



## An Exploration of Figures of Speech in Alamgir Hashmi's Poem *Singing on in the Old Culture; Or the Poem as a Foundling*

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### ABSTRACT

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The present research contemplates to analyze the stylistic qualities of a poem *Singing on in the Old Culture; Or Poem as a Foundling* written by Aurangzeb Alamgir Hashmi. The poem has many connotations which are analyzed via distinctive tools of analysis. This research article is an attempt to evaluate the poem with its focus on the figures of speech. All the literary devices lead to the elucidation of the theme. This scrutiny endeavors to help the readers in the better understanding of the theme, reflected in the poem. The findings of this research set straight to the conclusion that the poem has employed figures of speech such as alliteration, symbolism, rhetorical questions and metaphor along strong imagery to address his concerns about the condition of the people of Pakistan and India during the British Colonialism.



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### INTRODUCTION

Style comes from the Latin word 'stylus' which literally means a way, method or manner of expressing something. For a literary author, it is the way of communicating his idea to the readers and spectators. He or She has to dress up that idea through style; and the style of the work is as significant as the subject matter. The writing style of a poet or poetess may deviate in

many ways from the already set standards of composing poetry. Among these deviations, some are vivid whereas other are hidden (Leech, 1969). The worth of the stylistic analysis lies in reading literary works (drama, poetry, prose and novel) and the effect of linguistic fluctuation in them. Each and every author has defined this subject according to his or her own point of view. In other words, we come across various definitions of stylistics. For example, according to Widdowson (1975), Stylistic deals with literary texts from a linguistic point of view. Likewise, stylistic analysis, according to Short and Candlin (1989), is a study of linguistic in literary works.

According to *Encyclopedia* Alamgir Hashmi, born in Pakistan, is considered as one of the best poets of Pakistani literature in English. He is also known as Avant-grade. From the early childhood, his parents taught him and developed his taste in reading, writing, and listening. Hashmi started writing poetry in 1962 and began to show his works to friends around 1964-65. The first book of Hashmi was The Oath and Amen. It was a thematic collection subtitled as love poems. Love is not the only theme or a quality that runs through his works. The readers also find variety of themes in his poetry and prose such as death, partition, isolation and independence etc. Likewise, they also find the philosophical and psychological themes in his poetry which are global. Actually, this is his abroad study, exile and travel which bring universality in development of thought, setting, symbolism and forms of expression in his poetry. Due to martial law in the late 1970s, he moved to America. There, he produced a poetry book, titled as My Second in Kentucky. This book retains much of his best work. He reveals the state of nostalgia for Lahore but he indirectly through the help of figures of speech answers to the question of loneliness of existence which life offers. Most of his poems are concerned with the problems of worldwide scale, especially the catastrophic role of colonialism in Asia and Africa, as expressed in “The Game Called Triply”, “They are Waltzing”, “Napoleon’s Clock”, “Crusoe’s Island” and “Winter Flight”. Furthermore, Hashmi’s Poetry is clean from animosity of personal grudges. His view that happiness fades away as the time passes and history has fathomless recurrences in the sufferings of human beings makes his poetry apathetic and calm.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is witnessed from the Pakistani poets that people of sub-continent were suffered, victimized and otherized before, during and after the partition. Countless impeccable people were stoned to death by the mobs and no one had the courage to stop, to question and to control them during that period. The poet, Hashmi, portrays a touching picture of the state of people during the period of colonialism. He, with the help of metaphorical language and through dialogues conveys the theme of colonialism. The poet, by using his artistic skills, shows to the world that how did the foreigners intrude and represent themselves clean in order to colonize the native and indigenous people. This research will throw light on the significant of the selection of words in the poem which makes the readers to look at it through the lens of colonialism. The purpose of this research project is to observe this poem from stylistic point of view.

### **Research Objectives**

The following are the research objectives:

- (1) To examine the different figures of speech in Alamgir Hashmi’s poem *Singing on in the Old Culture; Or the Poem as a Foundling*.

(2) To analyze the literary devices in the poem, helping in communicating the real meaning and message as well as original ideas and thoughts of the poet.

### **Research Questions**

The following are the research questions:

(1) What different poetic devices or figures of speech have been used by Alamgir Hashmi in his poem *Singing on in the Old Culture; Or the Poem as a Foundling*?

(2) How do these literary devices help the poet in conveying the real meaning of the poem?

