



RESEARCH PAPER

A Stylistic Study of Javed Shaheen's Poem *I Asked the Night*

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ABSTRACT

The current study is focusing on the societal issues, facing by the Pakistani society from pre-partition times up to date. This is both quantitative and qualitative research analysis having used Stylistics theory of foregrounding by Geoffrey Leech, that purposes to evaluates Javed Shaheen themes of social complications in the poem *I Asked the Night*. According to Leech, foregrounding consists of two major parts *parallelism* which means parallel features and *deviation* which means turn aside from the standard form, are clearly exercised in the poem *I Asked the Night*. Further, it has used the syntactical, morphological, and semantic levels of parallelism of the foregrounding. The outcomes of the analysis are the loss of the ambitions of every individual in Pakistani society from pre-partition history to the present circumstances of the day. Moreover, the understudy poem can also be analyzed through various levels of Deviation of the foregrounding theory.

KEYWORDS

Foregrounding, *I Asked the Night*, Javed Shaheen, Pakistani Literature in English, Stylistics

Introduction

Pakistani literature in English has a large scope in the international sphere of the study. Because of it prominent literary authors, who spread and introduced it to the world, as a result of their famous works, having different type of social themes of Pakistani society. In poetry *Javed Shaheen* is an important personality, who has written many famous works, which carry different societal themes. One of his famous works is *I Asked the Night*, a poem, in which the poet is dealing with the loss of aspirations of the Pakistani society that effect Pakistani society very badly from the pre-partition history up to the present moments. Therefore, the above poem will be analyzed through the three levels of parallelism, syntactical, morphological, and semantic level of the foregrounding theory, forcing all those losses and brutalities, and its real cause.

The Poet: Javed Shaheen

Javed Shaheen was born on 28 October 1932, in Amritsar. He was a graduate. He writes under his pen name "Shaheen". He was a very famous poet. He was one of the pioneers of progressive writers' association of Pakistan. He had a long history in the left movement in the subcontinent. Before the bloody partition that separated Pakistan from India, he lived and worked as an actor in Bombay. He was influenced by left intellectuals. When he came back to Lahore he was associated with the communist party. He become a communist and remained communist to the end (Wood, 2008).

Furthermore, Javed Shaheen had an extraordinary talent as a writer and poet. He put this great talent at the service of the workers and peasants, the poor and oppressed. In

the field of revolutionary cultural activity, he was a warm and generous human being, who was deeply affected by the sufferings of the masses (ibid, 2008).

All the works of Javed Shaheen regarding literature i.e., poetry, novel, and short stories, have different types of themes. In his works, we can find different type of ironies regarding, social attitudes, class conflicts or class opposition that much influenced his poetry. Also, he has the perception of the contemporary social and economic situations of the time. Besides the reflection of those social and economic brutalities, there has been reflected the romantic norms and feelings in his works as well (Zafar, 2020).

In 1990, he joined the Bunyaadi Jamhurriat Munciple Corporation. *Zakhm-E-Musalsal Ki Hari Shakh, Subha Se Mulaqat, Mehrab Me Ankhein, Dar Se Nikalne Wala Din, Urdu Adab 1983, Nikiyo Se Khali Shehr, Aath Ghazal Go* are collection of his works. *Ishq-E-Tamaam* an edition based on his five collection was published in 1993. He has written a novel, a collection of short stories, an autobiography *Mere Maah-O-Saal* to his credit as well. He was awarded with the president's medal for outstanding contribution (Shams-Ul-Haq, n.d.).

The Poem: *I Asked the Night*

The poem *I Asked the Night*, a translated poem is taken from the publication of Javed Shaheen *Ishq-E-Tamam* in 1993, which was the outcome of the socio-economic and political problems as well as oppressions of the blood sheds and terrible conditions at the time of partition of the United India (Mirza, 2005). The understudy poem is all about the social, economic, and political issues which were the main restraints in the progressive ways of the people of Pakistan before, after, and at the time of partition as well as in the present time. In the first stanza, the poet is questioning about the desires, hopes, and the dreams of, peace, good economy, and solutions of the political conflicts from the night (as a personified woman). The second stanza is the response to the first stanza. The response is all about those people who have lost so many dreams and desires, who have lost a large number of individuals as result of the troubles and conflicts, because of the free will and lazy nature of the people of the Pakistani society. In the third stanza, the night ensures the responsibility and free will of the people of Pakistan toward all the difficulties and anxieties.

