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The social neuroscience of persuasion approach to the religious intercultural communication: A conceptual evidence from Sidhwa's novel 'An American Brat'

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Abstract: The study highlights the importance and influence of religio-cultural right-wing persuasion in intercultural communication, especially concerning the connection between two national/conventional cultures exhibited in the novel under the pretext of Pakistani national culture and Parsee (minority or subculture). Both cultures have various distinctive features with their specific diverse nature. Therefore, the research delves into the curated message of cultural diversity (Lomia, 2017). It explains the insight of the situation into cultural and religio-cultural persuasion (with persuasion driven and diversified from the neuropersuasive communication model of Morin & Renvoisé (2018). The script understudy is Bapsi Sidhwa's "An American Brat", which represents cultural diversity in a precise form, as it holds for all the stimuli listed by Morin and Renvoisé (2018). The character communication in the script is a slice extract of a Parsee family that lives and oscillates between Pakistan and America. The persuasive elements are analysed using the conceptual model/framework adapted from Morin and Renvoisé, which interprets any communication in a social neuroscience context. The researchers observed various events where characters inherently responded to incidental occurring in a manner adapted from the socialisation of the mass-prevailing reactions.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication; Religio-Cultural Rightist Persuasion; Social Neuro-Persuasion; Persuasive Influence; Pakistani Culture; Pakistani Rightist Values and Norms

1. Introduction

The script understudy is Bapsi Sidhwa's "An American Brat", which represents cultural diversity in a precise form, as it holds for all the stimuli listed by Morin and Renvoisé (2018). The character communication in the script is a slice extract of a Parsee family that lives and oscillates between Pakistan and America. The study highlights the importance and influence of religious-cultural right-wing persuasion in intercultural communication, especially concerning the connection between two national/conventional cultures exhibited in the novel under the pretext of Pakistani national culture and Parsee (minority or subculture). Both cultures have various distinctive features with their specific diverse nature. Therefore, the research delves into the curated message of cultural diversity (see Lomia, 2017 for more details). It explains the insight of the situation into cultural and religio-cultural persuasion (with persuasion driven and diversified from the neuropersuasive communication model of Morin & Renvoisé, 2018).

The *'personal'* stimulus is a fundamental principle of any writing written in the context of any specific society. The author is inherent in creating a walk-through experience for the reader, catering to providing a personalised viewpoint. The sense of relatability developed at the receiver's hand is essential in this form of communication.

The 'contrastable' is an odd behaviour observed in many aspects of social life dealings. Women may not use non-stereotypical vocabulary within religio-cultural guidance/scenarios in their communication(s); in other words, women mostly follow the norms (specifically in Pakistan). Henceforth, individuals acquired persuasive influence (Romanova & Smirnova, 2019) from their native religio-cultural surroundings (see Boyer, 1994 for more details), which often control behaviours, cognitions, and attitudes (Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2010; Harkins et al., 2017) in interactions, statements, or communications incorporating beliefs and feelings

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(Harkins et al., 2017) with the involvement of (core rightist) thoughts/impacts. ‘Memorable’, ‘Tangible’,

‘Visual’ and ‘Emotional’ are all other debriefs to be explored while interpreting this extract.

The present research represents the conflicts amongst the cultures, specifically rightist Pakistani, rightist-Parsee, liberal-Parsee, and American – most evidently found in the text/data extracted from religio-cultural communications within the mentioned script. Therefore, the *stimuli that trigger* can involve interactions when conflicts/differences occur in ‘intercultural’ communication. It may happen primarily when individuals from distinctive cultural backgrounds and pertaining relative nurturing communicate attentively (Lomia, 2017). Therefore, explicitly focusing on the religio-cultural factors, the present research highlights the influence of right-wing religio-cultural persuasion within social communication(s). Along with individuals who rely on persuasion in their occupations (Cacioppo, Cacioppo, & Petty, 2018), writers (especially as intercultural representatives in the present case) also use persuasive strategies in communicative actions as a conscious attempt to market, promote, and criticise their native/conventional cultural values and norms. Consequently, they try to persuade others to adopt their beliefs or behavioural intentions through a shared social exchange (Falk et al., 2010).

