



RESEARCH PAPER

Post Prophet Muhammad () Sermons: A Critical Discourse Study of Counter Oppression Verbal Strategies

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ABSTRACT

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The critical discourse study of Islamic sermons not only brings forth the persuasive and convincing aspects from linguistic perspective but also create true understanding of true Islam and a guideline for humanity as well. The present study aims to analyze the counter oppression verbal strategies in Post Prophet Muhammad sermons through critical discourse study in qualitative research paradigm. Sermon of Zainab binte Ali and Sakina binte Hussain in Kufa are analysed to attain the aforementioned aim. The sermons are studied from CDA perspective through Van Dijk's concept of US v/s THEM with positive self-representation and negative other representation by bringing to limelight discourse structures, strategies or indicators proposed by Dijk (1995b) i.e. Positive self-representation and negative other representation, authority, disclaimer, evidentiality, comparison, polarization, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, victimization, generalization, pre-supposition and warning. The critical discourse study of the sermons would tend to highlight the persuasive power exercised by the holy females of Prophet Muhammad's lineage that compelled the oppressor to move them away from Kufa.

Introduction

Muhammad ibn Abdullah () was assigned by Allah Almighty a holy duty of preaching Islam to the people of Arab. At the age of forty he had his first wahi (divine revelation), "revelation (wahi) is an act by which God, having created the world, proceeds to disclose Himself to His creation, acting in his capacity as hadi (guide)" (Zaki, 1983, p.1). The task of propagating Allah's commandment to Arabs and especially to the people of

Mecca was not an easy task as they were staunch in their religious beliefs; lending an ear or giving space to another religion, its teaching, diverse beliefs and varied practices was really difficult for them (GhaneaBassiri, 2010, p.3). Forbearance, fortitude and courage were his armors while following and propagating Allah's message while he had to face criticism, cruelty, brutality and hostility of the people who once had him as apple of their eye (Syed, 2011, p. xi). During his stay in Mecca he left no stone unturned to teach the people real essence and meaning of Islam but they were consistent and seemed never to change instead of listening to him they started making life miserable for him, only few people embraced Islam and they too had to face various difficulties as its consequence.

After fifteen years stay in Mecca and bearing hardships, Allah ordered Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) to migrate with his companions to Madina where people accepted him whole heartedly and embraced Islam and created an ideal Islamic state having *"an understanding of Islam in its true form"* (Kerstan,2017, p.498). Eight years after migrating to Madina Holy Prophet (ﷺ) conquered Mecca without even a drop of blood being shed. *"After declaring a general amnesty, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) went up the Safa Hill and accepted the allegiance of the Quraish. Many years ago, he had declared his Prophethood there but he was rejected then. Now, he was accepting the allegiance to Islam from the same people on the same hill"* (Conquest of Makkah, Islamic Finder, 2020). Holy Prophet (ﷺ) left this world eleven years after migrating to Madina. After that Muslims started practicing caliphate in Madina.

Holy family of Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was highly respected by the Muslims and Ali ibn Abu Talib belonged to it, he was born in Khana Kaaba and was the first child to embrace Islam. He was not only the son in law of Muhammad ibn Abdullah married to his beloved daughter Fatima but his very close companion and cousin brother. He became caliph and after his martyrdom in Kufa at the hands of Ibn e Muljim, his Son Hassan ibn Ali had a brief era of caliphate and later he was poisoned and embraced martyrdom. Unfortunately, not all the people who accepted Islam at the hands of Holy Prophet (ﷺ) were true believers instead they were black sheep. Some people who were bestowed amnesty at the time when Mecca was conquered without a drop of blood being shed, despite the fact being worst enemies of Islam apparently embraced Islam but remained the enemies of Islam. This enmity gradually started coming to limelight soon after Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ) left this temporary world and was meant to be everlasting. Martyrdom of Ali ibn Abu Talib and Hassan ibn Ali was a part of it.

The aforementioned enmity took its worst form in 61 A.H when Yazid became caliph and demanded allegiance of Hussain ibn Ali the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and son of Ali ibn Abu Talib and was clearly refused by Hussain ibn Ali as he knew that Yazid was a sinful person and evil-doer. He was threatened of adverse consequences by Yazid but he bore the qualities of patience, strength and bravery of his father and grandfather and remained steadfast. People of Kufa wrote him a letter that assured their allegiance to him and requested that they needed his help, so in order to avoid any issue in Madina he left for Kufa with his family and

companions to help them. On the way Hussain ibn Ali reached Karbala a place destined for his martyrdom on second Muharram. After unbearable thirst, loss of loved ones on 10th Muharram when sun was half way between noon and sunset the male members of Hussain ibn Ali convoy excluding his one son Ali ibn Hussain known by his title Zain ul Abideen (sick and unconscious) all were martyred. The evening that proceeded was Shaam e Ghareban, when the camps were burned, belonging were looted and heads were uncovered of sacred and pure ladies of Holy Prophet's () family. With the martyrdom the hardships of Hussain Ibn Ali came to an end and the trials of his sister Zainab binte Ali started who now had to take the command of the convoy of the holy females.

