

THE USE OF SACRED LYRICS IN SONGS AND ITS IMPACT ON MUSLIM IDEOLOGY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Language is the medium through which different institutions represent their moral beliefs, values, and cultural ideologies. In this regard, music, specially the lyrics of songs, serves as a powerful tool in shaping and reflecting the different religious perspectives. The current study attempts to investigate how the use of sacred lyrics in songs impacts the Muslim ideology, using the method of critical discourse analysis. This research uses the mixed approach involving both the qualitative and quantitative data and critical discourse analysis to investigate the strategies used by the music industry through a close analysis of some selected songs that incorporate Islamic references in songs. Data collection includes a review of lyrics from five songs, ideology, and religious representation in music. The study results show that the use of sacred lyrics in music reflects a broader ideological shift where the religious language is being commodified, that potentially diminishes or lowers its spiritual value. This trend reveals the tension between the freedom of artists and religion, by examining how the sacred discourse is used in public entertainment space. Consequently, this study offers recommendations to safeguard the religious sanctity without undermining artistic freedom.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Sacred Discourse, Song Analysis, Muslim*

Ideology, Lexical in-appropriation

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1. Introduction

This research falls in the field of media discourse as well as religious discourse. In the modern era of globalized entertainment, music has emerged as a powerful medium that reflects societal ideologies, beliefs, and values (Campbell et al., 2021). Halliday (1978) introduces the concept of language as *social semiotic*, framing it as a system of meaning-making shaped by social functions while Fairclough (1995) emphasizes the role of discourse in both sustaining and challenging ideology. Among this medium, lyrics hold a significant place as they convey messages that influences public perception, culture, and sometimes religious thought. In recent decades, many songs have included the sacred Islamic phrases such as Quranic verses, giving references of Almighty Allah, and comparing God with worldly individual in their lyrical content. While some people argue that this usage represents artistic innovation of artists, and others view it as a misuse of sacred language, which is raising concerns about the sanctity of Islamic discourse.

The present study falls under the domain of *Van Dijk's* model of **critical discourse analysis (CDA)**, an approach that examines the relationship between language, power, and ideology. CDA is used to allow researchers to uncover hidden meanings, social structures, and ideological influences embedded within different texts. By applying Critical discourse analysis, the study focuses on investigating the strategies used by song producers during the incorporation of sacred Islamic language in lyrics of songs. It also focuses on how these strategies led to the desacralization of religious aspects in music.

Music and lyrics are the tools for shaping religious and cultural values. Similarly, music and particularly lyrics operate as an important potent of religious meaning. Natalie Fritz (2020) emphasizes how popular music transmits not merely emotions or community but also *religious knowledge* across different times and contexts. In recent decades, many songs have included sacred Islamic phrases—such as Qur'anic verses, invocations of Almighty Allah, or analogies comparing God with worldly individuals—within their lyrical content (Otterbeck, 2008). While some scholars argue that this represents creative innovation and a form of religious engagement, others view it as a misuse of sacred language that risks diminishing the sanctity of Islamic discourse.

This research is important for many reasons. First of all, it seeks to raise awareness among artists, content creators, and the public specifically the young youth about the potential risks involved in using sacred language in context like music (Ali, 2011). Secondly, it aims to offer the recommendations for maintaining the balance between artistic freedom and religious spirituality. This study also offers understanding of how Muslim ideology is being transformed or challenged in different ways by media discourse.

1.1. Significance of the Study

Language plays an important role in shaping and indicating the religious values, and tradition of any society. In Muslim communities, sacred language holds an important and deep spiritual significance, and it is considered as the core element of

religious identity. The present study is important to understand how sacred lyrics of Islam are being altered and used in several songs, potentially affecting the sanctity of religious utterances. The findings of this research will be helpful for the artists, students, and the critics who are interested in discourse analysis, media studies, and religious portrayal. It will also help to raise awareness among the content creators, new artists, and the younger generation about the future harm caused by the commodification of sacred texts. Moreover, this research also looks for building the critical thinking towards the ethical constraints of artistic utterance and the importance of maintaining the sanctity of religious language in media.

1.2. Research Questions

- How are the sacred lyrics being represented and re-contextualized in songs?
- What ideological consequences does the use of sacred lyrics in songs have on Muslims' belief system?
- To what extent does the use of sacred lyrics in songs contribute to the normalization of religious discourse in popular media and younger Muslim generation?
- How can the sanctity of religious discourse be preserved without undermining the artistic works?

