



A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE POEM *CLEAVAGE* BY DAUD KAMAL

Dr. Muhammad Imran¹, Dr. Humaira Jabeen², Muhammad Ilyas³

¹Lecturer, Department of English, FATA University, Darra Adam Khel FR Kohat, Pakistan. Email: imran@fu.edu.pk (Corresponding Author)

²Asst. Professor of English, Abasyn University Peshawar.

³MS Graduate, Department of English, Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST) Kohat,

Email: Mikhattak109@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to conduct a stylistic analysis of the poem “Cleavage” by Daud Kamal. The study focuses on the lexical and phonological features of the poem in order to explore their artistic and aesthetic effects. Paul Simpson’s stylistic approach, particularly the levels of language framework, is employed to analyze selected lexical and phonological categories. The analysis is carried out with particular attention to the use of abstract nouns and adjectives, as well as key phonological patterns. In addition, phonological devices such as alliteration, consonance, and assonance are examined to highlight their expressive functions. The findings reveal that the poet’s deliberate linguistic choices contribute significantly to the creation of vivid imagery and the achievement of aesthetic effect, thereby enhancing the overall poetic experience of the reader.

1. Introduction

Literary stylistics is a relatively new and emerging area in the field of contemporary linguistics research, which primarily studies and explores the language of literature. According to Simpson (2004), stylistics as an academic discipline is very active and alive in the twenty-first century. It is taught as a subject in universities around the world in the departments of language, literature, and linguistics, and has been a very rich area of research. Therefore, a number of scholars are engaged in studying the relationship between language and literature and are exploring the use of language in literary works. The importance of language in literature has generated a great deal of interest among new scholars who are interested in the linguistic study of literature. Therefore, in recent years, there has been considerable interest in investigating how the tool of language is used by poets and other writers to achieve stylistic and artistic effects through the use of language, variants, and deviant forms. According to Leech (2007), “style consists in choices made from the repertoire of the language” (31). Generally, this phenomenon is referred to as *style as a choice*. In recent years, researchers have become increasingly motivated in literary stylistics to investigate, for example, style as a choice, foregrounding, parallelism, deviation, and point of view in fiction and poetry. The possibility of exploring these elements of language in literary works has attracted new researchers to this emerging discipline.

There has been much research exploring the language of poetry. However, the stylistic analysis of the poems of Daud Kamal has been rarely explored. The purpose of the current paper is to stylistically analyse the poem “*Cleavage*” by Daud Kamal in order to investigate the lexical and phonological categories in the poem. To analyse the poem, the research adopts a stylistic approach



to investigate how *style as a choice* and phonological patterns are used by the poet to foreground imagery and develop the theme of the poem.

Research Questions

1. Why does the poet prefer certain linguistic expressions (nouns and adjectives) in the development of the central ideas of the poem?
2. How are lexical and phonological patterns used to achieve stylistic and aesthetic effects on the readers' minds?

2. Review of Related Literature

According to Leech & Short (2007, 12) "literary stylistics has, implicitly or explicitly, the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function". In literary stylistics when we analyse a literary text our focus is on language. How language is used in a particular way is noticed by a stylistician. Therefore, the purpose of literary stylistics is to analyse how an aesthetic effect is created by an author in the production and reception of literary text. When a stylistician analyses a piece of literature, the focus is more on why and how than what. Why certain linguistic expressions have been preferred by a writer and how an aesthetic effect has been achieved through the use of language. (ibid). In a similar vein to study the language of literary pieces Simpson (2004) adds "To do stylistics is to explore language, and, more specifically, to explore creativity in language use". A stylistics analysis of a literary text refers to studying and exploring the language. Not just exploring the language. But to investigate the creativity of writing in the form of establishing aesthetic effects through the use of language. Because language is a dress to one's thought. So, in order to understand a literary text, the study of its language became very important and crucial.

