



Exploring Stylistic Elements in Daud Kamal's Poem *Plough & Oxen*

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Abstract

The stylistic study of Daud Kamal's poem 'Plough & Oxen' is a unique and significant contribution to Pakistani literature. It delves into the literary devices and strategies that Kamal uniquely employs to evoke meaning and readers' emotions. This study, with its aim to enhance readers' understanding of Kamal's unique style, explores how the poem's distinctive use of poetic devices enhances its aesthetic and thematic features. Kamal's poetry stands out for its captivating use of a variety of sounds, a feature that this study aims to unravel. The poem is melodic and musical, a testament to the unique poetic approaches that this research examines. This study examines the selected poem on two levels: the Phonological level and the Syntactic level of stylistics. Phonological and syntactic levels of stylistics enable the analysis of how language is skillfully and creatively employed in poetry to produce certain stylistic effects.

Keywords: Daud Kamal, Pakistani Poetry in English, the Poem, Phonology, Stylistics

1. Introduction

This research employs stylistic analysis to examine Daud Kamal's poem '*Plough & Oxen*' thoroughly. The study utilizes the stylistic categories proposed by Leech and Short (2007) to provide a comprehensive analysis of the poem. Stylistics offers a structured framework for analyzing the text, and this study aims to explore the poem's language decisions across various levels. There are five levels of stylistics, namely the phonological level, grammatical level, phonetic level, lexical level, and grammatical level. This study examines the selected poem on two levels: the Phonological level and the Syntactic level of stylistics. The Phonological Level, which includes Alliteration, Consonance, Assonance, and Trope, will be a key focus. The researcher's objective is to shed light on the poem's understudied relation to these areas, providing a deeper understanding of Kamal's unique style and enhancing readers' comprehension of his poetic choices.

Pakistani literature in English is not just a reflection of the nation's social, political, and cultural context, but also a profound expression of its identity. It captures the nuances and complexities of Pakistani life, offering a unique perspective to the world. Pakistani authors, both domestically and abroad, have created a wide range of English-language literature including fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, each piece contributing to the rich tapestry of Pakistani literature.

Pakistani English-language poets have had a considerable impact on the literary community. Daud Kamal, Maki Kureishi, Taufiq Rafat, and Alamgir Hashmi are powerful and inspiring poets whose poetry frequently addresses issues such as tradition, modernization, love, identity, grief, and the complexities of Pakistani culture (Hashmi, 1978).

Pakistani poetry is a distinctive blend of Western and Eastern literary traditions. These poets express their ideas using a variety of stylistic devices, playing with language, structure, imagery, and symbolism. This combination of effects yields powerful, affecting poetry that encapsulates Pakistan's rich cultural differences, making it an attractive subject for stylistic analysis.

1.1. Daud Kamal

Daud Kamal is one of Pakistan's greatest gifted poets. His poetry articulates a feeling of loss and spiritual transfer in the face of violence and cultural erasure. Kamal writes poems in a very different way, and his fragmented writing is rather wonderful. His poetry frequently deals with rustic and rural themes, reflecting his keen awareness of the little things.

Kamal's poems contain imagery from the Sufi realm. He may also be considered a mystic poet. His poetry also comprises beautiful representations of the natural world. The Imagists had a big effect on his poetry. He composes in the same vein as Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats. He was highly sensitive and conscious of his surroundings. He has a discrete sense of history and the necessity for beauty in his poems.

1.2. Stylistics

Language is one of the distinctive features of poetry as a literary work, and this is obvious in the poet's word selections and style. Poets have a definite way of communicating their ideas and feelings while also trying to strike the attention of their audience. According to Hornby (1995), a style is a technique of doing, acting, or offering something. It consists of the word choices, sentence structures, idioms, and rhetorical techniques that all writers use.

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There are many tactics used to classify the degrees of stylistic analysis, which might vary depending on the goals and point of view of the researcher. Three common phases of stylistic analysis, each providing a detailed understanding of the text, are often distinguished, however:

1. **Macro-level analysis:** This is concerned with the common procedure and structure of a work, including its tone, genre, and storytelling devices. Researchers also consider historical and cultural settings to have a profound understanding of the text.