1.3. Delimitation of the Study

The research pays attention only on the analysis of five selected song lyrics and does not include any other form of media such as films, advertisements, or any drama serials. Additionally, the focus of the study is limited to the linguistic and indirect use of sacred language in the lyrics, rather than focusing on the overall creativity of artists, musical model, or production aspects of the songs.

2. Literature Review

The intersection of music, religion, and ideology has been a subject of scholarly inquiry for so long, especially within Islamic contexts, where the use of sacred texts in popular media raises complex religious, cultural, and linguistic concerns. The Critical Discourse Analysis guides the researcher on how to analyze the intersection of language, power, and ideology in cultural texts like music. According to *Fairclough (1995)*, CDA examines how discourse structures reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies. Applying CDA to religious music allows researchers to uncover the hidden power dynamics involved when sacred lyrics are being used in musical discourse. Research by *van Dijk (2000)* emphasizes that discourse does not only reflects the ideology but also helps in shaping it. In the context of Muslim identity, the use of sacred lyrics in music may influence listeners' perception of religious morality, and cultural belonging and distort the sanctity of religion in them. A CDA approach can critically investigate how these lyrics construct or deconstruct the notions of divine authority, and religious identity within the Muslims.

Sacred lyrics, often derived from religious texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, or Duas, hold deep spiritual and cultural significance. Otterbeck (2008) discusses the increasing use of Islamic themes and symbols in nasheed (Islamic devotional music) and noting that some see this as a means of spiritual outreach, while others may

perceive it as a form of cultural commodification. Cook (2001) argues that sacred language in music often undergoes a transformation that may distort its spiritual essence, particularly when used in commercial or entertainment-driven contexts. In Muslim-majority societies, the debate over the permissibility of music, especially music incorporating sacred lyrics, is still ongoing. Scholars like Frishkopf (2009) and Bohlman (2005) have explored the ideological divides between different Islamic views, which often resist musical innovation, and more liberal or Sufi interpretations is that they embrace music as a spiritual practice. The use of sacred lyrics in mainstream music often invites criticism from conservative scholars who argue that such usage disturbs and distort the religious sanctity.

The use of sacred lyrics in songs has the potential to reshape religious ideology by changing the context in which sacred language is used. Studies by Roy (2004) and Abu-Lughod (2005) suggest that media representations of religion, including music and other media platforms, are deeply influential in the formation of contemporary Muslim identities. When sacred lyrics are presented in the entertainment - focused formats, they may shift from being the tools of worship to the tools of identity expression or entertainment. The impact of sacred lyrics in songs also vary across cultures and sects within Islam. In South Asia, for instance, *qawwalis and naats* have been embraced as the sacred content in musical form, whereas in Arab Salafi contexts, such practices are more controversial as they are being considered harmful for religious sanctity. Studies by Ali (2011) and Saeed (2007) highlights that how cultural norms and theological interpretations shape our attitudes toward sacred music. Thus, CDA must also account for regional, cultural, and sectarian dynamics when analyzing the ideological implications of use of sacred lyrics in music.

Within Islamic musical genres, nasheed and Sufi music provide vital case studies of recontextualized devotional content. *Nasheed* vocal music rooted in Islamic themes has evolved from strictly cappella to include instruments and global influences, reflecting both adaptation and controversy within Muslim community. *Sufi rock and Taqwacore (Islamic punk)* illustrate radical contemporary reimagining of devotional music, blending western genres with Islamic spiritual motifs showing how young musicians critique tradition while expressing faith. Regional variations matter in how sacred music is received. For instance, in South Asia, traditions such as naats and qawwali are broadly accepted as legitimate devotional expression, while more conservative *Salafi* contexts may view them as religiously problematic. These differences reflect complex theological and cultural determinants influencing audience perceptions. While previous studies have explored the role of music in cultural and religious expression, there remains a significant need of doing research specifically focusing on how sacred Islamic lyrics are used into popular music and the ideological implications of this practice on Muslim audiences and how they are distorting the real form of religious expressions. This research will focus on the misuse of sacred lyrics in songs and how these expressions are misguiding the young generation. It will also focus on religious boundaries for the artists to follow.

