

Stylistic Analysis of Shadab Zeest Hashmi's Poem "You are chained"

* Muhammad Ramzan, MPhil in English (Corresponding Author)

** Dr. Abdul Karim Khan, Assistant Professor

*** Dr. Ihsan Ullah Khan, Assistant Professor

Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing Shadab Zeest Hashmi's poem 'You are chained' with a special focus on the foreground. The tools of foregrounding i.e. parallelism and deviation are surfaced that attract the attention of the reader for hidden messages related to the socio-political scenario of Pakistan, Kashmir, and India. Thus the miserable plight of the Kashmiris is encompassed through stylistic devices which are peculiar to Hashmi's poetry. Foregrounding is the tool through which one can analyze a piece of literature having so many deviations and code-switching. The main aim of the study is to bring to the fore the local poets writing in English. The research is based on this intention to strike the attention of new researchers to criticize as well as to appreciate our local poets for their encouragement. On the other hand, research on Pakistani literature in English is an emerging area of investigation that is why, it is hoped, that this paper will prove to be an encouraging step ahead for future scholars.

Keywords: Foregrounding, Pakistani Literature, Shadab Zeest Hashmi, Stylistics, the Poem

Introduction

This is a fresh study as no researcher has worked on Hashmi's poetry collection *Wings of Silver* (1991) through foregrounding. The study conducts a stylistics analysis on her poem 'You are chained' which is selected from her poetic collection, *Silver Wings*. The very title of the poem attracts our attention as it gives us some kind of deviation in the use of the pronoun 'You' which directly addresses Kashmir i.e. Kashmiris.

The Poet

Shadab Zeest Hashmi is a local poet who writes poetry in English with multifaceted themes and issues. Her *Wings of Silver* contains forty-four poems. Most of her poems included in this collection are in the form of blank verse with varying stanzaic forms. Hashmi was born on August 16, 1972, in Peshawar, Pakistan. She got her BA degree from Reed College in America. She has published poetry collections *Wings of Silver* (1991), *Baker of Tarifa* (2010), and *Kohl and Chalk* (2013). The last two poetry collections *Baker of Tarifa* and *Kohl and Chalk* have won the San Diego Book Award. Shadab Hashmi also wrote critical essays on the different forms of poetry. Her book *Ghazal Cosmopolitan: The Culture and Craft of the Ghazal* (2018) contain poetic forms such as Ghazal and Qasida. Shadab has also worked as editor of the *San Diego Magee Park Poets Anthology* for twelve years. She has been also an editor for *MahMag World Literature* as well as a columnist for *3 Quarts Daily*. She also taught in the MFA program at San Diego State University.

Hashmi's poetry consists of so many elements of foregrounding which increase the beauty of her style, therefore; it is suitable to choose the foregrounding perspective for the analysis of the poem. Her most striking aspect is that she writes poetry objectively rather than subjectively.

The Poem

The poem under study occurs in Hashmi's poetic collection *Wings of Silver* (1991) containing four strophes. The poem consists of totally 27 lines. Each strophe of the poem has a different number of lines in it. Similarly, each strophe starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. 'You are chained' is written in the form of a direct address to Kashmir; the Indian occupied Muslim majority territory in the northernmost region of the Hindu-Pak subcontinent. In this poem, Kashmir has been attributed to the quality of human beings as the poet directly addresses Kashmir with the pronoun

* Qurtuba University DI Khan Email: ramzannur@gmail.com

** University of Science and Technology Bannu Email: akarim.khan@yahoo.com

*** University of Science and Technology Bannu Email: ihsanlakki@yahoo.com

'you'. The text constructs the sorrowful condition of Kashmir where India established its control over the people of Kashmir opposing the right of self-determination of Kashmiris which was given to them at the time of partition of Pakistan and India.

Hashmi gives her heart-touching account of Kashmir, the heaven on earth, as destroyed and drenched with the blood of innocent Kashmiris. The only crime they commit is to raise their voice for freedom and their right of self-determination either to ally with Pakistan or India. She laments of the beauty and the green hills of Kashmir as snatched and made hell for the people of Kashmir. She also laments the helplessness and slavery of Kashmiris who want to be a part of Pakistan through using their right of self-determination.

