Religious identity and discourse in Pakistan: a sociolinguistic study

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Abstract. This study focuses on the construction of religious identity in a low-income group of Pakistani Muslims as compared to their sociocultural identity. Through a critical discourse analysis of interview data, this paper explores the interconnectedness of individuals' identity and their religio-sociocultural traditions. Based on three important dimensions of discourse, i.e. experiential, interpersonal and expressive given by Fairclough (1989, 2001); the analysis reveals a range of linguistic devices and traditions linked with identity related issues. The findings illustrate that sociocultural traditions have an unmistakable impact on Pakistani Muslims' religious identity; and manifest that through such conception of selfhood, Pakistani Muslims connect themselves with Arab and Muslim world on the one hand and with Indo-Pakistani sociocultural traditions on the other.

1. Introduction

According to Thornborrow (2002), "how you talk along with other kinds of social codes as how you dress and how you behave, is an important way of displaying who you are, in other words indicating your social identity" (p.138). The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine the linguistic instances from the interviews of a low-income group of Pakistani Muslims which would lead to map their religious identity which it has been assumed is intertwined with their sociocultural identity. Identity is something which individuals constantly keep building and negotiating all their lives through their exposure to different cultures and contacts with the people coming from different contexts. Language is a powerful means of exercising social control – if one wishes to belong to a particular social group, this means adopting the linguistic conventions of that particular group. This both captures the agency of speakers and views language as a social action (Kroskrity 2000). The perception of identity and selfhood is produced either through deliberate, strategic manipulation, or through out-of-awareness linguistic practices. Therefore, the issue of identity in any context is always multifaceted, and a wide range of factors "enter into the definition of ethnic and social identity: racism, nationalism, stratification into classes and castes, status and role, solidarity, and distance, social stereotypes" (Crystal 1987: 15). These myriad facets of human identity prompted the following research questions:

a) What are the multiple facets of religious identity of the low-income group of Pakistani Muslims?
b) What experiential, expressive and relational values do the discourse practices of the low-income group of Pakistani Muslims carry which in turn reveal their religious identity?

This paper argues that the concept of identity is a dynamic one, and not amenable to fixity and stability within a context. Hence, the answers to identity-related questions (i.e., what does it mean to be a Pakistani Muslim?) could not be absolute or final. Focusing on this dimension of identity, this research provides a critical view of the cherished identities related to the discourses of the low-income group of Pakistani Muslims. Somewhat similar efforts to gauge the construction of Malaysian national identity has been made by Abdullah (2004), who while proposing a discursive model of Malaysian national identity writes:

In 'structured multicultural contexts, (the) sourcing of meaning and experience in the discourse is framed via principal dichotomic (but not necessarily antithetic) sets of strategies serving a broad meta-narrative of inclusive national ideologies that transcend \textit{inter alia} ethno-cultural, socioeconomic, and gender differences, and a narrower one that celebrates nationalist ideologies to the relative exclusion of identifiable sub-national identities respectively.'(p. 125)

Following the same tradition, Polovina-Vukovic (2004) studied the representation of social actors in media discourse. It is in this connection that this work seeks to explore the construction of religio-sociocultural identity as it is incorporated in the discourse practices of Pakistani Muslims.

2. Overview of the method

As stated above, the primary object of this research is identification of linguistic instances in discourse practices of low-income group of Pakistani Muslims which would invariably give clues about their religious identity as compared to their sociocultural identity. In this study, the income below Rs. 15000– per month has been considered low-income.

For data collection, the method of direct interview with the informants has been preferred. Formal interviews were conducted in April, 2010 at a hospital in Multan, a city of Southern Punjab, Pakistan, with 12 low-paid staff members (nurses and ward boys). It is very important to make sure that this is done in such a way that the information cannot be associated with the named individuals, and that the privacy of the informants is protected. To achieve this end, the information about the exact location of the interview site has been withheld. The entire interviews were tape-recorded, and then the text was transcribed word for word. This transcribed text makes the data for this research. The data thus collected has been analyzed for its textual and thematic content borrowing Fairclough’s (1989, 2001) framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Fairclough (2001) provides us with a list of ten main questions and a number of sub-questions, which could be addressed when analyzing a text applying CDA. This is not intended as an exhaustive or all-encompassing list, but is a suggested list of
possible directions or areas that could be investigated. The ten main questions are divided into three main groups:

- Vocabulary
  - What experiential values do the words have?
  - What relational values do the words have?
  - What expressive values do the words have?
  - What metaphors are used?
- Grammar
  - What experiential values do grammatical features have?
  - What relational values do grammatical features have?
  - What expressive values grammatical features words have?
  - How are simple sentences linked together?
- Textual Structures
  - What interactional conventions are used?
  - What larger scale structure does the text have? (p. 92-93)