Literature Review

Pakistani literature in English took it start long ago, through Indian subcontinent history up to date. It is divided into two phases, literature before and after partition of the Indian subcontinent. As before partition, all its genres have the themes of sociological conflicts mainly. Its prominent figures included; Ahmad Ali, Feroz Khan Noon and Mumtaz Shah Nawaz (Rehman, 1991).

Similarly, after partition all the genres of Pakistani Literature in English mostly express about the social, political, economic, and religious issues. As most of the literary figures are concerned with the problems of partition, identity crisis, feminism, etc. (Junaid,2021).

Specifically, all the four genres of Pakistani literature, i.e., Poetry, novel, drama and short stories, having the themes of technology, middle-class, people issues, and fictional creative writing. Among all the genres of Pakistani literature, poetry has the prominent place. Pakistan and its people have a rich heritage of poetry from the pre-partition era. The second phase after the partition was remarkable regarding the flourishing of poetry. The prominent figures of the second phase include, Alamgir Hashmi, Taufiq Rafat, Makki

Qureishi, Muneeza Alvi, and Daud Kamal, etc. They represented Pakistan, its culture, tradition and issues in the second phase (Yaqoob, 2020).

One another great personality in Pakistani literature in second phase named "Javed Shaheen", who translated his poems in English from Urdu, to make place in English literature. Javed Shaheen was born on 28 October 1932 in Amritsar. He was a graduate. He writes under the pen name Shaheen. He was a very famous poet. He was one of the pioneers of progressive writers' association of Pakistan and was influenced by left intellectuals. When he came to Pakistan he was associated with communist party and remained communist to the end (Wood, 2008).

In the literary works of Javed Shaheen, we have different types of themes. In his works especially in his poetry, we can find different types of ironies regarding; social attitudes, class conflicts or class opposition that influenced his poetry. Also, he has the perception of the contemporary social and economic situations of the time. Besides the reflection of those social and economic brutalities, there has been also reflected the romantic norms and feelings in his works as well (Zafar, 2020).

Javed Shaheen has many works regarding English literature but here the researcher has taken his famous work *I Asked the Night* as a research subject. We have two types of citations regarding this poem as:

(1) The poem is analyzed by "Mirza" as, the present collection discusses about the objects that are mainly pertain to the contemporary socio-economic and political problems faced by the country at that very time (Mira, 2005).

(2) The poem is also analyzed by "Wood" as: The poem *I Asked the Night* prove that poetry is not only the reflection of language and culture but it is also an expression of the desires, ideologies, and thoughts for humanity better future (Wood, 2005).

Therefore, the understudy poem has been analyzed through different approaches, but not yet analyzed through 'stylistics' particularly from the theory of 'foregrounding' stand point. So, the poem will be examined from the stylistics point of view.

Material and Methods

Style

"Style refer to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose and so on" (Leech, p9, 2007).

In practices, different writers have different styles depend on their understanding of the subject. In its broadest sense, style can be found in both spoken and written forms, in both literary and non-literary varieties of a language; but, by tradition, it is particularly associated with the written literary text (ibid, 2007).

Stylistics

The term Stylistics has a long history from the an Ancient Rhetoric to the post modern era. In the beginning it was exercised by the Ancient writers as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle etc. from 400 to 300 BC. But in 20th century it was given a proper shape by Russian formalists as Makarovsky and Valadmir Prop. More specifically, in post modern era stylistics has given more modern and more update form by such a writers as Paul Simpson, Lorenz, Mick Short, and the most prominent among all is Geoffrey Leech.

Stylistics is defined as, the branch of linguistics in which we study about the style of a person. It is an exercise which describes about how a language is used by a person (Short and Leech, 2007, p:11).

Foregrounding

Foregrounding is the opposite of backgrounding which refers to the act of interpretation in which we make a sense of what is strange and unmotivated there in the text. It is mainly concerned with the question that what should have led the author to express himself in that strange way (Short and Leech, 2007).