After the partition of Hindu-Pak on 14th of August 1947, India invaded Kashmir on October 27, 1947, and occupied the valley without caring for violation of the Plan prepared at the time partition of the subcontinent, and against the aspirations of the Kashmiris. In this regard, Pakistan has been drawn attention towards India's illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir at the world forums as well as giving stress to the worldwide community that this self-regulating act of India can put at risk the peace of the region.

The Government of India retracted the special position of the valley and limited its autonomy on August 5, 2019, which was granted to Kashmiris under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir. In this regard, Ali (2019) asserts that,

“Unlike the previous years, this year the eventful day has achieved greater significance in the wake of unilateral, immoral and unconstitutional measures taken by India on August 05, revoking the special status of Occupied Kashmir, putting at risk the regional peace and giving way to tension with Pakistan through its mindless actions. Since then, the occupied territory has been under complete blockade and communications blackout, totally cut off from the outside world” (Para 2).

He further says that the issue of Kashmir remains on the United Nations Council agenda for want of arrangement for decades.

In this poem, Hashmi craves for the people of Kashmir to implement their right to self-determination. She gives her account of the beauty of the valley of Kashmir. She also craves the freedom of Kashmiris who are struggling and have been given sacrifices for the own right to self-determination.

Literature Review

The poem is replete with various stylistic choices and foregrounding elements. There are practicing a lot of foregrounding tools that strike the attention of a reader as well as of researchers. Foregrounding is a main branch of stylistics, therefore, the main concern of the study is asserted on the poem's use of various foregrounding techniques i.e. deviation, parallelism, code-switching, and so on. Foregrounding analysis of a poem is to explore the frequently used linguistic choices by a poet. It can be defined as a “technique in which any linguistic structure is used other than its ordinary position in the sentence. Therefore, foregrounding focuses on the functions of the linguistic structures rather than their meaning” (Oztekin 2013, 110).

Pakistani Literature in English dates back to the emergence of Pakistan itself, though the subject was highlighted, for the first time, by Dr. Tariq Rahman (1990) through his epoch-making book, *History of Pakistani Literature in English*. Hajiyeva (2016) puts that most of the Pakistani Literature in English has been produced by Pakistani Diaspora writers. Almost all these writers write without considering their geographical boundaries. She says that some of the fundamental questions we face are the national identity as well as the differentiation between Diaspora and colonist literature.

Tarin, et al. (2015) traced Pakistani Literature in English till the 1920s. At that time nationalism sentiment was receiving strong footing. They introduced prominent writers of that age such as Raja Rao, Chattopadhyay, M.A. Rashid, Sarojini Naidu, and Mumtaz (as Cited by Karim Khan). Karim Khan (2020) also asserts about Pakistani literature in English that Pakistani literature is an interesting subject for scholars and researchers. He says that Tariq Rahman's epoch-making work *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* (1990) made this subject more interesting. This book covers all the literary works in English by Pakistani writers both outside as well as inside of Pakistan.

According to Waqar (2015), Hashmi's poetry has been translated into Urdu and Spanish. Her poems have been published in different journals and poetic anthologies. Her works have published in

journals such as Poetry International, The Cortland Review, Wasafiri, Prairie Schooner, Vallum, POEM and World Literature Today, Atlanta Review, Spillway, Journal of Postcolonial Writings, The Adirondack Review, One, Hubbaub, The Citron Review, Paris Lit Up, and Serving House Journal. Her essays on the poetic forms of the east such as Ghazal and Qasida also have been published in different international journals.

Methodology

This study of stylistics or styles in literary texts observes the role of foregrounding by critically analyzing the effect that it has on a piece of writing as a whole. *Foregrounding* is a method used to defamiliarize language or to make language defamiliarize. Simpson (2004) asserts that whether the foregrounded pattern diverges from a median, or whether it reproduces a pattern through parallelism, the role of foregrounding is that it strikes a reader's attention towards itself. As already said that foregrounding is a branch of Stylistics, it is important to introduce stylistics and foregrounding as well.