Zainab binte Ali was modest, generous, wise, brave, eloquent, bold, steadfast, pious, simple, intelligent, devoted and submitted towards eternal salvation. On the evening of Karbala when tents were burnt all the females rushed out of tents, all were looking towards Zainab binte Ali as their savior; all were present except Sakina binte Hussain. Everybody started looking for four years old girl but no one could find her until they reached the beheaded body of Hussain ibn Ali where she lied embracing her father. Sakina binte Hussain had memorized Quran at the age of four, she bore almost all the qualities of her aunt Zainab binte Ali even at a very young age.

On 11th Muharram all the captives were on their torturous journey towards the court of Yazid in Damascus. On the way when the captives reached Kufa, all the natives gathered in the streets and markets to see the people who had rebelled against Yazid and were defeated. When the holy people reached Kufa after tedious journey tired, hungry, thirsty, sorrowful and in agony, the people of Kufa witnessed the heads on spears of the soldiers, followed by ailing Zain-ul- Abideen ibn Hussain hands cuffed, legs chained and iron collar against neck, followed by the females riding on bare backs of camels, covered with dust and head and faces unveiled covered with long hairs. Among the captives in pain Zainab binte Ali who had lost her sons, nephews and brothers and Fatima binte Hussain (Sakina) who had lost her father brothers and cousins, were although sorrow ridden but being from the sacred lineage felt it to be their duty to reveal the truth to the people of Kufa who were kept in dark by the followers of Yazid.

The sermons of Zainab binte Ali and Sakina binte Hussain are of great significance in Islam and they not only reveal truth before the inhabitants of Kufa but also before the entire world. Critical Discourse Analysis of these sermons is significant as linguistically analyzing the sermons through the lens of Van Dijk model of Us (Self) vs Them (Other) will bring forth the persuasive elements in speech.

Study of the sermons in light of CDA is significant as they reveal the true picture of the reasons and happenings during and after Karbala. At the same time the study reveals the real essence of Islam. Dealing with the issues of oppressor and oppressed it deals with power relations that is the main concern in CDA. The sermons not only contain important teachings and realities for the audience but they also have the capability of being generalized for all human beings. The research efforts to answer

the succeeding research interrogations: Which information about oppressed is positive in the sermons and which information about oppressor is negative in the sermons?

Literature Review

Discourse is something that lies above language. It focusses on how and why something is uttered, written or even done. Critical Discourse Analysis focusses on power dynamics and show how social relations, social identities, knowledge, beliefs and systems are constructed as a result of contestation and negotiation of different discourses. (Fairclough, 1995, p.1). According to Fairclough it aims to, "*systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.*" (p. 135). Critical Discourse Analysis also investigates the role of language in creating power, dominance, hegemony, discrimination and control (Wodak, 1995, p.150). It also study "*the way social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by texts and talk in social and political context.*" (Dijk, 2001, p.352). Critical Discourse Analysis tends to expose "*the ideological and asymmetrical power structures that inhabit social, political and cultural processes*". (Bhatia, 2013, p.1). There is nothing inherent in language that makes it powerful. In fact it is user, his authority and context that graces language with power. (Wodak, 2001, p.152). "*Words don't produce or interpret themselves. People engaged over some matter, and the way they use them create responsible for that.*" (Jones, 2007, p.338). Same is the case with sermons as they deal with power dynamics.

Sermon is generally defined as the persuasive power exercised by the speaker in order to convince the speaker in favor of the perspective presented before them (Talis, 1959, p. 9). It can also be explained as, "*the skill of verbal speaking to the public, convincing and attracting them*" (Al-Hawfi, 2007, p. 5), and it deals with the principles of the sermon that are: Audience, spoken words, attracting and convincing (Al-Hawfi, 2007, p. 5). As sermons deals with convincing, persuasion, power, domination, ideology and hegemony so CDA is an effective way to analyze them.