The term 'foregrounding' was first presented by Garwin, in early 20th century it was used by Jam Makarovsky and Valadmir Prop who were the Russian formalists, and more specifically by Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short in the late 20th and early 21st centuries as above. It is categorized into two main parts; *parallelism* and *deviation* by Leech. According to Leech *parallelism* refers to the repetition of sounds, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, punctuation marks etc. and *deviation* refers to the difference between an ordinary and observed or deviate values of a text.

Parallelism

Parallelism is a part of foregrounding. According to Geoffrey Leech and Mick short, "parallelism is identified as structural repetition in which variable elements occur" (Leech and Short, p113, 2007).

Therefore, Parallelism is generally defined as the repetition of same sounds, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, punctuation marks, and structures in a statement. It aims to catch the attention of a reader, as well as to create aesthetic effects.

There are different levels of parallelism as: Phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic, graphological etc. Here, in the study, the researcher is applying syntactical, morphological, and semantic levels of foregrounding.

Results and Discussion

Syntactical parallelism

Syntactical parallelism generally refers to the repetition of the same phrases, clauses, and sentences in two or more successive lines of a stanza.

Anaphora

Anaphora is defined as "the repetition of at least one same word in the beginning of two or more phrases, clauses, and sentences or lines of a stanza. Here, in the understudy poem the anaphora occurred three times as bellow:

Lines

"the dream pilfered from my home?"

"the dream of my neighbors' children

"the dream of daughters waiting for marriage in their parents home."

Analysis

These anaphoric lines emphasize over the desires and future plans, and its loss, of the whole Pakistani society, before, after, and at the time of partition of united India.

Here, "**the dream**" represents the aspirations, future deals, and its damage, of every individual muslim society before partition. Because of some major conflicts, as: "*The Hindi Urdu controversy*", that highlighted the language conflicts between Hindu and Urdu, the one would be the official language. "*The establishment of congress in 1885*", was another major conflict which destroys Muslims wishes. In the beginning it was the representative of all India, but later it become the clear representative of Hinduism. "*The World War-1 (1914-18)*" and "*the World War-II (1939-45)*" were also the third main causes of the demised of the Muslims longings. As it lost, so many people, peace, stable economy, social, and religious norms. Etc.

Besides, "**the dream**" also represents the wishes and future thoughts, and it destroying, of every person of the Muslim community at the time of partition. Because of many troublous movements, as: "*The massacre of Muslim refugees*" while traveling to Pakistan from India, the loss of the desires of so many lives. "*Plundering of the Muslim refugees*", the loss of the wishes of wealth. "*Distribution of assets*", as the Muslims were bereft of all the valuable assets, i.e., Companies, industries, machineries, etc. "*Military and security issues*", as the Muslims were given no proper military and security, Etc.

Moreover, "**the dream**" also represents the ambitions and future steps, and it breaking off, after partition, of the whole Pakistani society. Due to some tyrant situations, as: "*The declaring of the first martial law*" by Ayub Khan in 1958, the "*second martial law*" by Yahya Khan in 1969, and "*the third martial law*" by Zia-Ul-Haq in 1977, the loss of the wishes of democracy, good economy, and peace. "*The 1965 war against India*", the disaster of the desires of good economy and so many lives of soldiers. "*The separation of Bangladesh in 1971*", the casualty of the separation of a major portion and population. "*The assassination of great leaders*" i.e., Liaqat Ali Khan, Zulfiqar Ali Butto, Benazir Butto, etc. the loss of valuable personalities. Etc.

Furthermore, "**the dream**" also portrays the wishes and loss, of us all in the present society. As in our society there is still disaster and confusion to someone expressions due to family issues, having no proper caring, attention, and motivations. These all cause to the lack of education, health facility, and employment rate. Same in case, our neighbors are facing with different types of obstacles, having bereft of education, health, and good achievements of everyday life. Because of no support, care, attention, and help to them, from us. Similar in view, the daughters all over the society are the victims. They are waiting for marriages in their parents' homes long years ago, because of the tyrant rules and the jealousy nature of the already married women, of our society. As in our patriarchal society women are suppressed and deprived of their rights, and also a wife does not bear that her husband should marry another woman also.