Stylistics

The study of Stylistics deals with the investigation of the communicative resources found in a particular language. Theoretically, stylistics is concerned with language resources/means existed in language. It helps researchers to explore the hidden meaning or message in a particular piece of literature (text). Simpson (2004) puts about stylistic analysis of a text that the main aim of stylistics is to investigate and examine language and explore the creativity in that language. He further says that stylistics analysis enriches the ways of our judgment about language... "And exploring language offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of texts" (3).

Hall (2007) quotes Verdonk (2002) and Simpson (2004) that nowadays stylistics is generally "contextualized and discourse-based focusing on issues of choices of style, register, genre, culture, and identities in varying contexts" (3). Toolan (1990) concerns stylistic analysis which can be performed for language teaching as well as of literature. He asserts that stylistic analysis helps in investigating the miscellaneous reading of analogous texts as well as it can be performed to assist in exploring characteristics of texts which might not be noticed before. Khan (2020) quotes Toolan (1990) that stylistics analysis of a text "can shed light on the crafted texture of the literary text, as well as offering a productive form of assistance in completing interpretations, making them more complex and richer. Stylistics can, thus, be used both as a descriptive tool and a catalyst for interpretation" (170).

Foregrounding

The history of foregrounding traces back to Greek antiquity hence it received its status as a theory in the first decade of the twentieth century with Russian Formalists. Secondly, its further developments took place with the principles of the western formalists in the 1960s and 1970s. Foregrounding is a useful device through which researchers can analyze a piece of literary texts having so many deviations and code-switching. It deals with the form of language and a literary piece as well as with the reader's response to these forms.

The task of foregrounding is to explore meaning in a complex way. The Russian formalist Shklovsky argues that stylistic analysis of a text is more complicated than conveying known meaning. In this connection, he (1965) further says that the role of a literary text or image "is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object" (p.18). Richards (1929) puts that there are four types of functions of texts and meanings such as sense, tone, intentions, and feelings. Jacobson (1966) points out six functions that are, referential, conative, poetic, emotive, phatic, poetic, and Meta-linguistic. Fairclough (1995) asserts that texts are multi-semiotic and make use of a variety of forms of vivid designs instead of sound effects, photographs, and diagrams.

Stylistic analysis of literary or non-literary texts uses various techniques and devices to explore the hidden meanings of the text and its implied ideas. This study analyzes the poem '*You are chained*' through the perspective of foregrounding. There are two main devices of foregrounding such as parallelism and deviation. Parallelism refers to the repetition of words, phrases, sentence structure, sounds, or the use of any other kind of linguistic device in the piece of literature (text) while deviation refers to any kind of violation that occurred in the text. The violation may occur in the form of semantic deviation, syntactic, punctuation, and phonological deviation or the form of the use of a word of a language other than the main language of the text.

The stylistic study is a suitable approach to analyze a literary piece objectively for which various tools are adopted by scholars and researchers for its better analysis. The poem under study has a lot of stylistic devices used; therefore it is suitable to choose foregrounding perspective for the analysis of the poem.

Critical Analysis

Stylistic tools in a piece of literary text evoke emotional effects of the feelings expressed in it. Similarly, the words and phrases used in poetic expressions evoke rich images as well as feelings as compared to the ordinary communicative process.

In this study foregrounded words, phrases, expressions, and lines are underlined for further analysis. Their relationship to socio-cultural matters was also considered accordingly. The analysis has been conducted through the main two branches of foregrounding i.e. parallelism and deviation.

Parallelism

This branch of foregrounding mainly focuses on alliteration, rhyme; repetition of words, phrases, sentence structure, sounds, or the use of any other kind of linguistic devices in the poem '*You are Chained*'. In the first four lines of the first strophe of the poem, the word '**chained**' has been recurrently used four times. The anaphoric use of the word creates a rhetorical and poetic effect in the poem. It puts stress on an event of an extremely sorrowful nature to the poet. This kind of anaphoric use of words constructs strong feelings of sorrow in the discourse to show the poet's regret for Kashmir being in chains. Similarly, we also observe the same sentence structure in lines 13 and 14 with the recurrent use of '**with waiting**' and '**with age**' respectively.