In this stated background, all cultures influence each other; similarly experiencing two or more cultures, it is evident that Sidhwa[6] (1994) could represent communicative differences more effectively than any other writer who only has single intercultural communicative experiences (see Liu, Akhtar & Qureshi, 2020 for more details). For example, Bapsi Sidhwa explains the fact mentioned above in an interview with the *DAWN* as “when you change your geographical location, naturally, the new culture and geography influence your characters” (DAWN, 2013, para. 12). Therefore, the depiction of cultural issues and conflicts through the communications of the characters of the novel indicates how one is affected by their thinking approach while escaping society's limitations.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Persuasion & Religio-Cultural Values

Religious (Rightist emotional religio-cultural in the current scenario) communication (induced from Quranic clergy, which is Islamic Council in case of Pakistan) often influences other fields of social life or events of life (Tungjitcharoen & Berntsen, 2020), i.e., with the participation of political messages from clergy (considering it a credible communicator or source of communication) (McClendon, 2019), or with the usage of religious rhetoric by politicians (Knoll & Bolin, 2019). Pakistan is an Islamic republic where laws are brought and injucted as laid down in the Quran and Sunnah (see Const. of IRP (1973) Art. IX 227-231 for details). Although in many cases culture determines the relevant religion (Beyers, 2017; Ratten, Ramadani, Dana, & Gerguri-Rashiti, 2017), however, in Pakistan, religion reciprocally influences culture and ideologies. Therefore, rightist ideology(ies) (hypothetically deduced from conventional Islamic culture) influences variant cultures (see Ahmadi, Hussin, & Mohammad, 2019; Rahman, 2019), specifically in Islamic countries.

According to a diverse cultural context, social influence plays a vital role in ensuring the sustainability of one’s culture that influences communicative behaviors within or outside the group. For instance, every social species retains it, i.e., honeybees (e.g., Britton, Franks, Pratt, & Seeley, 2002), chimpanzees (e.g., Whiten & Van Schaik, 2007), rats (e.g., Galef & Whiskin, 2008), fish (e.g., Kendal, Coolen & Laland, 2004; Webster & Laland, 2012), and birds (e.g., Aplin et al., 2015), and not surprisingly, humans (Cacioppo et al., 2018). Humans have a unique type of social influence, persuasion, which they actively use at a *personal* or organizational level (eg, orator / writer / speaker, government, business, political party) to influence others’ attitudes, behaviours, or beliefs (Cacioppo et al., 2018) and vice versa (in case of cultural writers) using persuasive strategies (Saeed, Aslam, Khan, Khan, Atiq, & Bhatti, 2020; Iqbal, Aslam, Aslam, Ashraf, Kashif & Nasir, 2020).

Iqbal et al. (2020), Saeed et al. (2020) and Sibtain, Aslam, Zia-ur-Rehman & Qasim (2021) used persuasive strategies in a classical context, i.e., adapted from Aristotle’s model that contains Ethos, Logos, and Pathos to analyze political speeches in a sociopolitical context. However, in the present research, the researchers adapted the conceptual model of persuasion from Morin and Renvoisé (2018), naming it neuro-persuasion. The present research may assess/evaluate the text of the selected novel in a religio-cultural scenario concentrating on intercultural communication in the text penned in four (i.e., Rightist-Pakistani, Rightist-Parsee, Liberal-Parsee, and American) religio-cultural settings. The present research aims to highlight the ideas/arguments through which the writer may persuade the audience. For this purpose, the study uses the Morin and Renvoisé six-stimuli model (2018) as a tool to assess persuasive strategies that can be used to attract the audience towards right-wing Pakistani cultural values.

Every act of communication has a persuasive impact in a specific context in a variant situation(s). Therefore, the quality or quantity of persuasion, specifically neuro-persuasion, would predict and analyse how persuasion impacts the primal brain. Moreover, it would be explained and anticipated by measuring the quality of the messages. To understand behaviour in persuasive communication, Falk et al. (2010) accentuate many studies, which seem influential, mainly linked to the changes that exist in the activity of the brain in reactance to persuasive communication (see Chua et al., 2011; Cooper, Thompson, O'Donnell & Falk, 2015; Falk & Scholz, 2018; Riddle,

[6] Bapsi Sidhwa (بپسی سدھوا; born August 11 1938) is a Pakistani-American novelist of Gujrati-Parsi descent who writes in English and is resident in the United States.

Newman-Norlund, Baer, & Thrasher, 2016; Vezich, Katzman, Ames, Falk, & Lieberman, 2016 for more details). Similarly, in *this* process, Neuro-Map science may help us understand how neuro-persuasion works practically. Morin and Renvoisé (2018) identify six *subconscious* primal meta-biases, derivatised from 188 cognitive biases, *that benefit persuasive communication*. Therefore, theoretically and conceptually, these six stimuli (meta-biases; primal goals): Personal (to survive; protect from threats), Contrastable (to speed up; accelerate decisions), Tangible (to simplify; reduce cognitive effort), Memorable (to store less; remember limited information), Visual (to see; rely on the dominant sensory channel), Emotional (to sense; decision making) assist the present research in finding psychological links between detectable change and religio-cultural influences on individuals' minds. For instance, the primal brain often gets influenced and persuaded subconsciously by social and cultural values and norms and vice versa and can be evaluated in cultural communication(s). Subconsciously, these primal brain stimuli frame restrictions when individuals start to practice other cultures than their conventional/native cultures regarding their *personal* intended interests/benefits. Current research has been conducted specifically to seek influences of interconnected right-wing values, especially in the conventional cultural values of individuals. These religio-cultural meta-biases often seem to arise in the intercultural communication(s) of the characters/individuals of the focused novel.