When we do a linguistics analysis of literary text, we come across certain deviations, like lexical deviation, semantic deviation, pragmatics deviation, phonological deviation, and morphological deviation. A lexical deviation is the one according to Leech (1969) when the writer invents new words which are formally called neologisms in which a poet may exceed from the normal resources of language. But this analysis is not only restricted to deviation. Sometime the writer's choice of word also matters. Style as a choice and variant "constitutes selection from a total linguistic repertoire. Each individual has the right to choose from the available possibilities that which is appropriate and fits in to his work" (Panda, 2006:19). At sound level the poet repeats certain sounds to foreground certain ideas or images. For example, "Alliteration is the deliberate repetition of usually initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words or syllables" (Lehtsalu, Liiv & Mutt, 1973). The poet uses this sound deliberately to form images through the use of these repetitive sounds. "Image is the representation of sense experience through language. It appeals human senses to create specific descriptions" (Khan Raffique & Saddique, 2014, 32).

3. Discussion and Analysis

The poem is written in four stanzas along with one quotation in an unrhymed irregular metre. It has four stanzas and each stanza consists of five lines. The poem has used decorative language, but there is a lack of musicality, i.e., rhythm in each line of poem. In terms of graphology, this particular poem is written in the Roman alphabet, and in an 11-point emboldened 'Calibri' font. The poem contains irregular lines, there is the use of certain metaphors, such as, dead leaf, kingfisher, lustrous bodies and river. There is an expected pattern of grammar use in the poem where we can find proper punctuation and the use of main and subordinate clauses. This all reveals that the poet belongs to modern time because we cannot find any archaic words and unusual deviation



in the poem. The title of the poem cleavage is related to the opening lines of the poem and later development as we proceed. The very first two lines have been quoted from the well know African poet Pablo Neruda's poem the *Heights of Machu Picchu*. The poet Neruda wishes to dive into the most powerful, joyful and contended life. He compares life with a river and wishes to swim in the river of life. Swim symbolizes the process of life and continuous struggles that one makes in order to peruse happiness in life. In the next four stanzas we find the extension of this thought of the poet Daud Kamal. The poet is torn between ideal and real world. In the very first stanza the poet is lost in his imaginations and finds it difficult and misty to move in appropriate direction as everything seems to him foggy, obscure and misty. But in later part of the poem, we notice that this mist is actually the source of creativity for him which finally gives him a way out. In last part of poem, we concluded that this happiness and contended life suit in imagination only. In reality we cannot find such life as mentioned by Neruda in his poem the *Heights of Machu Picchu*.

3.1 Lexical category

In this section the researcher will explore and analyse the lexical category used in the poem to investigate how the poet achieved aesthetic effect through the use of nouns and adjectives. The poet has used certain lexical items in the development of theme to create images and stylistics effects on the mind of readers. Creating stylistics effects on the mind of readers through the use of adjectives on the one hand and to create profound images on the mind of readers on the other hand is one of the central characteristics of this poem.

3.1.1 Choice of Lexical Items

The theme of the poem can be revealed using symbolic language and rich imagery used by the poet. For example, the word *mist* which represents weakness of memory and subconscious where nothing is clear but vague and obscure. The poet is in a difficult situation where he has no vision and everything seems foggy and obscure to him and he is lost in his imagination, and he has no clear idea of destination. Along with the mist, the poet used the word *memory* which symbolizes his past. The poem recalls his past and is lost in his imagination and cannot see a clear path to go out. Because like a thick deep forest where one loses his way, the poet is also stuck in such a situation. The forest of oblivion gives a vivid picture of subconscious where are number of imaginations exist.