Different models for analysis are there in CDA out of which Fairclough, Van Dijk and Wodak are most well known Critical Discourse Analysts and the models presented by them are most widely used for study of speeches and sermons in CDA paradigm. Some of the relevant researches related to the study are Noor Kareem Khfeef's (2017) wrote her Doctoral dissertation from Al-Qadisiyah University on *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Al-Sayida Zainab bint Ali's Speech in the Court of Yazid*. She investigated the sermon delivered at the time of tribulations by Zainab binte Ali in the court of Yazid after Karbala. Noor examined the micro level of the sermon including lexicon, rhetoric and syntax by adopting Van Dijk's theories of Ideological Square and Semantic Macrostructures and highlighted the relation that exists between ideology

and structures. Dr. Qasim Obayes Al-Azzawi and Kadhim Shakir Fashal (2018) from *University of Babylon* have done research on *Discourse strategies of Al-Sayeda Zainab's (as) Sermon in Yazid's Palace*. They employed two models for analysis i.e. van Dijk's Ideological Square for the macro-level analysis, and van Dijk's Ideological Discourse Analysis to bring forth the discursive strategies employed in Zainab binte Ali's sermon in Yazid Palace. Al Salami (2018) in *A Socio-pragmatic Study of Condemnation in Lady Zainab's Speech in the Court of Yazid* tried to examine the act of condemnation in the speech of Zainab binte Ali in the court of the tyrant Yazid from both the moral and deliberative perspective.

Very little research has been done on Islamic sermons so the present study intends to do Critical Discourse Analysis of Sermons of Zainab binte Ali and Sakina binte Hussain in Kufa a place having in itself a significant contribution in the tragedy of Karbala.

Material and Methods

The study is purely qualitative in nature so focusses on non-numerical data only. Data is collected from two sermons delivered by two females (Zainab binte Ali and Sakina binte Hussain) from Prophet Muhammad () lineage after the tragedy of Karbala in Kufa. The two sermons are analyzed from CDA perspective based on van Dijk's (1998) concept of US v/s THEM with positive self-representation and negative other representation by bringing to limelight discourse structures, strategies or indicators proposed by Dijk (1995) i.e., Positive self-representation and negative other representation, Authority, Disclaimer, Evidentiality, Comparison, Polarization, Euphemism, Hyperbole, Irony, Victimization, Generalization, Pre supposition and Warning.

Results and Discussion

Zainab binte Ali, 56 years old, sorrow ridden lady and Sakina binte Hussain, 4 years old girl, after losing their father, brothers, cousins, sons and nephews when reached Kufa with other females and ailing Zain ul Abideen ibn Ali couldn't restrain themselves and delivered glorious, eloquent sermons in Kufa that astonished the people. The sermons greatly affected the people who felt immense regret and shame and realized how sinful they were and how ignorant and wrong they had been. Both sermons are analyzed individually in light of indicators given by Van Dijk for the representation of Positive US and Negative THEM.

Positive Self Representation

Positive self-representation is significant in making speech convincing, influencing and persuasive. In the Sermon of Sakina binte Hussain it can be witnessed in the following utterances:

"Pure offspring."

"Allah has given His knowledge to Us and made Us as the trustees of His wisdom."

"We are the hujjat (proof) of Allah upon the heavens and the earth."

"We are the source of His wisdom."

"Allah honored Us and raised Our status before the creation through Muhammad ()."

In Zainab binte Ali's sermon Positive self-representation can be witnessed in the following sayings:

"The master of the youths in Heaven"

"You would go to him whenever you had tribal fights and disagreements"

"Your best choice to solve your own problems and worries"

Negative Others Representation

Negative other-representation is important in making the listeners realize the negativity of the others and consequently enhancing positive self-representation. In the Sermon of Sakina binte Hussain it can be seen in the following utterances:

"O' people of kufa! O' cheaters!"

"You denied Us and committed Kufr with Allah"

"You attributed lies to Allah"

"You are deceitful"

"You committed every atrocity against Us and looted Our wealth"

"Your hearts have become impure from filth"

"Allah sealed your hearts, eyes and ears"

"Shaitan became your leader and lead you astray"

In Zainab binte Ali's sermon Negative other-representation can be witnessed in the following sayings:

"O people of Kufah! O you deceivers!"

"O you have break your pledges and treated back"

"You traitors!"