Similarly, rightist norms and values often influence cultural values, precisely the thoughts of individuals during intercultural communication (Anderson, Drakopoulou-Dodd, & Scott, 2000; Croucher, Zeng, Rahmani, & Sommier, 2017). In the present case, the preestablished/acquired cultural ideologies of the characters/individuals (mostly belonging to the Parsee conventional culture) and their *personal stimulus* seem to be influenced and persuaded by the directive rightist-Pakistani cultural shared thoughts. Individuals, belonging to a majority or a minority, intuitively employ these shared thoughts in their communication(s) to make their ideas *tangible* or *contrastive*, synchronising their *personal* beliefs in the process of intercultural communication(s). For example, during *representations* (communications) in local or cross-cultural events, in Pakistani or American settings, the characters of the novel seem influenced by rightist (collective) religio-cultural beliefs, thoughts and values. Their intuitive *personal stimulus* (relevant to their personal opinions and beliefs) appears to be affected by their subconsciously acquired (Parsee) or learned/acquired rightist Pakistani and cultural intuitive values (see Boyer, 1994; Harris & Koenig, 2006; Smith, 2003 to read how individuals acquire/learn rightist/religious values) both in Pakistani and American religio-cultural contexts, respectively. For example, the protagonist (Feroza) of the novel appears to be influenced by rightist-Pakistani religio-cultural (in both Pakistani and American) settings/events. Even though the new culture (when she moves to America) persuades her, she eventually often seeks help from rightist (Pakistani/Parsee) values for self-survival at specific events, deducing solutions incorporating the *personal stimulus*. Thus, there may be a chance of conflicting *personal* benefits. However, the people of the society seem to portray safety and positivity in their judgment (Panksepp, 1998; Morin & Renvoisé, 2018).

2.2. Communication and Persuasion

Synchronising responses between communicators and receivers promotes successful communication and social influence (Falk & Scholz, 2018). For example, Falk and Scholz (2018) argument, relevant to communicators and receivers, would help clarify the concept of social neuropersuasion incorporating Morin and Renvoisé (2018) six-stimuli conceptual model. The research adapts and modifies the example taken from (Falk & Scholz, 2018) that reveals the relation of communication to social neuroscience. The present researchers reinstate the same instance of Emily to show its link with this study. In the example given by Falk and Scholz (2018), when Emily's friend Christine offers her to take the stairs, in response, Emily decides to follow her friend's suggestion to take the stairs. After that, she seems to follow two types of thought processes subconsciously. Firstly, she decides to go stairs to be persuaded by the social influence (of friendship) following her friends' routine; secondly, she makes her decisions more consistent and stimulating by her primal brain (see Falk & Scholz, 2018 for more details). According to the previous argument, two types of communicative processes would occur: the social-relevance communicative process and the self-relevance communicative process (ibid.). Therefore, we will build a conceptual argument on how the six-stimuli model works during both previously mentioned communicative processes. For example, in Emily's decision to take the stairs, social relevance would be the value of persuasion and social influence, which she receives as shared information from her friend Christine. However, her self-relevance appears to be activated in the second immediate step, activating the primal brain stimuli process (Semin & Cacioppo, 2008). In this case, Emily and her brain become communicators and receivers simultaneously or vice versa. In retrospective convergence of the thought, we carry the idea to interpret it in a stimuli neuro-persuasive model. The *Contrastive stimulus* reflects two extremes: high and low, slow and fast, goodness and badness, and quality-wise differences (stereotypicality vs non-stereotypicality of the intercultural values and norms). In this context, the *contrastive stimulus* of the individuals is activated against pre-established experiences whenever new things/experiences appear. The primal brain subconsciously makes contrasts prominently, for better and beneficial selection, recalling features of both experiences (past/present), respectively. This process works with convincing and prominent comparable/notable features to highlight comparisons; if the said features are there, it works accordingly and successfully (Beard, 2013). The writer also promptly brings constructive evidence of contrastive objects (El-Dali, 2019), i.e., contrastive cultural ideologies or values in the present case, from the said four cultures (i.e., Rightist-Pakistani, Rightist-Parsee, Liberal-Parsee, and American) at numerous intercultural communication/performances events. Ultimately and effectively, the subconscious *personal stimulus* of individuals

is affected / influenced by the *contrastive stimulus by* making quick selections or picking (the right or best) options without extra time and energy.

The tangible stimulus validates/decides the friendly and familiar decisions utilising reliable and credible past experiences through constant scanning and matching. A simple example of this trigger is a sense of touch, i.e., the primal brain precepts the tangibility of an element in a response by touching the element. Similarly, the primal brain recognises/matches the immutable natural/native cultural values and norms between native/traditional and new/modern cultures in self-assessment. Similarly, individuals who migrate from one culture to another can unconsciously recognise tangible and immutable concepts and values that are familiar and friendly, according to their original culture.