In second stanza line one, the lexically selected term *mirror* symbolizes real world. It refers to the poet conscious. When he looks in the mirror, he transforms himself from an ideal world to a real one where he finds it difficult to peruse his imaginations. Another lexical item used by the poet is *fossilized hope*. Hope is an abstract idea, but the poet has given it a physical shape. Two different contexts have been combined by the poet in several places to create stylistic effect on readers' minds. Hope has positive connotative meaning, but the poet used the term with negative connotation which is a lexical deviation. The term fossilized has been borrowed from geology (different domain) and a geological term has been used with abstract entity. It means on the one hand; we have the lexical item fossilized belongs to physical world geology while on the other hand hope which is itself an abstract entity and the poet combined these two lexical items very beautiful to create a different and peculiar image of his hope. Furthermore, the poet has achieved artistically aesthetic effect on readers' minds by using these two lexical items side by side.

In stanza two line 3 the lexically selected word definition has been used for abstract entity. The poet talks about his imagination, and the value and importance of his imagination is lost when



he comes to face the hard realities of life. Everything loses definition means nothing is possible in real life and even his hope has been broken down and is more brittle than a dead leaf. In stanza third line 4 the lustrous bodies symbolize those all imagination in which the poet spent a happy life. Similarly, in the last stanza line 1 the poet used the word kingfisher which represents the poet himself. He compares himself with this bird who diminishes itself (its own image) in order to grasp its goal. River symbolizes the flow of life and rush refers to the state or chaos of life.

3.1.2 The Use of Adjectives

To create stylistic effects and represent his thought in more explicit way, Kamal uses adjective in this poem where he combines the abstract entity with concrete one. The abstract nouns are modified by concrete words which exist in physical shapes. For example, when he uses fossilized as adjective with abstract noun hope to create stylistic effect on readers' mind. Fossilized is a geological term which is used by scientists, but here the poet uses it with a word hoping to create stylistic effect. Similarly, in the same stanza the poet uses another adjective dead with leaf. Human qualities have been given to leaves.

In the first stanza, third (3) line the word forest is used with oblivion. On the one hand the term forest belongs to different discourse type, i.e., forestry and has different genera while the word oblivion has different domain, i.e. psychology. On the other hand, the entity from physical world has been used with abstract ideas. The purpose of using such lexical choices is to achieve the stylistic effects in creating imagery of past time or the process of becoming conscious from unconscious.

If the first stanza we find that there is registrational deviance where the poet structures images. This deviation can be found through the use of adjectives which are taken from different contexts and used with nouns to create stylistic effects on reader's mind. The lexical choice of fossilized belongs to scientific discourse and is used along with everyday life word hope. Then he compares his hope with a dead leaf and even his hope is more brittle than the dead leaf that can be easily broken. Dead leaf symbolizes the inner condition of the poet due to the hard reality which destroyed his thoughts, imaginations and ideas. Here a very powerful image has been created by the poet a dead leaf, and his fossilized hope. The poet seems almost hopeless in life and his journey is from optimism to pessimism.

In the second stanza line 2 we find the poet used adjective slow with the noun rage. It seems like lexical deviation because of how a rage can be slow. Rage is state of anger that is sudden and violent, and one cannot control his/ her emotional state. But the poet uses the term slow as adjective before the noun the rage. This lexical deviation reveals and creates the image of rage more vividly and explicitly the poet deviated from the normal uses of adjective. In the last stanza the poet created a beautiful amalgamation of reality and imagination by using adjective Unbridled with noun pleasure. The poet has symbolized life with the rush of water where one's happiness conceals as he tries to get happiness from that flow of water.

In the last stanza third line, the poet used adjective unbridled with the noun pleasure. The term unbridled denotative meaning is uncontrollable feelings. Thus, the term unbridled has been used by the poet to intensify the feeling of pleasure. The pleasure has been compared with the bridle of horse that even through bridle we can control the horse, but the pleasures of a kingfisher is unbridled when he dives and shatters his own image in the water. To peruse happiness and unbridle pleasure the bird dives into the water, but with this dive the bird shatters his image and



diminishes his pleasures in the rush of water. Same is life according to Kamal, we want to peruse happiness in life like a kingfisher, but when we come to reality and face the hard reality of life our pleasure is gone and disappeared.