Meso-level analysis: This level of stylistic study studies language and style at the sentence and paragraph levels, considering diction, tone, and grammar. It often involves the use of analytical methods such as pragmatics, semantics, and discourse analysis.

Micro-level analysis focuses on word-level language use, including phonological, grammatical, and syntactic components. Due to its precise nature, this level of study is often the most labor-intensive. The study mainly focuses on the poem's phonological, grammatical, and syntactic components.

2. Literature Review

Pervez (2018) shows how Daud Kamal's linguistics approach, cultural background, and religious views set him apart from other local poets and authors in their viewpoints on death and personal life. He centers his study of Kamal's poem 'An Ode to Death' on Leech's (1967) stylistic approach. His argument is based on Kamal's stylistic meaning tool, which awakens people from their dreams and prepares them for Death. Haider and Ramzan (2022) conduct a stylistic analysis of the poem "Stone Bridge" by Daud Kamal. Their study employs four stylistic levels—phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic—to analyze the poem. The researchers conclude, "The poem is written in a typical imagist form that conveys the message of the transitory nature of human life on this planet." (p. 51)

According to (Davy and Crystal, 1969) applied linguistics is the central area of attention in stylistics. This discipline encompasses the scientific and systematic analysis of style using linguistic principles, norms, and theoretical foundations. Although stylistics is primarily concerned with a poet's writing style, it has recently become closely related to linguistics.

Stylistics as a discipline highlights many components of language and its development, while linguistics offers the chance to study language scientifically (Crystal, 2008). Stylistics looks at the link between the poet's artistic accomplishment, and how it is achieved through language (Leech and Short, 2007 & Hassan et al., 2022). It explores the connection between meanings and the linguistic features of the text that make them obvious. Leech and Short separated the stylistic feature into four categories: phonological, graphological, grammatical, and lexical.

Stylistics is essentially the study of language and style. According to (Verdonk 2002, Gul et al., 2022(a) and Gul et al., 2022(b)) stylistics is a linguistic account of language-style research. Though stylistics is a branch of linguistics, as language is its primary subject, it may draw from a literary perspective while conducting research. The growth of stylistics has influenced the subjects it studied.

Stylistics is first used to analyze literary works. This is because of stylistics' application as a study of literary criticism and language analysis. Poetry and prose are the subjects of the investigation. Today's works, however, may use stylistics in non-literary contexts. According to (Simpson, 2004) literary texts are the ideal subject for stylistic research. However, a wide range of discourse, including popular music, journalism, advertising, and even everyday speech, often exhibit a high degree of stylistic scope. These days, a wider range of people may employ stylistic research since it is more adaptable and useful.

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative study of stylistic features in Daud Kamal's poem 'Plough & Oxen'. The research focuses on two stylistic levels: phonological and Syntactical. Examples are used to explain these levels, and some have been presented in tabular form with exact analysis. Since Daud Kamal is a poet from Pakistan, the researchers considered Pakistan's setting while analyzing the poem under investigation. The poem is taken for Kamal's poem collection '*Before the Carnations Whither*'. The selected poem is analyzed through the following levels of Stylistics (Ishtiaq et al., 2021).

3.1. Phonological Level of Stylistics

Phonological analysis is the study of a language's sound system and describes formal rules of pronunciation. It focuses on analyzing sound patterns, the utterance of different words, and the systemic use of sound in the language to learn about the meaning, ideas, focuses, and idiosyncratic behaviors in a text. Phonological devices include alliteration, repetition, consonance, and assonance.

3.2. Syntactic Level

Through syntactic analysis, we may expose the intricate ways in which writers use word choices and sentence structures to achieve definite stylistic goals, transfer ideas, and draw the attention of readers. Understanding these decisions may provide important insights into writers' creativity and skill.

The Poem

The sweat
Of man and animal
Sink into the moist earth...
Heavy drops
Impervious to the sun's savage thirst.

Children are climbing
All over a broken cartwheel
And a young woman
Admires herself
In the running **mirror** of a stream.