Similarly, words '**hungrily**' and '**sadistically**' in the sixth line and the words '**devouring**' and '**consuming**' in the eighth line of the poem are used as internal rhymes. This kind of internal rhyming acts to produce rhythm in the poem. Similarly, rhyming words are usually used for appealing to the senses and evocate feelings. The poet puts stress on her stance on the Kashmir issue and represents her feelings and regrets for its being in chains. In the second line, the collocation of the preposition '**to**' and pronoun '**toe**' can be taken as both assonant words having the same vowel sounds at their end. It functions in attracting the reader's attention and striking his feelings. It also creates similar sounds in the verse which contributes to the poet's style.

The /t/ sound recurrently occurred four times in the collocation of the words '**titanic appetite**' in line 9 of the poem. The sound /t/ gives us the idea of torture and torment as the poet wants to construct the miserable conditions of the Kashmiris. The collocation of the words attracts our attention again to the feelings and emotion of the poet towards the Kashmiris. It shows that the poet has some kind of emotional attachment with Kashmir and Kashmiris. She rightly considers Kashmir as her land and its people as her people and condemns the illegal occupation of Kashmir by India. Foregrounding gives more attention to the use of such words for creating "reattentional" activity" (Mial and Kuiken, 1994). The function of the use of stylistic devices is to attract the attention of the reader. It strikes our senses with wonder and appeals to the readers' feelings. Again, the sound /r/ also used repeatedly in line 10 is "**Your earth so rich**". Mial and Kuiken (1994) put that foregrounded excerpts of poetic texts are striking as well as strongly evocative. Quoting Shklovsky phrase, they add that such foregrounded excerpts may "increase the difficulty and length of perception" (394). This means that foregrounding tools make the text defamiliarize and difficult to understand. The collocated words '**with waiting**' in line 14 and '**wise with**' in line 15 give /w/ sound articulation repeatedly. Similarly, the words '**deeply dependable**' also give /d/ sound articulation repeatedly.

Deviation

This branch of foregrounding can further be divided into semantic deviation, syntactic deviation, and code-switching. From the very first line of the poem, we can see a syntactic deviation in the form of the use of ellipsis (...) in the end instead of the sign of address or sign of exclamation (!). Ellipses are used for omitting one or more words that are not necessary for an expression or phrase to be comprehended. Through ellipses, the readers are left to derive meaning on their own. It strikes the readers' attention for an implied message the poet intends to convey. The deviation can also be seen in the use of the number of the dots. Formally, the numbers of dots in using as ellipsis are three but the poet uses four dots which show deviation. Thus, the deviation occurring here leaves a gap for the readers.

Similarly, the poet makes syntactic deviation from that of traditional verse writing. All of the lines have been started with small letters except those lines which come after a full stop. Lines 1 and

17 ends with an ellipsis (....), the lines 2,3,7, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 18 ends with a comma (,), lines 4, 6, 8, 12,14, 16, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25 and 26 have been left without any punctuation mark, line 5 ends with a semi-colon (;), lines 9, 19 and 22 end with a full stop (.), and the last line ends with the sign of exclamation (!).

All these deviations of syntax make us feel the trouble faced both by the Land and the poet. On one side, the syntactic deviation gives us the idea of the restlessness of the poet and on the other, it highlights restlessness and confusion in Kashmir. Nothing is in order except for natural phenomena such as changing of the weather and the shining of the stars, to mention a few.

Semantic Deviation

In the first line, the word '**chained**' attributes human quality to Kashmir. So to say that the word Kashmir has been used as synecdoche i.e. it stands for the whole society living there especially the Muslims. The word 'chained' gives metaphorical meaning and has been used for the Kashmiris as they are deprived of their right to self-determination. Again, the collocation '**gaping serpent**' in line 5 gives metaphorical meaning and points to the unjust occupation of Kashmir without considering its geographical, political, and ground realities regarding its existence.