The visual stimulus has its prominence through which the writer draws picturesque images of the events that influence the audience to envision their minds, i.e., in the present case, relevant to cultural values and norms. Therefore, the overall picture is emotionally presented to get the primal attraction of the audience (see Morin & Renvoisé, 2018, p. 77-110 for details). Similarly, memorable and emotional stimuli work uniquely. The *memorable* stimulus clarifies the situation in any event by remembering the personal stimulus to better decide. While *emotional* stimulus forces decision-makers to choose whatever, the receivers get tempted by visual and auditory deep touch. Hence, the term neuropersuasion has been adopted because of the direct derivation of the stimulable elements connected to the human brain. These six elements under discussion have been proven to be an immediate stimulus for activating the primal human brain.

3. Methodology

Questions may be raised about how a novel would be analysed from the perspective of intercultural communication, as a novel is often written under the fictional genre. It can be answered that the selected novel may fall under the autobiographical paradigm. For example, 'Sidhwa (the writer of the novel) shows the autobiographical reflection on Feroza's character as she (Sidhwa, 1994) had undergone the experiences of émigrés, though not as a teenager but in her late 20s' (Nawaz, 2019). Therefore, the writer often seems to exploit the past events of her life directly, i.e., in Ice Candy Man (novel), she gets engaged in her childhood through the character Lenny (Jadeja, 2015). In The Crow Eaters (novel), she discussed her Parsee community in detail (Husain, 2019). Similarly, in An American Brat, she discussed her life experiences in Pakistan and America (Nawaz, 2019).

The present research highlights the socio- and religio-cultural elements represented through narrative communication in the novel containing semi-autobiographical events in the context of four (i.e., Rightist-Pakistani, Rightist-Parsee, Liberal-Parsee, and American). Therefore, using the purposive sampling technique, the researchers collected the data, identifying the relevancy of the sample data to interpret its communicative meaning and the association with rightist religio-cultural values. Qualitative research focuses on the soul of the study to make sense of the association between phenomena and meanings in a cultural context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Furthermore, for cultural contrasts and comparisons, the present research adapts the content analysis method to stay ‘true’ to the text, ensuring trustworthiness (Bengtsson, 2016). The (textual) content of an autobiographical novel was analyzed using the existing theoretical framework of the six-stimuli model through directed qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The relationships and differences among the four religio-cultural related (personal) narrative communication (of the novel) were identified at the initial coding themes. Specifically, the researchers identified and categorised data mainly related to rightist Pakistani persuasive appeals incorporating the other three cultures said after reading the transcript of the novel and highlighting all the text that, on first impression, appears to represent the influence of rightist persuasion over cultural persuasion. Finally, all the highlighted textual quotes (the predetermined codes) were utilised in the analysis (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005 for more details). The content analysis aimed to identify the four religio-cultural persuasive appeals in variant narrative communicative acts focusing on meaning according to culturally oriented core dimensions. For example, the rightist-Pakistani/Parsee culture may keep collectivist appeals (see Ali, Khurshid, Shahzad, Hussain & Bakar, 2018; Hofstede, 2011 for more details), and American culture may focus on individualistic appeals (see Pacheco Baldó, 2020 for more details). The novel 'American Brat' was chosen because it possesses various persuasive narrative communicative acts. The writer builds and communicates her relationships, cultures, and identities (Kellas, 2008) living in four of the cultures mentioned. There were four target characters from the novel. However, the main focus of the investigation was on the role of the protagonist (Feroza) as a prominent character, as it represented the author’s relationships with other characters and her varied cultural identities.

3.1. Sampling Technique

The researchers collected data employing the purposive sampling technique, that is, the most relevant data (text) to rightist persuasion was selected for analysis and interpretation. For this purpose, the researcher read the full text of the novel, and where it felt that the data were relevant to rightist Pakistani culture was separated. The most essential and purposive data (textual quotations) were quoted at the final stage.

4. Data Analysis

A Pakistani-American writer, Bapsi Sidhwa(the selected novel writer) is a well-known novelist. Through her communications, she is mainly recognised as the preacher and presenter of culture(s) in her specific ideologically

framed works. Whereas in communicative writings, cultural reflection concerns the writers often represent communicative acts/events as communicators focusing on one-way communication. If any writer does not feel free to communicate critically about his/her rightist cultural values due to some limitations, he/she communicates through the communication of the characters. Whenever a person migrates to another cultural setting, the new cultural background often persuades him/her towards its distinguished charm. Therefore, a writer describes this type of culture-focused persuasion through his/her typical communicative writings.