Inferred from these questions, the analysis in this paper is based on three broader dimensions of discourse i.e. experiential, relational and expressive, which make up the crux of all the questions posed above. The definitions of these terms: experiential, relational and expressive, are of great importance to the understanding of critical discourse analysis. Experiential values, according to CDA seek to unveil how the text producer’s experience of the natural or social world reflects in the text. On the other hand, relational value ‘may identify the perceived social relationships between the producer of the text and its recipient’ (Atkins, 2002: 5). The third dimension expressive value, provides an insight into ‘the text producer’s evaluation of the bit of reality it relates to’ (Fairclough, 1989: 112). These three dimensions of the language provide sufficient indication required to uncover the identities of the text producer. Despite being based on CDA framework, this paper does not follow CDA’s manifesto (Fairclough, 2004) slavishly. The way CDA studies social power abuse, dominance, and social inequality enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context is not the primary objective of this research. Rather it focuses on the way discourses’ dimensions i.e. experiential, relational and expressive could lead towards construing the religio-sociocultural identity of some social participants. Notwithstanding this divergence, this study nevertheless falls within the main tenets of CDA. Let us have a look at main tenets of CDA as summarized by Fairclough and Wodak (1997):

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action (p. 271-80)
Out of these tenets, except 1 and 2 all others are addressed in this study in one way or another.

3. Critical discourse analysis of the interview data

3.1. Experiential values

As stated above, the experiential values, according to CDA, targets to expose the text producer’s experiences of the natural or social world which make up his/her ideologies and worldview (Fairclough, 1998). In the following sections of the paper the experiential values of the research participants’ discourse have been looked at under three broader headings:

- Classification schemes
- Meaning relations
- Role of agency

All these three headings have been dealt with in detail in the following discussion sections.

3.1.1. Classification schemes

A classification scheme is a ‘particular way of dividing up some aspects of reality which is built upon a particular ideological representation of that reality’ (Fairclough, 1989: 115). It leads one to infer that the language preference of an individual 'exhibits a dual classification scheme that seems to map opposing values' (Hoon 2004: 141). Following these lines, a dual classification scheme to gauge the religious identity of the respondent in association with their sociocultural identity has been drawn. We can call these opposing schemes ‘sociocultural identity’ versus ‘Muslim identity’. This classification scheme is manifested in terms of:

- Code-switching
- Naming conventions
- Clothing preferences
- Plural marriages
- Sectarian diversity
- Religious personalities

The table given below indicates the discursive and non-discursive (i.e. clothing preferences & plural) practices followed by a common Pakistani to index these two aspects of their identity.

Table 1: Classification schemes – Sociocultural identity vs. Muslim identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociocultural identity</th>
<th>Muslim identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code-switching</td>
<td>Urdu-Arabic code switching: alhamdulillah (x3), subhanallah, Allah (x 11), nabi (x3),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu-English code switching: Photocopy, condition, style, mistake, res-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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pect, teacher, television, husband, bomb blast, planning, trend, fair, sorry, fitness, disturb, leader, problem, choice, daily, routine, respect, normal (23 lexemes)

1.2 Naming conventions
Name with Sanskrit/Gujarati origin: Seema
Names with Arabic origin: Fazilat, Rukhsana, Humera, Bashir, Abdul Qadeer, Jameel, Qaiser, Names with Persian/Arabic origin: Shama, Shazia

1.3 Clothing preferences
dupatta, shalwar kamiz, jeans, t-shirt, keffiyeh (Middle Eastern head-dress)
Scarf, prayer scarf, taqiyah, also spelled tagiyah (a short, rounded cap worn by Muslim men)

1.4 Plural Marriages
Aik hi shadi kami chahiye (One should marry only once.)
do shadian majboori ki haalat mein jayz hain (Polygamy is allowed under certain compulsions.)

1.5 Sectarian Diversity
Deobandi sect, Brelvi sect
Shiism, Sunnis

1.6 Religious Personalities
Allama Tahir-ul-Qadri Hazoor-e-Pak Muhammad (saw), Hazrat Umar (ra), Hazrat Bilal (ra), Hazrat Imam Hussain (ra), Bibi Zainab (ra)

All the words, phrases, clauses and strands mentioned in the Table 1 are multi-dimensional and give indication about the way the research participants perceive themselves. It confirms that their concept of selfhood is linked with multiple factors, e.g. naming, education, society, culture, psychology, and of course religion. Now, all the sections of the Table 1 would be discussed in detail:

3.1.2. Code-switching

Almost all Pakistanis demonstrate some aspects of experiential values when they make use of English and Arabic lexemes in their discourse practices. These are their experiences in their particular contexts which make them go for certain linguistic choices (e.g. the status of English language as the language of prestige, and the status of Arabic as the language of spirituality, holiness and divinity) They do not know the meaning of most of the Arabic words they use in their everyday conversation, the surahs they daily recite, the names they themselves have and the names they give to their children and so on. It is their upbringing and cultural habits which make them consider Arabic a language of God and an assurance to get closer to Him:

(001) Kafi sari surah aati hain. QuI ho wallah aati hai. Surah ka naam nahin aata. Matlab bhi nahm aata
I know many surahs. I can recite surah quI ho wallah, but don't know its title. I even don't know what it means.
Suraton ka Tarjama to nahin aata. Lekin alfaz se bara sakoon milta hai. Arbi se. Though I do not know the meanings of surahs but the words give me comfort as they are in Arabic language.

The section 1.1 of Table 1 enlists some of the Arabic lexemes, phrases and clauses which respondents used in their talk in order to manifest their urge to identify themselves with Arab Muslims. On the other hand, their colonial past also reflects in their prference for Urdu-English hybrid code for everyday conversation. Despite coming form very humble educational background (see Table 2), the respondents liked to use English lexemes in their talk. This attitude not only projects that they are staunch Muslims (who are proud of their Islamic identity), but also expresses a status oriented psychological bent (Crystal, 1987). By mixing English code in their talk, the respondents, in fact, attempted to associate themselves with socially and economically well-off strata of society.

Table 2: Educational Background of the Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. #</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fazilat</td>
<td>Matriculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Humera</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Seema</td>
<td>Matriculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shama</td>
<td>Middle (8th Standard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rukhsana</td>
<td>Middle (8th Standard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Shazia</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Qiaeser</td>
<td>Matriculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Qadeer</td>
<td>Matriculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ansar</td>
<td>Matriculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bashir</td>
<td>Middle (8th Standard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jamil</td>
<td>Primary (5th Standard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ahmad</td>
<td>Primary (5th Standard)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.3. Naming conventions

The section 1.2 of Table 1 indicates how Pakistani Muslims identify themselves both with Arab/Persian Muslims on the one hand and with Indo-Pakistani cultural traditions on the other. This is the reason that a majority of first names of the respondents come from Arabic and Persian origin. Only one name, Seema, comes from Sanskrit origin. It establishes the fact that Pakistani Muslims identify themselves more with Arab and Persian culture than the culture of their own land, i.e. the Indian sub-continent. Most of the time they do not even know the meaning of their names, but they do believe that their names originate from the Arabic language. As it happened in the case of a woman, named Seema. When she was asked if there is anything she has to say about her name, she said:

Mera naam, Seema. Seema ka matlab hai alamat nishani. Ye quran se lia hai lafz. Arbi lafz hai.

My name is Seema. Seema means symbol or a sign. This word comes from the Quran. This is an Arabic word.
But actually *Seema* comes from multiple sources. The girl name *Seema* comes from the Sanskrit word which means “border/limit.” It also stems from a Gujarati source which means “limit.” It also stems from a Hebrew word which means “treasure.” Table 3 shows the first names of the respondents along with their meanings and origin.

Table 3: Naming conventions of Pakistanis: Sociocultural identity vs. Muslim identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. #</th>
<th>Respondents’ Names</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fazilat</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Superiority,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shazia</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Precious, Unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Seema</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>Boundary,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Seema</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>Treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Seema</td>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>Limit, Boundary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rukhsana</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Star, Bright, Dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shama</td>
<td>Arabic,</td>
<td>Light, Flame, Candle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Humera</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Reddish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Qaiser</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Emperor, Caesar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Qadeer</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Competent, Capable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bashir</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Well-educated, Wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ansar</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Helpful, Supporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jamil</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ahmad</td>
<td>Arabic, Turkish</td>
<td>Worthy of Praise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rest of the categories of this classification scheme (dress code, plural marriage and sectarian diversity), though discussed in this section of the paper, overlap with the third dimension of discourse, i.e. *expressive value*, because these categories outline respondents’ evaluation, preferences and judgments etc. regarding certain sociocultural practices. In the interview data, the *expressive value* has been expressed either through negation or modality.

3.1.4. Clothing preferences

The section 1.3 of table 1 provides the inventory of Pakistani Muslims’ clothing preferences. Out of them, scarf is the symbol of Muslim identity for women and prayer cap is a symbol of Muslim identity for men. The Muslim prayer cap is called ‘taqiyyah’, (also spelled *tagiyah*) which is a short, rounded cap. These clothing preferences not only emit the Islamic traditions cherished by the Pakistani masses, but also reflect the Pakistani Muslim’s fervour to look educated and modern. Regarding his dressing habits, one of the respondents comments:

(004) Ji haan. Pant shirt pehnana acha lagta hai. Hum parhe likhe jo hain. Sirf shalwar kamiz to nahiin kisi na kisi mauqe per to pehnana par hi jata hai
(Yes. I like to wear jeans and T-shirt. We are educated, after all. Only shalwar kamiz is not enough. We have to wear (jeans, pants, T-shirt etc.) on one occasion or the other.