A thousand years hence
They'll dig up
Figurines of gods and goddesses
And a baked clay jar
Half full of blackened wheat.

4. Stylistic Analysis of the Poem

Stylistic analysis is the procedure of analyzing literary style and language to understand a text's meaning, tone, and effect on the reader. It centers on the writer's use of linguistic devices, sentence structure, figurative language, and word choice.

Analyzing a literary piece's stylistic choices reveals the speaker's goals, themes, and narrative devices and provides insight into its historical and cultural setting.

4.1. Phonological Analysis

The phonological level of stylistics concerns language's sound system. This level of analysis focuses on the poet's use of stylistic devices and sounds, rhyme patterns, word utterances, alliteration, consonance, and assonance. It is concerned with how several aural components affect meaning and visual appeal. Analyzing a poem's musicality and spoken quality is a common step in phonological stylistic analysis.

4.1.1. Alliteration

When a word or phrase begins with the same sound or letter many times in a sentence or phrase, this is known as alliteration. Poets often use this strategy of repeating first-letter sounds to draw readers in.

We have |a| in the collocated words “**and animal**” and |s| sound in the words “**sun's savage**” in the second line and the fifth line, respectively, in the first stanza of the poem. Similarly, there is |g| in the beginning of the collocated words “**gods and goddesses**” in the third line of the third stanza of the poem.

Frequent patterns of sound in the form of rhyme and alliteration stimulate memory more broadly and more quickly than meaning or imagery (Rubin, 1995, Sajjad et al., 2022 & Afaq et al., 2022) Alliteration can stick in the mind and has been made relevant with metrical emphasis. The poem's meter is important in identifying the locations of alliteration. The repeating letter sound in a poem should start with a stressed syllable to form a harmonic pattern, which increases the poem's overall tone and rhythm.

4.1.2. Consonance

Consonance is the corresponding repetition of consonant sounds in sequential words. In linguistics, consonance refers to the repeating of comparable sounds, or consonants (non-vowels). Writers employ consonance to convey flow, rhythm, and emotion. Alliteration is a kind of consonance where words with similar sounds at their beginnings have a higher degree of connection (Heckmann, 2022 & Ali et al., 2022). Consonance serves in two ways in poetry: it draws the reader's attention to a definite subject or sound in the poem. Recurring consonant sounds strike the reader's attention to the words that include these sounds.

Haider and Ramzan (2022) assert that attractive sound is produced by the repetition of similar consonant sounds in the lines of a literary poem or within groups of words. The recurrence occurs frequently at the end of words and within words. Poets use this technique to emphasize a particular poem's rhyme and rhythm.

Some examples of consonance in the collocated words in lines of the poem are:

Reference	Consonant Sounds
Children are climbing	The consonance of n sound
And a young woman	Consonance of n sound
Admire s her self	Consonance of r sound
Figurines of gods and goddesses	Consonance of d and s sounds

4.1.3. Assonance

The recurrence of vowel sounds in a line of poetry or prose is known as assonance or ‘vowel rhyme.’ The occurrence of assonance establishes a rhythm. Every poet uses this tool with the goal of using sound to convey the theme and tone he wants to convey. There are also a few instances of assonance in this poem.

There are some examples of assonance in the poem. We find the |a| sound all over the poem, occurring in the closely located words in various lines of the poem. The paired words are:

References	Assonance sounds
“ <u>M</u> an and <u>a</u> nimal,” “ <u>S</u> avage,” “ <u>b</u> aked <u>c</u> lay <u>j</u> ar,” “All <u>o</u> ver a <u>b</u> roken <u>c</u> art <u>w</u> heel” and ‘ <u>h</u> alf full of <u>bl</u> ackened <u>w</u> heat.	Assonance of a
‘Sink <u>i</u> nto the <u>m</u> oist earth,’ ‘And a <u>y</u> oung <u>w</u> oman,’ and ‘... <u>g</u> ods and <u>g</u> oddesses	Assonance of o sound
‘Sink into the <u>m</u> oist earth,’ ‘ <u>C</u> hildren are <u>c</u> lim <u>b</u> ing,’ ‘In the <u>r</u> unning <u>m</u> irror’ and ‘ <u>F</u> igurines.’	Assonance of i
‘All <u>o</u> ver a <u>b</u> roken <u>c</u> art <u>w</u> heel,’ ‘... <u>A</u> d <u>m</u> ires <u>h</u> er <u>s</u> elf’ and ‘... <u>g</u> ods and <u>g</u> odd <u>e</u> ss <u>e</u> s.’	The assonance of e