Consequently, Sidhwa (1994) finds the autobiographical reflection in Feroza (the protagonist of the selected novel) as she experiences the events represented through communicative acts in the novel chosen (Nawaz, 2019). Hence, Sidhwa's novel An American Brat represents persuasive intercultural religio-cultural communication. From an intercultural communication point of view, the novel's communicative acts/events reflect the religiocultural differences between four (that is, Rightist-Pakistani, Rightist-Parsee, Liberal-Parsee and American) communities. For instance, the protagonist Feroza and her whole family belong to the Parsee conventional religio-cultural minority (declared by the state of Pakistan) yet flourished under the shade of conventional rightist-Pakistani culture.

If we observe closely the communication acts between Feroza (protagonist) and Zareen (protagonist's mother), Feroza seems impressed and subconsciously becomes persuaded by the social relevance of the right-wing Pakistani society. Consequently, Feroza's self-relevance is influenced by the social relevance of (the majority) rightist-Pakistan's social relevance of the right-wing Pakistani society. Therefore, Zareen (her mother) changes her daughter's social relevance, sending her to America to eliminate rightist conservatism[7]. The same situation persists throughout the novel; for example, Feroza criticizes her mother's dress (Zareen) when she goes to school. Feroza dislikes her mother's sleeveless shirt, as it is not allowed in the cultural and social norms of the right-wing Pakistani society. Due to this criticism raised by Feroza, Zareen feels insulted and seems confused at that time; consequently, she decides to send her daughter abroad. Here, Sidhwa's (1994) strong technique urges the reader communicatively to think and reconsider a lot of socio- and religio-cultural values. Through the dialogues of the characters, he seems to be trying to influence the personal stimulus of the observers. Although Feroza and her family belong to Parsee culture, she persuasively adapts conventional rightist-Pakistani cultural dress due to subconscious rightist influence over other minorities/subcultures of Pakistan.

4.1. Cultural influence of the rightist Pakistani on the liberal / parse culture

From the beginning of the novel, the personal stimulus of the characters may seem subconsciously influenced by the contrastive and tangible stimulus induced by norms, values, and the impact of the rightist ideologies, as described in a dialogue.

'...religion influenced every aspect of day-to-day living' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 11).

The writer represents conservatism and optimism in parallel and highlights the influence of rightists on cultural and social values within two Pakistani intercultural values, Parsee and Pakistani. For example, Feroza (protagonist) substantiates the cultural and social values of rightist Pakistani in communicative acts, especially in a dressing context. At the beginning of the novel, communication between Zareen and Cyrus informs the receiver that they seem worried about their daughter. She follows the rightist-Pakistani ideologies, as Zareen says (to her husband),

'She is getting more and more backward every day' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 9).

During their conservation, the word 'backward' used by Zareen reflects her confused mentality and thoughts about the rightist Pakistani culture that seems to be low compared to her own culture (Liberal-Parsee). She considers her Liberal-Parsee culture advanced, civilised, and modern. Therefore, from their point of view, rightist Pakistani culture, especially rightist-centered social norms, hinders their identity as the Liberal-Parsee community.

In addition, they consider their culture and identity endangered if they follow the right-wing Pakistani national culture. On the other hand, Feroza herself persistently conforms to her parents' skepticism, saying,

'Mummy, please do not come to school dressed like that (sleeveless shirts)' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 10).

Through this dialogue, the writer of the novel seems successful in communicating the social validity of the conventional rightist-Pakistani cultural dressing through subconsciousness and tangible stimulus of the character. The persuasive effect of the prevalence of acquired rightist norms urges Feroza to follow them, and she follows norms with the help of her subconsciousness. The words uttered by Feroza evoke Zareen's personal stimulus because she could never expect such an antiliberal Parsee reaction from her daughter. The writer has highlighted the emotional scenes in the mutual communicative acts between mother and daughter through emotional stimulus.

Similarly, this is the personal stimulus that, on the one hand, urges Feroza to maintain right-wing Pakistani traditions. On the other hand, Zareen (mother of Feroza) shows her longings to protect her cultural (Liberal-Parsee) ideology, which seems to be affected through her personal. Therefore, she tries to convince her daughter (Feroza) to become conscious and aware of the influence of the rightist Pakistani culture on theirs (Liberal-Parsee).

[7] the tendency to resist tremendous or sudden change (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries)

Therefore, she considers her daughter's attitude rude and raises conservatism despite knowing that Pakistan's culture is based on right-wing values. She (Zareen) feels that rightist mullahs (clergy) are responsible for the pessimism of her daughter 'Feroza' as she blames Zia[8] for promoting *mullahism* (cleric). Therefore, she tries to make her daughter realize his negative response (influences her personal stimulus, which is diverted to conventional Islamic Pakistani culture) by rebuking 'mullahs' when he says:

"Girls must not play hockey or sing or dance! If everything corrupts their pious little minds so easily, then mullahs should wear burqas and stay within the four walls of their houses" (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 10).