Contrarily, women are expected to follow the traditional dressing conventions. Talking about the women who wear western dresses the same respondent said:
Larkiyon ko pant shirt nahin pehnana chahiye. Wo pant shirt mein nahin achi lagti.
(The girls should not wear jeans and T-shirt. They don’t look decent in jeans and T-shirt. They can wear this dress if they like. It is their choice. Scarf looks better as it covers their entire face.)

Similarly, all the other respondents (both male and female) shared somewhat homogeneous views. Some of them are reproduced below:

Larkiyon ko pant shirt nahin pehnana chahiye. Larkiyon per dupatta acha lagta hai aur scarf bhi.
The girls should not wear jeans and T-shirt. Dupatta looks good on girls and so does scarf.

Ye Pant shirt hamari shnakht nahin hai. Hamare liye to wohi hai na jo hazoor SAW ne kiya bataya. Aur auraton k liye to parde ka bahut sakht hukm hai.
It (jeans and T-shirt) is not our identity. We must follow the way that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) showed us, and women have been strictly told to observe the veil.

Kabhi dil nahin kiya k pant shirt pehnein. Shalwar kamiz dhaka chupa libas ha, is se parde ke liye rehta hai. is liye ye sab se acha hai.
I never wished to wear jeans and T-shirt. Shalwar Kamiz covers us (women) well. It fulfills the covering requirement for women. That’s why it is the best dress.

Let us have a look at the linguistic choices in above given statements. We can see how negative expressions have been used by the respondents while disapproving western clothing for women. The use of modality marks the personal opinion of the individuals with no claim of the authenticity of the propositions they are making. Women’s clothing preferences collocate with dhuka hua (covered) and parda (veil). As far as men’s clothing preferences is concerned, Western clothing, supposedly, is a requirement for them if they are educated. This fact has been illustrated in Ex. 3 through the use of a transitional device, i.e. jo (after all).

3.1.5. Plural marriages

The identity of Pakistani Muslims does not always conform to the socio-cultural traditions of Arab Muslims. Pakistani Muslims’ identity stands in contrast to the Arab culture in many ways. One of such contexts is the general stance held by the majority of Pakistanis over plural marriages. Immersed in their sociocultural discursive set-up, where monogamy is considered a norm and polygamy a deviation, almost all the respondents contend that they would never approve of polygamy:

Bilkul nahin kami chahiye dosri shadi. Hum maashre mein aise mard dekhte hain na. lekin humein aise mard nahin mile Allah ka shukar hai.
Bigamy should not be allowed in any circumstances. But this sort of men (bigamous or polygamous) is common in our society. But we do not happen to relate to this sort of men, thanks God.

Mard ko doorsi shadi nahin kami chahiye. Main to yehi kaho gi. Agar begum faut ho jaye to unko bhi goli kha kar mar mar jana chahiye.
A man should not have two wives. I would rather suggest, if his wife dies, he should commit suicide by taking pills.
Whenever Holy Prophet (SAW) told Allah's commandments regarding four marriages, it was only in case if a man could afford.

Here the first two instances (i.e., 009 & 010) come from the women who strongly disapprove of polygamy. In the first (i.e., 009) statement, the woman is thanking God as God has saved her from the men who are polygamous. The second woman (in 010) gave a very interesting statement, because she believes that a man should prefer death over bigamy. Interestingly, men do not go to this extreme as far as their stance on second marriage is concerned. They believe a well-off man who can afford is allowed to have as many as four wives (011). To them, polygamy is not questionable and is a settled and established norm. But they also want to establish that Islam does not encourage polygamy. So, they make use of conditional sentences where the conjunctive device agar (if) joins the clauses with supportive claims. Through this sort of conditional statements, they express an urgency to conform to the general views held by the general populace in their particular sociocultural context.

Before winding-up this section, it has to be added that the non-discursive practice (like the observance of certain clothing preferences and monogamy) are an outcome of the overall discursive space of a culture. According to Foucault, there is nothing outside discourse. Thus, the ideology investing non-discursive practices have to be legitimized by the dissemination and propagation of certain discourses. Once internalized, such discourses could be realized via different linguistic means. For example, in the case of plural marriages related discourse on Pakistan, the discursive situation of Pakistan is generally realized by the people in the form of cautionary advices or suggestions. It is generally observed that a majority of people always advises against bigamy or polygamy, and the same could be observed in the instances quoted above.