3. Research Methodology

This research employs a mixed-method approach, including both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a complete understanding of how sacred Islamic lyrics used in songs influence the Muslim ideology. The mixed-method approach allows for the combination of textual analysis and questionnaire data, providing a rich and multidimensional view of this problem. The framework used for this research is *Van Dijk's* Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. It emphasizes on the interplay between language, power, and ideology. Van Dijk's approach is particularly useful for understanding how language is used to reinforce, challenge, or manipulate belief systems and ideologies within social structures. This framework allows the study to critically examine the song lyrics that contain sacred Islamic language to interpret how these lyrics shape or distort religious ideology in the public sphere.

This research used two data collection sources. The first source is song lyrics which is the qualitative data. For this purpose, this research is going to use five selected songs that incorporate sacred Islamic terms, verses, and name of God and comparison of God with worldly individual. These songs were chosen based on their availability, and relevance to the topic. Each song was carefully analyzed using Van Dijk's CDA model to identify the patterns of lexical appropriation, ideological framing, and discourse manipulation. The second source of data collection is questionnaires which is the quantitative data. A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed among university students of different age and gender to gather their perceptions, responses and opinions regarding the use of sacred lyrics in music.

The questionnaire included closed-ended and Likert scale items to gather information about the audience attitudes and beliefs, providing a measurable dimension to complement the discourse analysis approach. As this research has used a mixed method approach, so the researcher has used the two techniques of sampling. First is the purposive sampling for collecting the samples of songs. The five songs were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on those that explicitly used sacred Islamic language and distorted the sanctity of Islamic ideology and have reached a wide audience. This method ensured that the songs which are analyzed were relevant to the research objectives and reflected actual trends in music production. The five songs used for research are

- bhar do jholi meri
- Aaj din chadheya
- Ibadat
- Pitah sa hy naam tera
- “tuj mai Rab dikhta hy

The second one is the convenience sampling for collecting the samples from participants. For the questionnaire, participants were selected through convenience sampling, targeting a diverse group of Muslim listeners, including students of different ages. The goal was to gather a wide range of perspectives regarding the impact of sacred lyrics used in music.

4. Data Analysis

The mixed-method approach is used in this research and it aimed to explore the impact of sacred Islamic lyrics being used in songs and how it affects the ideology of Muslims. The study reveals that sacred language when used in musical contexts, undergoes a complete change in meaning, often shifting from a spiritual framework to artistic purpose. This shift reflects a very wide ideological trend in which religious expressions are being adapted and at times being distorted for entertainment purposes. Through a critical discourse analysis of selected songs, the research uncovers the implicit and explicit patterns of lexical appropriation, emotional manipulation, and symbolic distortion. These patterns suggest a destruction of the sanctity associated with Islamic texts when used in non-religious settings like in music. The collected data supports these findings and showing that many Muslims view this trend as harmful to the religious sentiment and cultural identity.

In the following section, we will analyze the lyrics from selected songs that have used sacred elements, highlighting how their language, tone and context contribute to the distortion and reinterpretation of Islamic ideology.

The first song is “*Aaj din chadeya*”

Maanga jo mera hy jaata
kia tera hy Mai ne konsi
tuj sa jannat maang li
Kaisa khuda hy tu bas naam ka hy
tu Rabba Jo teri itni si bhi na chali

These lines demonstrate the confrontational tone towards God and challenging His Divinity and His powers. As in these lines, God is no longer revered, rather is subjected to human desires and their judgment. This song tries to hurt the sentiments of all lovers of God. Such representation can deeply affect Muslim audiences, as it distorts the core Islamic concept of divine wisdom and the concept of *Sabr and Tawakkul*. This analysis reflects the broader issue of the research that how the sacred language, once detached from its religious perspective can contribute to the impactful erosion of Muslim ideological values.

The next lyrics are taken from the the song “*Pita sa hy naam tera*”

Pitah se hai naam tera Pitah
pehchaan teri Jiye jis sahaare
pe tu
Pitah se who
saans mili Hai
pitah, rab tera
Ho Ishwar
Allah, Jitne bhi
Rab hain
Noor tera tujh
mein hi sab hai

This song uses deeply sacred vocabulary, directly comparing the love of father with divine entities. There is no doubt that father's love is incomparable. But in Islam, equating any person or anything in Islam is considered as *Shirk* or a major sin in Islam. But in this song, the earthly father figure is directly equated to the level of God, blending personal relationships with divine qualities. From the perspective of CDA, these lyrics signify the lexical and symbolic overlap that risks the religious boundaries. This not only diminishes the sanctity of the *Islamic concept of Tawhed (the oneness of God)*, but also normalizes the casual, artistic reinterpretation of core religious beliefs of all religions.