Lines

"and no" alarm

"and no" clue"

'Without your' will

'Without your' participation

Analysis

These anaphoric lines are the response to the above lines, about the dreams and its loss, of the whole Pakistani society, before, after, and at the time of partition of United India. The response is in such a way that the night, which is considered as the cause of those losses, answers back that, you have lost so many wishes and upcoming thoughts not because of me but because of your non struggling, alarming, and crying nature against those all tyrannies. The night also added that, how those cruelties, injustices, and anxieties are occurred 'without your free will', 'without your participation'. So, these anaphoric lines emphasize and ensure, the unaware and inactive nature of the whole Pakistani society, while blaming others.

Moreover, it expresses and emphasize the coward and inactive nature of us all in the society. As we are inactive, undeveloped, and unchangeable with the rapid changing nature of the world. We are responsible to all the ups and downs in the society. Therefore, we must change our mind setup, in order to solve all the challenges of the society.

Lines

"You are" sinless

"You are" innocent"

Analysis

The above anaphoric lines are about the sinless nature of the night and the real engagement of the whole Pakistani society in all their strategic and painful moments, which they have faced from the inception to the current stage of their lives. It emphasizes over the anxieties of every person, their dark desires, which were the real outcomes of their asleep nature. At first, they are blaming the night as the real cause of their restlessness. At the end the night presents all those peaceful and restful situations in front of them and says, "place your hand on its head and swear" that "you are sinless, you are innocent." Which bring them into astonished state and they acknowledge the real involvement of themselves.

Besides, it also expresses about the current bloodsheds and crucial circumstances, and its true causes, the individuals of the whole Pakistani society. As we are blaming others, but instead, we ourselves are the subjects to all these. For example, if we look at the Pakistani society especially, Pukhtoons that they are facing with the bloodsheds of the day, not because of anything else, but of their illiterate and lazy natures.

Morphological Parallelism

Morphological parallelism is defined as 'the repetition of same structured words in two or more lines of a stanza. As in the selected poem the repetition of 'ed' and 's' suffixes.

"ed" suffix words: The repetition of the "ed" suffix words are: "Askeded, pilfereded, wandereded, lookeded, discoloreded, stretcheded, claspeded, and stareded". Which basically refers back to those casualties and exploitations of human rights especially of Pakistanis in the past movements, which they had faced before and at the time of division of united India.

's' suffix words: Repetition of the s suffix in the words: "Neighborss, daughterss, dreamss, desiress, and corpsess." Firstly, it indicates plurality of aspirations and loss, of the over all Pakistanis in those crucial times of division. Secondly, it expresses about

destroying and killing of the ambitions of every man and woman, of Pakistani society in the present times. For example, if we look at the current circumstances of the state that the whole of our society is facing various kinds of obstacles as: terrorism, target killing, unstable economy and government, corruption, injustices, poverty, illiteracy, exploitation of human rights, etc.

Semantic Parallelism

Semantic parallelism is that level of parallelism, in which the repetition of the same meaning occurred in two or more lines or sentences.

Personification

Personification in figurative language is when a non-living thing is given the characteristics of living thing. In the selected poem the "night" is presented as a woman thoroughly, from whom the questions about the disappearance of the dreams are asked in the first stanza. The night in second and third stanzas replies and ensure every individual as responsible to all those destructions, and the sinless nature of herself. The solid reason behind the night as a personified with a woman is that women throughout the history in Pakistan are considered as the objects to the sum of adversities, across the patriarchal society. But actually, they are not so, they are just blaming, men themselves are the true subjects to those all.

You are "sinless"

You are "innocent"

Here in the above lines the words "sinless" and innocent" have the same meanings which point out the semantic parallelism. The reason behind these similar words is, to stress chastity of the night, and the accused nature of the men towards the miseries of the day.

Conclusion

The poem *I Asked the Night* is analyzed through the syntactical, morphological, and semantic levels of parallelism of the foregrounding theory. The syntactical and semantic levels express and emphasize over losses of economic, social, cultural, political and religious aspirations of the over all Pakistani society from the pre-partition era in comparison to the present, which are the true results of the careless nature of the men, while blaming others. The semantic level stresses the brutalities and blames of the men over other things, as in this poem they blame the night (personified with a woman), which also express about the cruelties of the patriarchal society of Pakistan against their women.

Recommendations

The understudy poem can also be analyzed through various levels of 'Deviation' of the foregrounding theory by Geoffrey Leech, and through the psychoanalytic point of view.

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