3.1.6. Sectarian diversity

The Muslims coming from different sectarian backgrounds have been coexisting in the Indian subcontinent for centuries (see Table 1 section 1.5) The sectarian diversity to this extent is quite unheard of in the rest of the Muslim world. Such sectarian diversity could be attributed to the cultural borrowings from local traditions of the Indian subcontinent. The best Sufi scholars did not hide the fact that they borrowed profusely from what they found attractive about older Indian traditions. These traditions brought diversity in the Muslims' religious practices and taught them to coexist peacefully with other religious communities. The same was revealed by the respondents who declared that on the one hand, they are proud of their sectarian traditions and consider their sect better than the other sects; on the other hand, they also talk about religious harmony and peace:

(012) Main kisi firq ko bura nahin samajhti
(I do not consider any sect distorted).
The respondents in all these statements acknowledge the sectarian differences but they raise voice for humanity, religious affinity and amicability. On the contrary there was also a section of respondents who took others' sectarian traditions disparagingly:

(016) Kuch firqon k log namaz ulti parhte hain aur kuch khatam waghaira nahin dete, hamare firqa mein jo hai wo hamare liye acha hai.
*(The believers of some other sects offer prayers in a wrong way and some do not like to perform funeral rites. The religious traditions that we learnt from our sect, we consider them the best).*

(017) Main kis surat mein apna firqa nahin badloon gi
*(Whatever happens, I shall never convert to any other sect).*

These articulations manifest the respondents' deep affiliation with their sectarian traditions. The use of the adjective *ulti* (meaning wrong, backwards) for *namaz* (prayer) in the fifteenth example and active construction in the sixteenth example displays determined and resolute stance of the individuals as far as upholding their religious traditions is concerned.

### 3.1.7. Religious personalities

As it has been discussed earlier, Pakistani Muslims like to identify themselves with Muslims of the entire world. So, in most of the cases, their role models (Table 1, Section 1.6) have been universally acknowledged religious personalities (e.g. Prophet Muhammad and the *rashidun* caliphs, i.e., the four orthodox caliphs) who are held in great esteem by the entire Muslim world. The *rashidun caliphs* include:

- Abu Bakr
- Omar
- Uthman
- Ali

The word caliph has been originated from the Arabic word *khalifa* which means a representative or successor. When the Prophet Mohammed died in 632, the title was bestowed on his successor as the leader of the Muslim community. The word *rashidun*, is the plural of the word *rashid* which means "the rightly guided one". The four orthodox *rashidun* caliphs ruled for the first three decades of the new Islamic era. Their conduct is considered the perfect one, and they are generally considered the ideal human beings after Prophet Muhammad. In Pakistan, they are very well-known figures and the entire sociocultural discourse revolves around them. Their
biographies are an essential part of all text books (whether the subject is religion related or not, e.g. social studies, language and literature etc.). The rashidun caliphs are repeatedly mentioned in the political discourse of Pakistan, (e.g. newspaper articles, television talk shows etc.) The names of educational institutions are after them, the names of the mosques and hospitals are after them, the names of roads and markets are after them, the names of military gallantry awards are after them and so on. Therefore, it is not surprising that a common Pakistani considers these religious personalities her/his ideal. The religious figures of the present era are not held in high esteem by the Pakistani masses. Thus, only one living Muslim leader from Pakistan (i.e. Allama Tahir-ul-Qadri) is mentioned by the respondents as their spiritual guide.

3.1.8. Human relations and binary oppositions

Lorde (1984), who described herself as a “black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two” believes that “much of Western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior” (p. 114). Likewise, in this research the participants identified their subjectivities through opposite relations with the others. As the respondents belong to the low income group, they found themselves standing in contrast to the rich who they believe should help them through alms, zakat and fitrana etc. One of such binary oppositions could be observed in:

(018) sahib-i-eistataat vs. gharib, gharib ghurba
the well-offs vs. the poor

In the following list of antonyms, the respondents idealize or give preference to the first concept of each relation over the other:

(019) Behtarin vs. Buddtarin
the best vs. the worst

(020) Islam ke mutabiq vs. Islam k khilaf
according to Islam vs. against Islam

(021) Ye daur vs. wo daur
this age (the present age) vs. that age (the age of the Prophet)

(022) Anjane mein vs. jaan boojh kar
inadvertently vs. advertently

(023) Musalman vs. Kafir
Muslim vs. non-Muslim

(024) Mazloom vs. zalim
the sinned against vs. the sinner

The respondents identified themselves as islam ke mutabiq (according to Islam), musalman (Muslim) and mazloom (sinned against). And they wished to make themselves behtarin musalman (the best Muslim) who wishes to be transported to Prophet Muhammad’s daur (age). Similarly while talking about the hijab and the veil, the women identified themselves with the first quality of the opposite relation given below:
Whatever the clothing, Pakistani lower-middle class women make sure that they are observing *parda* (veil or hijab). Muslim men also wish to see their women *baparda*, covered in *chadars* and *burqas* (shawls and gowns).