When we connect to line 10 '**Your earth so rich**' to line 11 '**drenched in youthful blood**', it gives some kind of syntactic as well as a semantic deviation in the use of the word 'rich'. Here, the phrase 'colored with' was better to be used instead of 'rich' because blood has its color not some kind of material stuff. Moreover, in line 10 the auxiliary verb "is" has also been excluded which was to be used before the word 'rich'. Hence, we can also take the word '**rich**' as irony which again gives semantic deviation. In this sense, the poet means to say that the valley of Kashmir is so rich in shedding the blood of the innocent Kashmiris who struggle for their freedom. It brings a picture of the innocent lives colored with their blood by shooting them for nothing but for struggling for freedom. Hence, the adjectival phrase '**youthful blood**' is also a kind of semantic deviation in the sense that there is used the adjective 'youthful' rather than 'red' for the blood. Normally, we use the adjective 'red' to indicate the color of blood rather than youthful.

The expression '**heeds the voice**' in line 12 attributes human qualities to 'earth' as we see in line 10. The word has been personified with the quality of hearing the voice of the dear mountains as we see in line 13. This kind of personification takes us to mean something else instead of the surface meaning which we term as a semantic deviation. Moreover, in line 17 the use of the simile '**like**' personifies the mountains with the qualities of a child. The poet means to express the relation of the mountains and the valley of Kashmir as dependable to each other as a child depends on his/her mother. It also gives us some kind the picture of the Valley as to what extent the valley means to the people of Kashmir.

In the third strophe of the poem, the poet again addresses Kashmir. Here, the word Kashmir can be taken as synecdoche i.e. the valley for its inhabitants (Kashmiris). The poet encourages the people of Kashmir to struggle for their emancipation from the clutches of India. The word '**chains**' is used here metaphorically which points towards the occupation of Kashmir. The phrase '**heated blood**' shows semantic deviation as it represents severity as normally blood is not collocated with "heated".

In the last strophe, the collocation '**wounded earth**' again shows semantic deviation because earth is not something that can be collocated with wounded. This phrase gives the idea of the killings and the picture of the bloodshed of the helpless Kashmiris by the Indian forces. The word '**world**' in the collocation of the words '**mortal world**' has been used as synecdoche e.g. the whole for the part. Here, it stands for people who live in the world to bless their eyes with the sight of the beauty of Kashmir.

Code-switching

Another form of deviation in foregrounding is code-switching. Code-switching is the use of foreign words other than the main language of the text. In this poem, we found the only word '**Janaat**' used as a foreign word. The word 'Jannat' is an Arabic word that may be spelled like 'Jannah'. This word is spelled as well as pronounced as 'Jannat' in Urdu and Pashto as well which stands for Heaven.

Kashmir has rightly been said and known as the Heaven on earth for its natural beauty. There are a lot of beautiful lakes enclosed by wonderful valleys and have been bestowed with natural reward in the shape of numerous flowers, fruits, and the blue rivers surrounded by the icy mountains. God has bestowed Kashmir with incredible seasons and greenery that we may call Paradise on Earth. It is

magnificent with striking tall trees. Its beauty can also be felt even during autumn when the whole valley seems red and yellow with the leaves of the Chinar trees.

Conclusion

Shadab Zeest Hashmi's poem, *you are chained*, embodies implicitly the injustices done to the people of Kashmir. The choices of words, phrases, and lines bespeak her considerate nature and sincerity towards fellow beings and co-religionists. The wonders of her treatment of the theme are explored through the theory of foregrounding where, in the poem, its elements of deviation and parallelism compelled us to go and search for the desired idea and themes. The style is peculiar and idiosyncratic to the poet who hides dexterously the element of reformation of the society in her lines. It disseminates the message of help for the bereaved thereby inculcating into our minds that something must be done for the reformation of society. It is highly recommended that full-fledge research be conducted on her poetry for exploring various themes related to socio-cultural aspects of the society.

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