5. Discussion

Assonance gives a poem a melodious, harmonic quality that increases its musicality and ear-pleasing quality. By repeating vowel sounds, the poem can have a rhythmic flow that improves its overall aesthetic charm.

Assonance reveals the frequent vowel sounds in a poem, attracting the reader's attention to certain words or phrases. The poet may then be able to draw the reader's attention to important themes, concepts, or feelings. Assonance, which involves joining many lines or stanzas through the repetition of vowel sounds, can help establish a sense of unity and cohesion within the poem. This may help the poetry have a sense of flow and organization. Repeated vowel sounds can invoke particular feelings or connections, adding to the poem's imagery and mood. Depending on the context and words used, assonance can contribute to the establishment of a specific mood or atmosphere in a poem.

Generally, assonance improves a poem's auditory and emotive influence, giving the poet's message more nuance and intricacy and drawing the reader in on several levels.

5.1. Syntactic Level

This stylistic level refers to the logical order of words and sentences to produce definite effects. It includes conveying the desired content and style of literary work using sentence structure, grammatical constructs, and word order. This research only explores figures of speech such as metaphor, personification, and hyperbole.

5.1.1. Metaphors

The researcher finds a number of metaphoric instances in the poem that have profound implications beyond their literal readings. There are some metaphors found in the poem:

First, the expression "Sink into the moist earth" can be taken as a metaphor for the concept of labor, which contributes to the life cycle. Secondly, the expression "Heavy drops impervious to the sun's savage thirst" may be a metaphor for overcoming hurdles with patience and fortitude, with sweat substituting for effort natural to outside forces.

Moreover, "A young lady admires herself in the running mirror of a stream" might be a metaphor for meditation and reflection. The stream mirrors the woman's innermost thoughts and emotions.

The expression "They'll dig out figurines of gods and goddesses" refers to the practice of digging buried truths or revealing previously forgotten and hidden aspects of culture, spirituality, or history. These metaphoric expressions contribute to the poem's additional meaning, and to the rich and vivid picture that the reader can enjoy and understand.

5.1.2. Similes

In this poem, various similes are produced at some points to draw similarities between several elements. These are a few similes from the poem:

The expressions "Children are climbing" and "All over a broken cartwheel" act as similes that highlight children's energetic and carefree behavior by comparing them to happy animals playing.

The lines "And a young woman"/"Admires herself" and "In the running mirror of a stream" compare the stream to a mirror and emphasize the flowing and reflected quality of water as it reflects the woman's image.

Similes help create vivid images, deepen the poem's account of the situations and feelings, and help the reader grasp the feelings and situations.

5.1.3. Personifications

Personification is the literary technique of giving non-human objects human characteristics. There are a few personifications in the lines of the poem as follows:

"Heavy droplets", "Impervious to the sun's savage thirst."

Because they are personified as immune to the sun's anger, the "drops," in this case, have human-like characters of defiance or resistance.

Similarly, the young woman sees her image in the personified 'mirror' that is the stream. See the lines below: "A young lady admires herself," "In the running mirror of a stream."

Through these examples of personification, the poem's portrayals become richer and more animated, allowing readers to empathize more deeply with the natural landscapes and components.

6. Conclusion

Daud Kamal's selected poem conveys an important message about the transience of time and the relationship of human experiences throughout generations through the clever use of stylistic devices containing personification, imagery, metaphors, and similes. The poet depicts a striking picture of children playing, perspiration soaking into the earth, and objects being found, all while demonstrating the eternal legacy of human existence. Overall, the poem invites readers to reflect on the significance of our experiences and deeds in persuading the world for future generations. It also serves as a painful reminder of the complex link between the past, present, and future.

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