### 3.1.9. Unclear agency

The data provides many instances where respondents either hide agency or skip the agent in order to distance themselves from certain unwanted actions or processes. (see (026-028):

- **(026)** Kayi kaam islam k khilaf ho jate hain
  *Many non-Islamic acts happen.*
- **(027)** Dozakh aur jannat suna hai islam mein
  *Hell and heaven have been told in Islam.*
- **(028)** Kaha hua hai k namaz parhein
  *(We) have been told to offer prayer.*

This sort of passive constructions obscure the active participation of the agents in certain processes. The unclear agency either serves to distance the respondents from certain non-Islamic acts (026), or it leads to infer that respondents' knowledge of Islam is unauthentic and is based on certain popular beliefs (027 & 028).

### 3.2. Relational values

Through *relational value* of discourse, the respondents seek to relate with people around them, and, thus assimilate themselves with the ingroup members. For this purpose, they attempt to establish certain 'socialized beliefs and/or opinions as well as common emotional attitudes and behavioural dispositions' (Abdullah, 2004: 124). By *including inclusive solidarity oriented and exclusive, distinguishing dispositions and also in many cases linguistic dispositions* (Wodak *et al.*, 1999:28), the respondents inculcate in themselves the twin concepts of Pakistani nationalism and universal Islamic brotherhood. In this paper the *relational values* of the discourse have been studied from two perspectives:

- The concept of 'we' and 'the other'
- The use of honorifics

#### 3.2.1. 'We' and 'the other'

Weedon (1997) suggested that language is the sight of unconscious, repressed meanings. The repressed meaning of the term *other* draws attention to its socially constructed meaning which includes a range of connotations such as *unnatural, alien, exotic, weird, eccentric, abnormal, aberrant, twisted, deviant, atypical, eerie,* etc. 'Othering' could be taken as a way of defining and securing one's own positive identity through the stigmatization of an 'other.' The 'other' is a key concept in continental philosophy; it opposes the *Same*. The *other* refers, or attempts to refer, to that
which is other than the initial concept being considered. Other is identified as “different” and can lead to a tendency to depict ‘others’ (women, foreign cultures, etc.) as somehow, categorically and intrinsically different (Said, 2001).

In the present study, the respondents related themselves with Pakistani Muslims in particular and with the Muslims all over the world in general. They described western culture as something opposite, contrary or queer which does not relate to them in any way. They see a different lifestyle that is not worth emulating. The following example records the wishful thinking of a young lady who wishes that the ‘others’ had seen the best side of Islam:

1. **(029)** Allah humein itna acha musalman banaye k doosre mazahib k ghair mulk ke log hamein dekh kar musalman banne ki khwahish karein

   May Allah make us such good Muslims that nonbelievers and foreigners (others) would wish to convert to Islam (after having observed us).

Here *humein* (us) denotes not only Pakistani Muslims, but also the Muslims from all over the world. Similar conceptualization could be observed in ex. 29:

2. **(030)** Humein ye islami mulk bari qurbaniyon se mila hai. Is ko bacha kar rakhein

   We got this Islamic country with great sacrifices, (we must) safeguard it.

In these interviews, the respondents used ‘we’ 60 times, and on all these occasions they either identified themselves with Pakistani Muslims or the Muslims from all over the world.

### 3.2.2. Honorifics

Honorific-containing sentences manifest a special kind of multidimensional semantic content (Bach, 1999; Potts, 2003). Honorifics not only contribute to add some specific flavour to discourse, but also function as a special kind of definite description which determine the relative honour accorded to a third person. The most common honorifics are usually placed immediately before the name of a subject. This is the type of honorifics that has been observed in this research.

The most commonly observed honorifics in this research is *Hazrat* which is an Arabic title used to honour a person. Literally, *Hazrat* means “the great presence” Instances of *Hazrat* extracted out of the interviewees’ talk include: *Hazrat Muhammad*, *Hazrat Umar Farooq*, *Hazrat Bilal*, *Hazrat Imam Hussain*. Although in Pakistan *Hazrat* is used for both male and female religious personalities, the respondents did not use the same honorifics for female religious personalities. They preferred *Bibi* (which is used to address women in an honourable way) to express their respect for holy women from the early Islamic era (*Bibi Zainab, Bibi Fatima* etc.). In addition to this, the following honorifics appeared in the interview data:

- *Huzoor* (lord) and *Pak* (holy) for Prophet Muhammad
- *Pak* (pure and holy) for durood: Durood is an invocation which Muslims make by saying specific phrases to compliment Prophet Muhammad and *Pak* (pure and holy) for Quran
- *Sharif* (holy) for Quran and for the month of Ramazan
Obviously, these honorifics mark the high esteem in which all the religious personalities, Quran and even the month of Ramazan are held by the common Muslims of Pakistan.