"Indeed you have done the ugliest, the most grievous and gruesome deed"

Authority

Referring to an authority in a sermon greatly influences the listeners and make them attentive towards the sermon. As authority exercises power as a result a reference to it in a sermon too is influential. Sakina Binte Hussain too refers to authority in her sermon as mentioned below:

"All praise is for Allah"

"O' Allah! You took from you're your Creation the promise of allegiance for the Wilayat of Ali (asws) ibn Abi Talib (as) and made this wajib (obligatory) upon them"

"O' Allah! I am very young, but still I am aware of the greatness of the attributes of My Grandfather (asws)"

"O' Allah! You are well aware of how My Grandfather (asws) protected Your tauheed (oneness) and Your Prophet() "

"Whatever We had to face in this world it is for the sake of Allah"

Zainab Binte Ali too mentions to authority in her sermon as stated below:

"Are you now crying? Yes, by Allah you must weep because you deserve the tears."

"That is because no one has the power but Allah."

Disclaimer

Repudiating all the wrong done serves the purpose of positive self-representation. In Sakina binte Hussain sermon it can be seen as follows:

"He had no concern for this world"

"What wrong did Rasool Allah () do against you that caused you to commit such atrocities against His Brother and My Grandfather Ali (asws) ibn Abi Talib (as) and His Offsprings (asws)?"

In Zainab binte Ali sermon disclaimer can be seen as follows:

"O you who break your pledges and retreated back!"

Evidentiality

Evidences to prove other guilty is an important counter oppression strategy at the hands of oppressor. In Sakina binte Hussain sermon evidentiality is evident in the following quotes:

“O’ Allah! You took from you’re your Creation the promise of allegiance for the Wilayat of Ali (asws) ibn Abi Talib (as) and made this wajib (obligatory) upon them but Your creation has broken this promise of allegiance.”

“You martyred My Grandfather (asws) and your swords are dripping with blood of Ahul Bayt (asws).”

In Zainab binte Ali’s sermon evidentiality is evident in the following quote:

“You placed yourself in the anger of Allah and you manifested yourself in greed and begging.”

Comparison

Comparison is to look for similarities and differences which is important for listeners to understand who is right and who is wrong. In sermon of Sakina binte Hussain comparison can be witnessed in the following assertions:

“These “Muslims” admitted to oppressing Ameerul Momineen (asws), but for your sake My Grandfather (asws) was patient.”

“We know those who obeyed Us and those who waged war against Us and those who came to Our support and those who abandoned Us, and you were amongst those who waged war against Us because your hearts have become impure from filth.”

“You became envious of Us because of the status and greatness which was bestowed upon Us by Allah.”

In sermon of Zainab binte Ali comparison can be witnessed in the following assertions:

“You are like the woman who painstakingly and with great labor twines a strong rope, and then herself unwinds it, thereby wasting her effort and energy.”

Polarization

Polarization is to show the difference of ideas, to give representation to opposites i.e., good and bad. It plays an important role in positive self-representation and negative other representation.

In the sermon delivered by Sakina binte Hussain polarization can be seen in following sayings:

“Those who were not created from Noor can never be like those who were created from Noor.”

In the sermon delivered by Zainab binte Ali polarization can be seen in following sayings:

"Was he not the one who you would go to him whenever you had tribal fights and disagreements."

Euphemism

Euphemism is to indirectly and mildly express harsh and unpleasant words. Sakina binte Hussain has effectively used euphemism as seen in the following saying:

"You felt pride in Our martyrdom and Our imprisonment. How can it be that this ummah (nation) can feel pride in slaughtering those whom Allah Himself made as Pure and kept all impurities from coming near to Them."

Zainab binte Ali has effectively used euphemism as seen in the following saying:

"Your false pledges contain no element of truth and sincerity."

Hyperbole

Exaggerated statements or hyperbole although are not meant to be taken in literal sense but still the serve best in being influential in terms of positive self-representation and negative other-representation. Sakina binte Hussain has effectively used hyperbole in her sermon and can be clearly seen in the following lines taken from her sermon:

"A praise which numbers ore than the grains of the sand and is weightier than the earth and Arsh (throne) combined."

"He left this world but His attributes and greatness will remain for all of eternity and no one will ever be able to reach His status."

"Your swords are dripping with blood of Ahlul Bayt (asws)."

Zainab binte Ali has effectively used hyperbole in her sermon and can be clearly seen in the following lines taken from her sermon:

"May your cries never end and your tears never diminish."

"Cry immensely and laugh less, for you are contaminated with such shame and disgrace, that you will never be able to wash it off."

"What heavy burden are you carrying: annihilation, downfall."

"You have done that, which could tear down the skies, open the earth, and make the mountains vanish. As far as the earth goes and as deep as the skies go."

Irony

Irony is use of expression that signifies something dissimilar as compared to the literal meaning can be used for satiric purpose to effectively bring out the element of negative other. Sakina binte Hussain has used irony in the following saying in her sermon:

"My Grandfather (asws) was martyred in Your House (Masjid) in the presence of other muslims."

