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**A Critical Discourse and Corpus-Assisted Analysis of the Patriotic Song
“Aye Raah-e-Haq Ke Shaheedo” (Original by Naseem Begum)**

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Abstract

This study presents a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the iconic Urdu patriotic song Aye Raah-e-Haq Ke Shaheedo, originally sung by Naseem Begum. The song occupies a central position in Pakistan’s cultural memory and is frequently performed during national commemorations of martyrs. Drawing on Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, van Dijk’s socio-cognitive framework, multimodal discourse theory, and a small-scale corpus-assisted approach, the study examines how linguistic, ideological, and musical resources construct martyrdom, sacrifice, and national identity. Corpus tools are employed to identify dominant lexical patterns and semantic fields supporting ideological meanings. The findings demonstrate that martyrdom is framed as sacred, morally elevated, and foundational to national unity, while multimodal features intensify emotional engagement. The analysis also acknowledges the possibility of alternative and resistant interpretations, highlighting the negotiable nature of patriotic discourse.

Keywords: CDA, corpus-assisted discourse analysis, nationalism, martyrdom, multimodality, Urdu patriotic songs.

1. Introduction

Patriotic songs play a significant role in shaping national identity, collective memory, and emotional affiliation with the state. In Pakistan, such songs are frequently broadcast during national days, military commemorations, and memorial ceremonies, functioning as powerful cultural texts that reinforce dominant narratives of sacrifice

and heroism. Among these, *Aye Raah-e-Haq Ke Shaheedo* holds a distinctive emotional and ideological status as a tribute to martyrs.

Rather than operating merely as artistic or cultural artifacts, patriotic songs function as discursive formations through which ideological meanings are produced, circulated, and naturalized. Language, music, and performance jointly construct particular understandings of sacrifice, duty, and national belonging. This study approaches the song as a site where discourse and ideology intersect, shaping public perception and social cognition.

Despite extensive research on nationalist discourse in political speeches and media texts, Urdu patriotic songs especially through a corpus-assisted and multimodal CDA lens—remain underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining how linguistic patterns and musical features jointly construct martyrdom and national identity.

2. Research Aims and Questions

2.1 Research Aims

This study aims to:

- Examine how martyrdom and sacrifice are linguistically and symbolically constructed
- Identify ideological meanings embedded in the song
- Analyze how musical and multimodal features intensify discourse

2.2 Research Questions

- **RQ1:** How does the song linguistically construct martyrdom, sacrifice, and national identity?
- **RQ2:** What discursive strategies shape emotional and ideological responses?

3. Literature Review

Scholars have long emphasized the role of patriotic discourse in constructing national identity and collective memory. Anderson (1991) conceptualized nations as imagined communities sustained through shared narratives and symbolic practices, while Halbwachs (1992) highlighted the role of cultural texts in maintaining collective memory. Patriotic songs function within this framework as ritualized forms of remembrance that repeatedly reinforce ideological meanings.

In South Asian contexts, Urdu patriotic songs frequently employ religious symbolism, elegiac traditions, and emotional intensity to legitimize national narratives (Shackle, 2015). Such songs merge Islamic moral discourse with nationalism, framing sacrifice as both spiritual devotion and civic duty. Recent scholarship has further argued that patriotic music plays a central role in affective nationalism, where emotional response precedes political reasoning.

Critical Discourse Analysis has been extensively applied to nationalist discourse, war narratives, and political communication (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2009). However, comparatively little attention has been given to musical texts, particularly Urdu patriotic songs, from a multimodal and corpus-assisted CDA perspective. Recent methodological developments advocate combining CDA with corpus linguistics to enhance empirical rigor and transparency. This study aligns with this approach by integrating corpus evidence with qualitative interpretation.

4. Theoretical Framework

This research draws upon three complementary theoretical perspectives.

4.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

Fairclough's model enables analysis at three interconnected levels:

- **Text:** vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, metaphor
- **Discursive practice:** production, circulation, and consumption
- **Social practice:** ideological and socio-political context

4.2 Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach

Van Dijk's framework focuses on how discourse shapes mental models, ideologies, and group identities, particularly through the construction of collective "us" identities and moral legitimacy.

4.3 Multimodal Discourse Theory

Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), this study treats music and vocal performance as semiotic resources. Meaning is analyzed through voice quality, tempo, rhythm, melody, and pauses, recognizing music as a form of affective discourse.

5. Data and Methodology

5.1 Data Selection

The primary data consist of the lyrics of *Aye Raah-e-Haq Ke Shaheedo*. To comply with copyright restrictions, lyrical references are paraphrased rather than reproduced verbatim.

5.2 Methodological Design

The study employs qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis supported by a corpus-assisted approach. This integration allows for interpretive depth while grounding analysis in observable lexical patterns.

5.3 Corpus Construction

A small corpus of approximately **350–400 words** was constructed using official lyrics and transliterated versions. Frequency lists and semantic clustering were generated to identify dominant lexical fields relevant to ideological meaning.

6. Corpus-Assisted Analysis

Corpus analysis reveals systematic repetition of ideologically significant lexical items associated with sacrifice, sanctity, and collective identity. These patterns provide empirical support for CDA interpretations.