3.2.3. Euphemism and elliptical You

The respondents also made use of euphemistic expressions to relate themselves with the Muslims who commit minor sins. Some of such euphemistic expressions could be observed in the following examples (see ex. 30 to ex. 33):

(031) Chota moti ghaltian injane mein to ho jati hain
   *Committing minor sins is a usual practice (with everybody).*

(032) Anjane mein koi mistake ho to ho.
   *Sins could be committed unknowingly.*

(033) Apne amal ko dekh lo aankhon mein se paani aa jaye ga
   *Look at your doings, (your) eyes will be filled with tears.*

(034) Ghaltian to ho hi jati hain jaise routine mein ho jata hai k jhoot keh diya
   *Committing sins is quite normal with humans. As it happens that (you) lie now and then.*

In all the above expressions, the respondents never said that they have committed these sins. They preferred confessing their sins by relating them with others and believing that all the Muslims indulge in the same sort of *ghair islami* (non-Islamic) practices.

Besides, in most of these clauses, *you* has been ellipted which serves to relate the participants with ingroup members who they believe are just like them, prone to committing minor sins.

3.3. Expressive values

As it has already been discussed, the third dimension of discourse, (i.e. *expressive value*) provides an insight into "the text producer’s evaluation (in a wider sense) to the bit of reality it is related to" (Fairclough, 1989:112). The discourse practices of the people exhibit certain *expressive values* which they uphold very dearly. The *expressive values* serve to relate the relevant social groups to the social identities of the text. In this analysis, linguistic instances with expressive values can be classified in two main ways:

— Positive Values: associated with *Islamic* (Islamic) traditions
— Negative Values: associated with *ghair-islami* (un-Islamic) traditions.

In addition to this, some metaphors have also been used by the respondents which also served to reveal the *expressive values* of the discourse.

3.3.1. Islamic traditions (positive):

The following statements show respondents’ description and evaluation of 'good' Muslim practices:
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(035) aurat ko baparda hona chahiye
A woman must observe the veil.

(036) Allah humein sacha, pakka pach waqt ka namazi banaye
May Allah make us a true and firm Muslim who is regular in prayer.

(037) Islami libas acha lagta hai. Is mein aurat achi lagti hai
I like Islamic clothing. A woman looks good in it.

(038) Sharam aurat ki zeenat hoti hai
Shame or modesty is the hallmark of a graceful woman.

(039) Mard ka ye farz hota hai, wo poore ghar ka sarbarah hota hai kama kar laye apne khandan k liye.
The man is the leader of the family. He must earn money to support his family. It is his duty.

In these statements the attributes like baparda (veiled), sacha, pakka, panch waqt ka namazi (true and firm Muslim who is regular in prayers), sharam (modesty) and poo-re ghar ka sarbarah (the leader of the whole family) have been used as normative and common-sense qualities of a man and a woman.

3.3.2. Un-Islamic traditions (negative):

The actions, doings and happenings stated in the following examples are considered un-Islamic by the respondents:

(040) ... Tv dekhna konsa islam mein hai. Main to kehti hoon cable katwa deni chahiye.
Watching TV is not in accordance with the teachings of Islam. I suggest, the cable should be disconnected.

(041) Nahin nahin pants shirts nahin pehlana chahiye, ye ghair mazhab ka libas hai.
No, no, one should never wear jeans and T-shirt. It is an un-Islamic dress.

(042) Kabhi kisi se jhoot nahin bola, kabhi kisi se mazaq nahin kia.
I never lied to anybody, never made fun of anybody.

(043) Khule paayenche hon ya tang, jo bhi fashion ho main bas normal rehtii hoon, islam mein bhi yehi hai k aik had mein rehna chahiye.
Whatever the fashion trends (whether loose trousers or the tight ones), I prefer to practice a little restraint. Even Islam teaches (us) the same that a person should remain within certain limits.

The examples from ex. 39 to ex. 43 (with negative evaluation of certain social practices) serve to elaborate some of the cultural practices which the respondents consider un-Islamic. It is pretty obvious, whatever is (allegedly) un-Islamic, gets an instant disapproval from the common Muslims of Pakistan. The use of nahin (meaning 'no', 'not') and konsa (it has many meanings, but in ex. 39, it means 'not') lends a negative tone to the discourse. In the last statement (ex. 43), the respondent (a young woman) seems to believe that following contemporary fashion is against the teachings of Islam. In order to maintain her Islamic identity, she does not like to wear trendy clothes. The use of a modal auxiliary such as chahiye (meaning 'should', or 'must') has been quite frequent in such contexts. The modal auxiliary serves to give the impression of a personal opinion in the text (with no claim of authority over certain issues)
3.3.2. Use of metaphors

The following statements makes use of a metaphoric expression for the actions that the respondent believes must be avoided:

(045) Hum islam ka mutabiq hi chalte hain. Kabhi kisi ka bura nahin chaha, kisi ki jurr nahin kati.