3.2 Phonological category

3.2.1 Alliteration

Mist, memory

Rive, rush

According to Norgaard, Montoro & Busse (2010) Alliteration is frequently used in poetry as means of foregrounding or is employed to emphasize and create mnemonic effect on readers; mind. The poet Daud kamala also uses alliteration in the cleavage to foreground certain ideas thoughts and images though the lexical items that has employed initially consonant sounds in beginning of each word. For example, in first stanza, line 1, the initial nasal sound /m/ in mist and /m/ in memory are used by the poet to foreground the poet imagination which are obscure and not clear. Similarly, in the last stanza the poet tried once again to foreground his lost happiness by comparing them with the rush of rivers. The initial letter of rush /r/ (retroflex) is alliterated with the initial letter of river/r/.

3.2.2 Consonance

Another stylistic device which consists of repetition of same consonant sounds that may appear in the middle or end of in a nearby word. Like alliteration and assonance, consonance has also cohesive effects in identical words. Furthermore, it can employ for mnemonic effect and to foreground an idea in a line of poetry (Norgaard, Montoro & Busse (2010).

The poet Kamal has used consonance in number of lines in the poem to create a vivid picture and stylistic effect on the mind of readers. In order to foreground certain ideals in the development of theme and create aesthetic effects the poet has used this consonance. For example, in stanza 1 the poet used the following consonance:

Its, shapes

forest ,of

and , then

and ,diverge

In stanza one, line 2, alveolar voiceless /s/ in words *its, shapes*. The sound /s/ comes at the end of these words. In line 3, the labiodental voiceless sound /f/ comes at the initial level in word *forest* while at final position in the word *of*. In line 5, the nasal sound /n/ can be placed in conjunction *and* and adverb *then*. Similarly, in line 3 the voiced alveolar sound /d/ at the end of *and* while the same sound appear at the end in *diverge*.

Rage, blurs

Slow, blurs

Brittle, leaf

In stanza 2 line 2 retroflex /r which appeared at the initial level in *rage* is similar with the sound that appear in *blurs* in middle position. Similarly, lateral sound /l/ that appear in middle of *slow* is similar with the sound that appear in middle of *blurs in* line 2. In the same stanza line 5, we find another consonance /l/ in two more words in line 4, *brittle* and *leaf*. In both these words /l/ appear in middle position.

Am, ashamed/ my, clumsiness



Don't, what, lost/ ask, lost

My, dream/ burnished, dream /faces. Dreams/

In stanza 3, line 1, the nasal sound/m/ appeared in four words in different positions. In *am* at initial level, *ashamed* in middle level, in *my* initial level and *clumsiness* in middle level. Similarly, in the same stanza line 2, the alveolar voiceless /t/ has placed in four different words. But In all these words the sound/t/ has final position. In the same stanza, line 3 we have once again the consonance sound/m/ in *my* and *dream*. The sound/d has appeared in *burnished* at the final level while in *dream* at the initial level. In line 3, the voiced alveolar /z/ is similar with sound /z/ in faces.

Shatters. His/and /own

Unbridled, pleasure

Occulted, onward

In stanza 4, line 2, the voiced alveolar /z/ in *shatters* is same in the word *his*. Similarly, the nasal sound/n/ in *and* and *own* are same. In the same stanza line 3, we find some other similar sounds like the voiced lateral /l/ in *unbridled* and *pleasure* and in line 5, voiced alveolar/d/ in *occulted* at final position is same with *onward* at the final position.