The next lyrics are taken from the song “*tuj mai Rab dikhta hy*”

tu jo muskayein, tu
jo sharmaye jaise
mera hai khuda
jhoomta
tu hi meri hain
barkat, tu hi meri
ebadat, aur kuch na
janobas itna hin jano
tujh mein rab dikhta
hain yaara mein kya
karo sajde sar jhukta
hain

This song presents a theme where the divine is metaphorically embodied in a romantic partner. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) lens, we can see that sacred terms such as “*Rab*,” “*Ibadat*,” and “*Sajda*,” which carry significant religious and spiritual weight in Islam—are recontextualized within romantic expression. In Islam, the acts like Sajda (prostration) and Ibadat are reserved only for Allah, but to relate these things with normal human being can be seen as blasphemous. The shift of religious language to the artistic framework can lead to diminishing the sanctity of Islam.

The next lyrics are taken from the song “*bhar do jholi meri*”

Jab talak tu bana de
na bigdi Dar se tere
na jaaye sawaali
Bhar do jholi meri
ya Muhammad Laut
kar main na jaonga
khali ...
Bhar do jholi ...
aaka ji Bhar do jholi
...hum sab ki
Bhar do jholi ...
nabi ji

Bhar do jholi meri
sarkar-e-medina
Laut kar main na
jaonga khaali

These lyrics also cause the misuse of Islamic context as it is strictly prohibited to ask from anyone except Almighty Allah. Only Allah is *Al-Razaq- the Provider, and Al Mujib-* (the one who responds to Dua). So, if a person asks from anyone else, then it enters into the category of shirk which is not forgiven. We cannot even ask from Muhammad (P.B.U.H). The song "*Bhar Do Jholi Meri Ya Muhammad*" portrays individual directly asking the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) for help by saying, "*Bhar do jholi meri*" , "*Laut kar main na jaonga khaali*" which is not permissible in any context.

The next lyrics are taken from the song "*Ibadat*"

ibadat muhabbat ki karte huay
duaaon mein rooh ki utarta hai dil tere zikr se kar ke
aksar wuzu
namazein muhabbat ki parhta hai dil ibadat karun mein
teri berukhi ki

This song blends the worldly romantic love with religious spirituality. By using sacred terms like *wuzu*, *namazein*, *ibadat* for the lover which is distorting the real spirit of Religion. These lyrics are effectively turning the acts of worship into the metaphor of love. Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this represents a clear instance of lexical appropriation, where sacred Islamic acts are aesthetically and emotionally reinterpreted for media performances.

The next lyrics have been taken from the song "*Tere liay*"

Akhiyan bichayi maine,
tere liye Duniya bhulayi
maine, tere liye Jannat
sajayi maine tere liye
Chod di khudai maine
tere liye Jannat sajayi
maine tere liye Chod di
khudai....oooo...

The lyrics of this song blend intense romantic devotion with sacred Islamic terminology, particularly in the 3rd and the 4th line. These expressions metaphorically equate human love with divine powers implying that the beloved's value is surpassing Paradise (*Jannat*) and even divinity (*Khudai*). From a theological perspective, such imagery is harmful and problematic because *Jannat* and *Khudai* are core religious concepts in Islam which are associated exclusively with God's authority and the believer's ultimate spiritual aspiration. The phrase "Chod di khudai" can be read as a symbolic-exaggeration in romantic poetry, but in Islamic discourse, it is being interpreted as an act of abandoning God or diminishing divine supremacy. In critical discourse terms, this usage represents a secular appropriation of religious language,

which is not only disrupting the sanctity of theological meanings but is also normalizing their casual use in non-spiritual contexts.

Oh, ab jaan lut jaaye, ye jahaan
chhut jaaye Sang pyaar rahe, main
rahoon, na rahoon Sajdaa, tera
sajdaa (karoon main tera sajdaa)
Din-rain karoon, na hi chain
Karoon
Sajdaa, tera sajdaa (karoon main
tera sajdaa) Lakh vaar karoon,
meri jaan karoon

The lyrics of “*Sajdaa*” directly drawn from sacred Islamic terminology, most notably in the repeated use of the word “*Sajdaa*” (prostration), which in Islam signifies the highest spiritual act of submission to God during prayer. In lines such as “*Sajdaa, tera sajdaa... lakh vaar karoon, meri jaan karoon*”, this act is redirecting entirely towards a human beloved. The relocation of *sajdaa* from the context of divine into a romantic one fundamentally shifts its theological meaning. From a critical discourse perspective, such lyrical inappropriation can be viewed as a misuse of sacred language, as it symbolically transfers acts of worship from the divine to the human realm, which is potentially eroding the clear theological separation between Creator and creation.