Wearing a burqa (wearing a veil/scarf) in Pakistan is an essential part of conventional Islamic culture, and most right-wing Pakistani women appear to be wearing the veil. However, another group(s) living in Pakistan do not wear a veil because it does not suit their culture or they want to adopt it. Thus, the writer has differentiated two interwoven multicultural thoughts through contrastable stimuli. Tangibly, cultures (i.e., rightist Pakistani and liberal Parisian) struggle to maintain their conventional values, worth, and identity. With her personal (stimulus) thoughts, on the one hand, Zareen seems to be struggling to go against rightist-Pakistani culture due to its strong influence, specifically on her daughter; even she becomes displeased with her husband, who little bit abides by the rightist-Pakistani and rightist-Parsee religio-cultural norms and values. Her aggressiveness against *mullahism* shows her grievances when she says (to her husband):

"More than can be said for this mullah (her husband) lying on my bed. Get out of my bed, you mullah! (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 13). "

On the other hand, she also wants to protect her own (liberal-Parsee) culture. She contrasts her liberal-Parsee culture, considering it the culture of freedom and liberalism while showing her hatred against the rightist Pakistani culture, according to her, which can create limitations and bans against any culture that intends to bring advancements and progression, that is, as seen in the act of Zareen wearing a (sleeveless) dress. Contrastive and tangible stimuli play a remarkable role in their (Zareen) mind when they feel safe in their Liberal-Parsee culture, not in their conventional rightist-Pakistani culture. Similarly, the contrastive tool seems a powerful element when making important decisions, as Zareen appears to be successfully converting her daughter's mind while sending her abroad. In her mission of sending her daughter to America, she tries to convince her mother (Khutlibai, Ferroza's grandmother) to favor the idea because she believes that rightist ideologies influence women's behavior. She argues with her mother by saying:

'... Feroza should go… you have no idea how difficult Feroza has been of late. All this talk about Islam and how women should dress and how women should behave is turning her quite strange. ' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 30).

The ideology intentionally expressed by Zareen indicates the contrastive element that seems to help her differentiate the cultures, rightist Pakistani and liberal Pakistani. For instance, Pakistani national culture follows conventional Islamic values (which never allow a woman to wear a sleeveless sari blouse), and rightist-Parsee culture also follows the traditional Persian Zoroastrian values (which also never allow a woman to wear a sleeveless dress). [The author (Bapsi Sidhwa) in another novel named 'The Crow Eaters' also elaborated on these Parsee cultural values. However, paradoxically, the writer and her characters seem confused, representing this novel's conventional rightist-Parsee religio-cultural norms. For example, during communication, Zareen's personal ideologies (the protagonist's mother) do not match the rightist-Parsee cultural ideologies. It seems that the writer consciously tries, through this dress-wearing event, to satisfy her contrastive stimulus (apparently) between two said cultures.

Nevertheless, historically and religio-culturally, in the communicative act relevant to dress, the sleeveless sari-blouse does not represent the traditional rightist-Parsee cultural dressing norms. Therefore, the dress appears to represent Zareen's *personal* stimulus (from the point of view of the writer) and is a politically motivated ideology against the politically enforced conventional Islamic ideologies of General Zia and the law of that time. Therefore, it can be argued that these cross-cultural psychological communicative acts sometimes get influenced by political situations, but do not represent the original cultural values of the nativist. For example, on the other hand, the liberal Parsee family seems attracted to the politically motivated ideology of Bhutto (a political leader and former Prime Minister of Pakistan). He represented himself as a liberal leader who did not enforce rightist Pakistani or conventional Islamic norms and values like General Zia; that is why Bhutto's ideologies often appear in the communicative acts of liberal groups like Liberal-Parsee. So, it supports the idea that political communication re/constructs the ideologies and the same communication style and language dexterity of Bhutto that made him famous in the masses during his political struggles, and this effect appears in the minds of the community whether it exists in the form of majority or minority.

4.2. Rightist-Pakistani / Parsee Religious-Cultural influence over Liberal-American culture

When she (Feroza) moved to America (Huston), her acquired rightist Pakistani personal or contrastive stimuli could not, first, allow her to join the gaiety of liberal-American cultural values subconsciously, because

[8] **Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq** (August 12, 1924 – August 17, 1988) was a Four-star Military General who became the sixth President of Pakistan in 1977.

'Feroza had no experience socialising with boys; there is no such thing as dating in Pakistan' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 162).

'An American Brat' depicts the culture of American society, both suitable and unsuitable after Pakistan's cultural background. In the sense of suitability, liberal America seems a 'paradise' for the liberals who want to lead their lives without any cultural ban or restriction. Due to this, she took a long time to adjust to the American culture as,

'It was very painful for her... how to respond or behave' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 162).

Eventually, forcibly or subconsciously, her tangible stimulus pushed her to accept the new cultural situations or, that is,

'After suffering the agony a few times… it occurred to her that they liked and accepted her... and graduated to two glasses of wine... began to admire Jo's spontaneity… (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 162-163). Although she finds various *tangible* opportunities, that is, '... two glasses of wine.' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 163), "She took a few puffs from a cigarette..." (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 164).