3.2.3 Assonance

Mist, is

With, its

Of, oblivion

changing, shapes

In, oblivion

Like consonance assonance is also one of stylistic device of same repeated vowel sound that may appear anywhere in a line of poetry. The poets used this device to create cohesive effect and to emphasize or employ mnemonic effect or to foreground any particular idea through the repetition of same vowel sound. (Norgaard, Montoro & Busse (2010). In the poem cleavage, the poet has used assonance also in number of place in order to foreground different images which has been created through the use of different assonance in lexically selected items. The researcher explore the following assonance in the poem:

In the first stanza, line 1, the short front vowel sound /i/ has been employed in the word *mist* and auxiliary verb *is* by the poet to create certain stylistics effect and to foreground the image mist in the first line. The short front vowel /i/ appear in the word *mist* in the middle while in auxiliary verb *is* at the initial position. Similarly, in the same stanza line 2 the short central vowel /i/ is similar in word *with* and *its*. In the same line in two lexically selected items *changing* and *shapes* the poet has used diphthong/ie/ in middle position of these two words. In line 3, central short vowel, *schwa* has been employed at the initial position in word *of* and *oblivion*. Similarly, in line 3 once again short vowel /i/ has been used in word *in* and *oblivion*.

In , mirror

And ,a/ My, eye

Everything, definition

Dead, then

In stanza 2, line 1 we find same front short vowel sound/i/ at initial level in *in* and middle level in *mirror*. There are two more words *my* and *eye*, where diphthong /ia/ can be identified at



final position in these two words. Similarly, *schwa* sound in both words in line 2, in *and* and *a* are same. Once gain short front vowel sound /i/ can be identified in *everything* and *definition*. In both words this sound occur in middle position. In last line of second stanza, we can find another short front vowel sound /e/ in *dead* and *then*. In both these words the sound /e/ appear in middle position.

*i.my /am, ashamed,of
by,my*

In third stanza the use of assonance is not that much as in previous two stanza. The diphthong /ia/ is similar in *I* and *my*. But in *I* it appears at initial stage while in *my* it appears at final position. Similarly, line 1, the use of *schwa* in *ashamed* is similar with preposition *of*. In both words *schwa* sound appear at initial level. Similarly, in fifth line , once again the diphthong /ia/ has been employed in other words *by* and *my* and in these both words sound /ia/ appear at final position.

*Kingfisher, into
his image*

In last stanza, line1, the short front vowel /i/ in kingfisher is same in the word *into*. But in *kingfisher* it appear in middle position while in *into* it appear at initial position. Similarly, in line 2 the same short front vowel /i/ can be identified in *his* and *image*. In *his* the sound appear in middle position while in *image* it appear at initial position.

4. Central Ideas of the Poem

We can infer the theme from the overall structure of the poem cleavage. The poet is torn between his imagination and real world. Everything seems to him possible in imagination, but when he turns to real world his hopes to jump in the river of happy life become hopeless. Not just hopeless but fossilized hope according to the term used in the poem. He compares his imaginative happiness metaphorically with a kingfisher. As a kingfisher, he does not know that if he dives to catch a fish his beautiful image in the river will shatter and he will face the hard reality of life. Same is true with the poet, he imagines a beautiful and contended life, but he comes to real world his imagination are torn into pieces. The poet very beautifully and artistically develops the theme of the poem through the use of images.

Another theme we can infer from the poem is that the poet is in his old age and laments for the life he passed. He has lost his memory due to old age and he is a place where everything seems to him misty and foggy. He talks about lustrous bodies symbolizing his old friend which are no more with him. His hope has become fossilized due to old age. Even we can abstract from the first quotation of Nerada in the poem that the poet wishes to swim in the ample lives, but not possible for him when he turns and realize that he is at the last stage of life. The pleasures he had in the past now became unbridle for him. The use of images and symbolism in the poem has giver an artistic and aesthetic touch to the poem.

5. Conclusion

Kamal has very beautifully and artistically depicted the amalgamation of imagination and reality in poem the cleavage. The use of language, lexical and phonological items have been used to foreground the theme of the poem. The artistic use of language created vivid images in the mind of readers. The use of adjectives as concrete entity with abstract entity is another characteristic of the poem. He foregrounded certain ideas through the use of adjectives and abstract nouns.



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