These lyrics are taken from song: “*Rab ka shukrana*”

Jazbo ka toh naya
bayaan hai Rab
Ka Shukrana
Naya rutba nayi
shaan hai Rab Ka
Shukrana
Tu hi ab mera
deen hai, imaan
hai Rab Ka
Shukrana
*Mera kalma hai
tu, Azaan hai tu
Rab Ka Shukrana*

The lyrics of “*Rab Ka Shukrana*” creating a theological and linguistic overlap that risks distorting religious concepts. The phrases like “*Rab Ka Shukrana*” (Thanks to God) are spiritual and deeply rooted in Islamic worship, while the surrounding lines, “*Tu hi ab mera deen hai, imaan hai*” and “*Mera kalma hai tu, Azaan hai tu*” are shifting these sacred identifiers from their divine reference to a mortal partner. *Deen* (faith), *Imaan* (belief), *Kalma* (profession of faith), and *Azaan* (call to prayer) are foundational pillars of Islamic theology, each tied exclusively to God and His worship but here this concept of worship is turning into the human relation. From a critical discourse perspective, such usage risks blurring doctrinal boundaries, particularly for Muslim audiences who may perceive it as reducing acts of divine

devotion into romantic hyperbole.

This section presents the **quantitative analysis** of the data collected through a questionnaire distributed among the Muslim participants to examine their perception of the use of sacred Islamic lyrics in songs. The research was being conducted between the ages of **18 to 35**. The education of majority of students was undergraduates, followed by graduates and Ph.D scholars. There is a balanced representation between male and female students. Most participants hailed from Muslim- majority countries.

- **Awareness of Sacred Content in Songs:** Approximately **90%** of respondents acknowledged that they are aware of the songs that are incorporating sacred Islamic content.
- **Appropriateness of Inclusion:** Around **85%** of respondents believed that it is inappropriate to include sacred Islamic content in songs.
- **Damage to Sanctity:** About **88%** agreed or strongly agreed that such songs that use sacred lyrics damage the sanctity of Islamic teachings.
- **Changing Youth Mindset:** Approximately **85%** of respondents felt that these songs using sacred lyrics are making young Muslims less sensitive for the sacred religious content.
- **Casual Sharing:** Nearly **80%** of the respondents had observed young individuals sharing or singing songs with sacred content without understanding that how blasphemous is it for the religion.
- **Repetition Leading to Desensitization:** Around **82%** of the respondents agreed that repetitive use of sacred words in casual music diminishes their spiritual importance specifically in the young generation.
- **Commercialization Effects:** Approximately **85%** of the respondents believed that commercializing Islamic content through music leads to the loss of its spiritual importance and desacralization in society.
- **Comparisons with Worldly Figures:** About **78%** of respondents had come across the songs in which artists equate Allah to worldly lovers, celebrities, or fictional heroes.
- **Impact of Comparisons:** Around **80%** of the respondents agreed that such comparisons weaken and distorts the uniqueness and sanctity of Allah's status in Islam.

So, this questionnaire reflects the strong disagreement of students about the use of sacred content in songs. They find it very disrespectful and blasphemous for the religion. The majority believes that it could lead to the desensitization about religion in younger generation. So, there is a high need to raise awareness in people about the misuse of sacred content for the purpose of entertainment.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of how sacred Islamic lyrics, when used in popular music, can impact Muslim beliefs and perceptions. By using the van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis along with a mixed-method approach, it examined five songs with sacred lyrics and gathered audience feedback through a questionnaire. The findings reveal a growing trend in the society where the sacred terms once reserved

for worshipping are now being used casually in entertainment, often deteriorating their original spiritual depth. This shift is not only normalizing the normal use of sacred language but also risks reshaping how Islamic values are understood in everyday life.

By bringing together the insights from critical discourse analysis and Muslim media studies, this research is offering a fresh perspective on how media can shape the religious thought and change their meaning. Ultimately, it calls for artists to respect the ethical and religious boundaries of Islam when referencing Allah or core Islamic beliefs, so that the faith remains honored even within creative spaces.

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