Table 1: Corpus-Based Lexical Patterns

Lexical Field	Examples	Frequency	Ideological Function
Martyrdom	shaheed, jaan	High	Sanctification of death
Moral legitimacy	haq, raah	Medium	Justification of sacrifice
Sacrifice	khoon, qurbani	Medium	Eternalization of loss
Collectivity	hum, hamara	High	Construction of national "we"
Nationhood	watan, qaum	Recurrent	Emotional belonging

These findings confirm that ideological meaning is lexically patterned rather than incidental.

7. Critical Discourse Analysis

7.1 Lexical Choices

The song relies on elevated vocabulary associated with purity, righteousness, and sacrifice, positioning martyrdom as morally superior and spiritually exalted.

7.2 Metaphorical Construction

Recurring metaphors frame:

- Martyrdom as *light*
- The nation as a *path*
- Blood as a *seed*

These metaphors transform physical death into symbolic continuity and moral permanence.

7.3 Discursive Strategies

Key strategies include:

- **Presupposition:** sacrifice is presented as unquestionably just
- **Intertextuality:** echoes of Islamic elegy and nationalist poetry
- **Emotional appeal:** grief intertwined with pride to mobilize loyalty

8. Multimodal and Musical Discourse

Musical features play a central role in meaning-making. Naseem Begum's plaintive vocal delivery, slow tempo, elongated pauses, and melodic crescendos intensify reverence and emotional absorption. Music functions as affective discourse, guiding listeners toward ideological alignment and reinforcing linguistic meaning.

9. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Aye Raah-e-Haq Ke Shaheedo operates as a complex ideological artifact in which language, music, and cultural memory intersect to produce a powerful discourse of martyrdom and national belonging. By integrating corpus-assisted evidence with qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis and multimodal interpretation, the study shows that emotional response in patriotic music is not spontaneous or incidental but discursively engineered through patterned linguistic repetition, metaphorical framing, and affective musical design.

At the lexical level, corpus findings confirm that high-frequency items associated with martyrdom, righteousness, and collectivity are systematically foregrounded. This repetition performs an ideological function by normalizing sacrifice as morally unquestionable. Rather than presenting death as loss or tragedy alone, the discourse transforms it into a sacred contribution to the nation. Such lexical patterning aligns with van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, wherein repeated exposure to ideologically loaded vocabulary shapes shared mental models and reinforces collective beliefs about heroism, duty, and national morality.

At the level of metaphorical construction, the song's imagery reframes physical violence and death into abstract moral continuities. Metaphors such as *blood as seed* and *the nation as a righteous path* erase the finality of death and replace it with symbolic regeneration. This metaphorical reframing functions ideologically by converting historical trauma into moral capital, thereby sustaining national narratives of resilience and

legitimacy. Fairclough's notion of discourse as social practice is particularly relevant here, as these metaphors do not merely describe reality but actively produce a socially acceptable interpretation of violence and sacrifice. The discursive strategies identified presupposition, intertextuality, and emotional appeal further contribute to ideological closure. Presuppositions embedded in the song treat martyrdom as inherently justified, leaving little discursive space for questioning the political conditions that necessitate sacrifice. Intertextual echoes of Islamic elegiac traditions and nationalist poetry embed the song within a broader cultural archive, lending it moral authority and historical depth. Emotional appeal, achieved through the intertwining of grief and pride, ensures that listeners experience sorrow without dissent, mourning without critique. In this way, emotion functions as a discursive shield, protecting dominant ideology from rational interrogation.

Crucially, the multimodal analysis reveals that music itself operates as discourse rather than as a neutral accompaniment to lyrics. The slow tempo, sustained notes, and controlled crescendos guide listeners toward reverence and solemnity, reinforcing the sanctity of martyrdom. From a multimodal discourse perspective, vocal texture and melodic progression act as semiotic resources that discipline emotional response, aligning affect with ideological intent. The voice does not merely express emotion; it instructs listeners how to feel, thereby strengthening ideological internalization.

However, the song's elegiac tone also introduces a degree of discursive ambivalence. While the dominant reading promotes sacrifice as sacred and necessary, the persistent sorrow embedded in both lyrics and melody allows for alternative humanistic interpretations centered on loss, grief, and the cost of violence. This tension supports the argument that patriotic discourse, even when hegemonic, remains negotiable rather than fully closed. Listeners may comply with dominant meanings, reinterpret them, or experience emotional resonance without full ideological alignment.

Overall, the discussion highlights that patriotic songs function as affective technologies of nationalism, where ideology is embedded not only in what is said but in how it is felt. The corpus-assisted CDA approach strengthens this claim by empirically demonstrating that ideological meaning is lexically patterned and multimodally **reinforced**, rather than artistically incidental. This methodological integration addresses a significant gap in CDA scholarship by showing how small cultural texts can exert disproportionate ideological influence through repetition, ritualization, and emotional design.

10. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Aye Raah-e-Haq Ke Shaheedo* functions as a powerful ideological text rather than a neutral patriotic song. Through patterned lexical choices, metaphorical framing, and emotionally charged musical delivery, martyrdom is constructed as sacred and foundational to national identity. The corpus-assisted approach strengthens Critical Discourse Analysis by empirically validating ideological patterns while preserving interpretive depth. Although the song strongly reinforces dominant narratives, discourse remains open to reinterpretation and resistance.

11. Directions for Future Research

1. Large-scale corpus-based CDA of Urdu patriotic songs
2. Audience reception studies across generations and social groups

3. Comparative multimodal analysis of different performances
4. Contextual studies linking patriotic discourse with political events
5. Ethnomusicological research on production and circulation

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