_We live according to the teachings of Islam. (We) neither cursed nor harmed anybody_ (literally 'jurr' means 'roots': the respondent means that she never wished to uproot anyone).

Here the use of _jurr _ (roots) carries the personal opinion of the respondent who believes that Islam abhors harming and mistreating others. Similarly, look at the following example (ex. 45):

(046) Aik lamhe k liye ruko apne amal per nazar dalo. Na aankh ka paani ruke ga aur na dil ki dharkan pehle jaisi rahe gi.yehi tumhein bata dein ge k tumhare kya halaat hain.

_(If you) pause for a moment, and look at your deeds, the tears (of remorse) would come without warning and your heart would skip a beat. They (your tears and heartbeat) would tell you your standing (in the eyes of God)._ 

Through such personified expressions (i.e. tears and heartbeat) the respondent seems to preach fear of God, abstinence from sins and religious piety. The expressions "tears", "heartbeat" could also be better interpreted as metonymies and/or synecdoches, i.e., "pars pro toto", that is, effects standing for the cause (= the person) or parts standing for the whole (= the person).

3.3.3. Discussion and conclusion

The analysis reveals that the notion of 'identity' or 'selfhood' is not very easy to define. The identity of an individual is constructed as the result of subtle and intricate working of many overlapping yet interrelated factors such as:

- the context of culture,
- epistemic order,
- historical processes,
- interactional strategies and
- symbolic (discursive) codes etc.

The analysis detailed above establishes that the identities are always in a state of flux and do not remain stable and fixed. The multiple layering of identity can be looked at sufficiently by critically analyzing and scrutinizing the discourses. The set of values (experiential, relational and expressive) attached with discourse provide a range of linguistic preferences which invariably lead one to infer socio-cultural positioning of the individuals and groups. The linguistic preferences/choices found in this study include Urdu-Arabic and Urdu-English code-mixing, the negative evaluation, activated vs. passivated constructions, elliptical 'you', unclear agency and modality. All of these linguistic features lead one to assume that discourses constitute a society and culture by certain Ideological State Apparatuses (e.g. school, church, families etc.)
(Althusser 1972). Through deducing the link between discourse and Ideological State Apparatuses, the identity of groups and individuals could be figured out.

Although limited in terms of sample size, this study nevertheless allows some generalizations to be made based on the research questions which were initially posed:

— What are the multiple facets of religious identity of the low-income group of Pakistanis?
— What experiential, expressive and relational values do the discourse practices of the low-income group of Pakistani Muslims carry which in turn reveal their religious identity?

As far as the answer of the first question is concerned, it is clear from the above given discussion that the religious identity of Pakistani Muslims carries the unmistakable stamp of their sociocultural identity. The sectarian diversity, colonial past and Indian subcontinent related cultural practices lend a distinct flavour to Pakistani Muslims’ discourse and make their identity distinct from the Muslims of the rest of the world. Secondly, the discourse practices of Pakistani Muslims express certain experiential, expressive and relational values which have been elaborated in the analysis sections of the paper. The questions remain: To what extent, do identity issues address social problems and how are discourse and identity linked with the power dynamics of a society? These question are left as food for thought and the subject of future research on the same topic.

4. References


5. Appendix

(The actual interviews were administered in Urdu. This is the translated version of interview questionnaire).

**Interview questionnaire**

Q.1 Would you like to introduce yourself, please? (i.e. name, marital status, qualification etc.
Q.2 If you are asked, who are you, what would be your answer?
Q.3 Would you like to tell the meaning of your name?
Q.4 Does your name describe you?
Q.5 Would you like to define and describe your ideology?
Q.6 How would you describe a best human being?
Q.7 What good things have you learnt from your religious education?
Q.8 What do you think is the most important for you out of these things: your name, your religion, your region, your family, your country?
Q.9 Your ideal personality?
Q.10 Why should a person offer prayers?
Q.11 Would you like to share some of your family traditions?
Q.12 How do you celebrate religious festivals?
Q.13 How would you compare people of Pakistan with the people from rest of the world?
Q.14 Would you like to make some comments about Pakistani clothing?
Q.15 What do you think about foreign clothing?
Q.16 Your favourite book/festival/ sociocultural tradition?
Q.17 Could a person change his/her faith in any situation?
Q.18 What do you think about plural marriages?
Q.19 Any message for our readers???
Q.20 Feel free to add anything you like.