Along with these changes, her rightist Pakistani religio-cultural values and norms often trigger her *conventional personal* and *contrastive* stimuli,

i.e., '... said the *Hormazd Khoda-ay* prayer... to beg divine forgiveness... with her unclean mouth.' (Sidhwa, 1994, pp. 164-165).

Hence, after performing against her native rightist or religio-cultural norms and values, she often regrets her mistakes in her loneliness. Her acquired *personal* stimulus relevant to her conventional ideologies forces her to apologise for indulging in American cultural luxuries, bringing the *tangible* stimulus through a *contrastive* stimulus.

In both cases, whether living in Pakistan or America, the rightist-Pakistani ideologies, values, and norms influence the other cultural ideologies (subcultural or adapted American) of the characters. Therefore, it seems that their acquired intuitive *contrastive* and *tangible* stimuli mainly influence their *personal* stimulus. Similarly, subconsciously, adopted from religiocultural values, the characters of the novel seem to be influenced and persuaded towards the rightist culture of Pakistan in their daily conversations and communicative acts. Similarly, Zareen also memorises her relations and touches on rightist Pakistani socio-religious culture when she says,

'recalled that she had not visited *Data Gunj Baksh*'s shrine… begged the Muslim saint's forgiveness… Then without thinking… she switched to her faith… it is time we went to Data Sahib' (Sidhwa, 1994, pp. 18-19).'

Consequently, the author's acquired *personal* stimulus also seeks to force her to induce the right-wing Pakistani values and norms in her variant communicative acts, that is,

'Allah is merciful' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 21), '... begged the Muslim saint for forgiveness' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 19), '...the Muslim sabbath... Muslim friends...' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 42), 'The maulvi made...' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 45),... 'Allllll-ah or Hai Allah' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 48).

Subconsciously, the writer's *contrastive* and *tangible* stimuli influence her *personal* stimulus. However, she, subconsciously, throughout the novel, criticises the rightist Pakistani values, even though they are not her conventional Parsee values, i.e.,

'...the mullahs should wear burqas and stay within the four walls of their houses' (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 10).

It is a fact that the rightist ideologies are integrated into every aspect of life in Pakistan, that is, social and religio-cultural practices or events of life. So, it can be said that rightist ideologies play a pivotal role, triggering contrastive and tangible stimuli in any intercultural communication.

Analyzing the text, there are some significant findings that support the theoretical framework and operational definitions as follows:

- The personal stimulus of the characters may be unconsciously influenced by the contrastive and tangible stimuli caused by the fundamental norms and values of American, Pakistani, and Parsee cultures, as well as the influence of rightist ideologies.

- The writer effectively seemed to convey the social significance of traditional rightist Pakistani cultural attire through the contrastive and tangible stimuli experienced by the character(s) at a subconscious level.

Emotional situations and dialogues between characters, particularly between a mother and daughter, were observed to evoke an emotional stimulus.

Memorable and visual stimuli are also evident in the recollection of subconscious events through the characters' dialogues.

5. Discussion

The present research data interpret the intercultural persuasive communication focusing on the values and norms of four religio-cultural societies – Rightist-Pakistani, Rightist-Parsee, Liberal-Parsee, and American. According to the best knowledge of the researchers (through extensive reading of variant postcolonial Pakistani English novels), the rightist Pakistani religio-cultural persuasion plays a pivotal role in communicative acts of most of the postcolonial writings characterised through every aspect of life (read Cracking India (Sidhwa, 1991); The Reluctant Fundamentalist (Hamid, 2007); A Case of Exploding Mangoes (Hanif, 2008); Burnt Shadows (Shamsie, 2009). The analysis suggests that the right-wing Pakistani culture influences the other minority cultures in the same region (state). For instance, in the intercultural communicative acts of the novel, individuals from the liberal-Parsee culture subconsciously adapt various norms and values from the dominant (rightist-Pakistani) culture because of its significant, powerful, and influential persuasive impact. The domination of significant culture brings about neuro-persuasion that always looks effective and impressive, influencing primal brain stimuli subconsciously. The characters under study possess the same traits in which neuro-persuasive elements play a vital role in the communication(s) described above in the analysis. Therefore, it is seen that the writer, through neuropersuasive techniques (stimuli), highlights the trends in the minds of the characters belonging to four cultures. Despite not even a single rightist Muslim character in the story participating actively(physically) in any intercultural communication(s) of the novel, none of the other characters seems to be going beyond the influence of the rightist Muslim thoughts related to rightist Pakistani culture in his/her daily routine life communication(s). For example, Zareen, although she seems against the rightist culture while living in Pakistan, in the end, she finds herself and her daughter's future secured only within the cultural boundary of the rightist Pakistan, which makes her realise her mistake (considering the pessimistic nature of the rightist culture) she was going to commit. When observing the liberal American culture and its futuristic impacts that could influence her daughter's future, she ultimately reconsiders her rightist ideology to avoid its effects.