Zainab binte Ali has used irony in the following saying in her sermon:

"Your tactics has become flattering the maids and nodding your heads in agreement to the enemies."

Victimization

Victimization that is cruel and unjust treatment done to self by other is significant in serving the purpose of positive self-representation and negative other-representation. In Sakina binte Hussain's sermon sense of being victimized is found in the following utterances:

"Muhammad () is His servant and messenger, and the Pure Offspring of Muhammad () were slaughtered near the banks of River Furat."

"They usurped His (Ameerul Momineen asws) right and martyred Him. "

"Then they martyred His Son Hussain (asws)."

"These "muslims" admitted to oppressing Ameerul Momineen (asws), but for Your sake My Grandfather (asws) was patient."

"You martyred My Grandfather (asws) and your swords are dripping with blood of Ahlul Bayt (asws)."

"For a long time now, your hearts had been filled with hatred and animosity towards Us."

"You slaughtered Ahlul Bayt (asws) and afterwards you rejoiced and celebrated."

In Zainab binte Ali's sermon sense of being victimized is found in the following utterance:

"How could you exonerate yourself from crime of slaying the son of the Last Prophet Muhammad ()?"

Generalization

Generalization is basically to give general statement based on an inference. In the sermon delivered by Sakina binte Hussain following statements fall in the category of generalization:

"You chose Him and declared Him to be Your "Siratul Musaqeem" (the right path)."

"You treated Us as if We were a group of common rebels."

In the sermon delivered by Zainab binte Ali following statement fall in the category of generalization:

"You have sponsored a very wrongful act for which Allah is totally displeased with you."

Presupposition

Presupposing that something is already known is called presupposition. It is significant in regard to letting others know the all-wrong acts committed by other are not the result of ignorance, in fact, knowingly committed. In the glorious sermon of Sakina binte Hussain in Kufa presupposition is clearly visible in the aforementioned assertions:

"O'Allah You are well aware that My Grandfather (asws) was martyred in Your House (Masjid) in the presence of other "muslims"."

"O'Allah You are well aware of how My Grandfather (asws) protected Your Tauheed (oneness and Your Prophet()."

"Was he not the master of the youths in Heaven?"

"Was he not the one who you would go to him whenever you had tribal fights and disagreements?"

"Was he not your best choice to solve your own problems and worries?"

"Do you know which part of Rasool Allah () that you have cut?"

"And which vow you have broken?"

"And whose blood you have shed?"

"And which respected family you have brought to the public as captives?"

"And whose sanctity you have violated?"

Warning

In case of negative other-representation of the oppressor by the oppressed warning is not only significant in making the other realize their wrong deeds but also make them aware of their punishments. Sakina binte Hussain warned the people of Kufa and the army of Yazid in these words:

"You were deceitful and Allah does not allow those who are deceitful to succeed."

"You committed every atrocity against Us and looted Our wealth, but you will not gain any benefit from this."

"Do not be pleased with the atrocities and acts of oppression which you committed against Us."

"Verily, Allah curses those who are proud and arrogant."

"May Allah destroy you."

"Soon the wrath and curse of Allah that has become your destiny will fall upon you."

"You will have to face the immense wrath of Allah."

"Verily, you will taste of its severity."

"May the curse of Allah be upon the oppressors."

"Verily, every person will reap whatever he has sown."

Zainab binte Ali warned the people of Kufa and the army of Yazid in these words:

"Beware, for you have sponsored a very wrongful act for which Allah is totally displeased with you. Without doubt, His wrath shall soon descend upon you."

"Remember! The punishment of the Day of Judgment which will be much more severe and much harsher! That is because no one has the power of Allah."

After the analysis of selected sermons and obtaining linguistic references with regard to indicators presented by Van Dijk the aforementioned conclusion is attained that the chief persistence in the sermons is to accentuate the repressive polarization and distinction amid negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation as a way to control the attentions of others in order to bring to limelight the manipulation, misappropriation of power, discrimination, and elimination. Furthermore it is revealed from the analysis of the text of sermons that Sakina binte Hussain and Zainab binte Ali who were from the Prophet's () family they were allied to honorable standards and moral principles, whereas one can clearly witness Yazid's regime as

depicted in the sermons of the Holy Ladies is totally opposite to the Holy family. Indicators analyzed that are: Positive self -representation and negative other representation, Authority, Disclaimer, Evidentiality, Comparison, Polarization, Euphemism, Hyperbole, Irony, Victimization, Generalization, Pre supposition and Warning all highlight the adverse acts committed by the out-group.

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