Consequently, the change of the behaviours of the notable characters in the novel often executes the appropriate behaviours (Falk et al., 2010), incorporating the rightist-Pakistani social norms. Similarly, in various significant communications of novel, personal, volatile, or tangible stimuli (Morin & Renvoisé, 2018) subconsciously integrate, mold, and promote the rightist-Pakistani cultural values too much extent. For example, characters seem to justify their thoughts by encoding information from rightist cultural tangibility and contrastable points of view incorporating with their personal (self-concepts), e.g., utilising the specific rightist-Islamic jargon such as "Allll-ah or Hai Allah!" (p. 48), in their social and cultural communication(s). Even through emotional stimulus, the writer has depicted the positive impacts of rightist-Pakistani culture, especially when Feroza moves to America and meets her uncle. The latter also tries to keep her under the conventional Pakistani-Parsee culture, which is very close to rightist-Pakistani culture. Therefore, he does not allow her to marry David (Jewish) because of the difference of conventional rightist ideologies and cultural backgrounds. Eventually, while the characters of the novel (except David) belong to Pakistan and their national culture would be rightist Pakistani culture, apparently this conventional (Islamic) culture influences (Romanova & Smirnova, 2019) persuasively and controls their behaviours, cognitions or attitudes (Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2010; Harkins et al., 2017) in their actions, (intracultural/intercultural) communication(s) and comments (Harkins et al., 2017) involving their beliefs and feelings. Accordingly, based on the findings, it would be argued that the writer of the present novel also uses persuasive techniques to promote conventional and intercultural norms and values.

6. Conclusions

Persuasion ultimately achieves its objectives, as its vital role is depicted in the novel understudy from the perspective of intercultural communication. Ultimately, every individual has to return to his/her conventional, cultural, and social cognitive identity, which is rooted subconsciously in his/her primal brain. Cognitive changes in stimuli often would not change or become easily influenced by adolescents at conceptual, theoretical, or biological levels. The present research employs the neuro-persuasion framework to highlight the persuasive strategies employed by the writer. The present research findings suggest that right-wing persuasion plays a significant role in right-wing Pakistani culture and hypothetically makes it Islamic culture. In intercultural communication(s), the rightist Pakistani culture persuades its followers in a specific context of conventional (Islamic) practices, strongly impacting Pakistan's other minority cultural groups. For example, most people are trained in their personal stimulus by seeking help from the tangible and contrastable stimuli of the rightist-Pakistani culture, which leads them throughout their lives in every other culture in Pakistan or wherever they live. In the present case, the impacts of social neuropersuasion in the intercultural communication of the writer have been described with the help of character communication using these persuasive strategies, which the writer utilises to attract / intimidate the audience in a typical way. For instance, the central/major character, Feroza, gets attracted to the American culture, but she mostly remains trapped in the conflicts of her conscience. Her mother, Zareen, also wants to eliminate the limitations and bans of rightist-Pakistani or conventional Parsee cultures, but in the end, she retreats to her conventional cultures.

Similarly, Manek looks against rightist Pakistani culture while living in America, but returns to get married in Pakistan because he considers his conventional culture safer than that of America. Even Feroza's father and her maternal grandmother are against American culture. All this happens due to rightist-Pakistani cultural dominance's persuasive and motivational power.

Similarly, social and moral values show their impressiveness and provide inspiration for the characters of the novel. That is why they return to their real identity, being fully persuaded by religio-cultural power. Hence, it can be concluded that neuropersuasion and persuasive strategies emerge as powerful and influential tools to inspire and motivate anyone subconsciously.

7. Limitations and implications

The results support the existing theoretical frameworks of social influence and persuasion in intercultural communication. Specifically, the findings might be different and provide new insight into the existing theoretical frameworks of social neuro-persuasion, built on the neuro-persuasive theoretical proposal of Morin and Renvoisé (2018).

The generalizability of the results is limited as it is only interpreted on the theoretical assumptions of the already existing theoretical frameworks. Subsequently, the trustworthiness of the findings is maintained, supporting the researcher's arguments with textual quotations from the original text of the novel.

Therefore, more research is needed to establish any practical implications. The present research was only delimited to a qualitative analysis of the text of a novel from the perspective of intercultural neuro-persuasive strategies, and the results and findings are purely based on the theoretically established conceptual framework. However, the theoretical framework of neuro-persuasion needs to be verified. Its impacts would be quantitively clarified involving a real-time audience having experiences of two or more cultures related explicitly to subconscious changes in brain activity in reactance to persuasive communication (see Chua et al., 2011; Cooper et al., 2015; Falk & Scholz, 2018; Riddle et al., 2016; Vezich et al., 2016 for more details).

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