### **Delimitations**

Only one poet, Alamgir Hashmi and his poem “Singing on in the Old Culture; Or the Poem as a Foundling” is taken for the purpose of stylistic analysis. The researchers only deal with the figures of speech in the poem.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The poem “Ode to Nightingale” was stylistically explored by Zia (2017). This poem was written by John Keats, a romantic poet. It is considered one of the best odes written by him. Actually, “Ode to Nightingale” is famous in English literature for its uniqueness and fascinating style. The way the poet elaborates the concept of beauty is totally different from the rest of the poets of his age. In addition to it, his idea of negative capability helps him to stand distinctive from his contemporary writers. The author of this research article, Zia, not only puts focus on the exploration of stylistic tools which are inculcated to give a picturesque and emotive connotations but he also digs out different stylistic devices which are incorporated in the composition of the poem. The poet, Keats, uses many figures of speech for the sake of creating an impact. Similarly, Zia scrutinizes the poem on different levels of stylistics i.e. Phonetic level, Graphological level, phonological level etc. The research highlights the use and value of assonance, consonance, vowel patterns, meter and rhyme scheme. Besides, the researcher also highlights that the poet employs the stunning imagery, metaphors and personification in order to communicate the strong meanings to the readers.

Khan (2014) also stylistically analyzed the poem “Night”. It is written by William Blake. This poem is about the subject of this world which is brutal and dangerous and the new world which is very much guarded and well mannered. Moreover, the poem deals with the awareness about environment of calamity associated to the possible nature of death. The poem contains many instances of gods, angels and demons. In addition to it, the poem retains many metaphors and illusions. The poet injects all these accessories through the medium of descriptive language. Khan analyses this poem on the basis of different levels of stylistics. The researcher, Khan, throws light on the lexical, semantic and phonological patterns of the poem. He studies the different devices of stylistics which makes it easy for the readers in order to understand the poem in a better way. The researcher finds different devices like metaphor, alliteration, imagery, personification etc. while doing the stylistic study of the poem. In a similar way, the poem is also analyzed at the lexical level. In the result of lexical study of the poem, the readers come to know that it has thirty nouns, thirteen adjectives and twenty eight verbs.

Batool (2015) interpreted the poem “Leisure” in the view of stylistics. In this poem, the poet attempts to demonstrate the conflicting relation between beauty of nature and the man who is dwelling in the modern world. The theme of the poem is materialism. The poet, W. H. Davies, deals with it through new approach. Today’s modern man totally concentrates on riches and has become materialistic in nature completely. The poet desires to show the worldly men that the mental and physical strength is more significant rather than merely living for material wealth. The researcher, Batool, examines the concept of the poet in the poem through stylistic analysis. Actually with the help of two famous books— *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* by Geoffrey Leech and Milk Short and Longman’s *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays, Prose*. So, the researcher has analyzed the poem. This analysis introduces the readers with many results. For example, the poem is having seven rhyming couplets in Iambic tetrameter (aa, bb, dd, ee, ff, aa ). In addition to it, the analysis concludes that many figures of speech like personification imagery and simile are commonly used; and the most common figure of speech used in this poem is repetition. All the above written results are found by the researcher during the study.

Aslam (2014) chooses the poem “Bereft” written by Robert Frost and interprets it through the lens of stylistics. This poem deals with the inward feelings of a person and his or her psychological state of the mind. Different aspects such as Graphological, phonological, syntactical, and grammatical patterns are explored during the analysis of the poem. The analysis of the poem on Graphological level reveals that there is no appropriate division of the stanzas throughout the poem. Similarly, there is no proper use of colon, capitalization, full stop, comma and apostrophe. They are use haphazardly. The lexical study of the poem highlights the repeated use of verbs, nouns, adverbs etc. He finds out that the poem has nine adjectives, two adverbs, eight verbs, three pronouns, one collective noun, eleven common nouns, two pronouns and eleven nouns during the break down (lexical study) of the poem. Anyway, when the researcher (Aslam) studies it on the phonological level, he finds that it has sixteen lines and it is a lyrical poem. The rhyme scheme is aa, aa, ab, ba, ca, dd, de, de. The poet’s assertion on the alliteration is also found during the scrutiny. Actually, this research is very beneficial because it unveils the hidden and deeper meanings of the words; and it is done through studying the structure and style of the poet. More specially, this research propounds indirectly that readers get the main idea through different literary device used in the poem.

Batool and Ahmed (2014) stylistically analyzes the poem “Success is Counted Sweetest” written by an American poetess Emily Dickinson. She is considered one of the greatest poets of America. The analysis of the poem is based on different stylistic levels which are Graphological, lexical, grammatical and phonological. Firstly, when the poem is studied on the Graphological level, the research shows that much punctuation marks are used in the text by the poet like, full stops, hyphen, exclamation mark, capitalization etc. Each punctuation has a purpose and importance behind its usage in the mind of poet. Secondly, phonological study of the poem brings forth the employ of alliteration in the text. Likewise, the further analysis highlights the use of paradoxes and symbolism. They are used very artistically by the poet. In addition, she also deviates from the traditional structure of sentence. This is shown from the researcher that the poet uses simple and easy words. It also shows that she does not stick to only one sentence pattern of the poem. This research is beneficial and helps the readers in orders in order to identify the different themes of the poem which are isolation, indifferent of man and death.

Niazi (2013) explores the style and subject matter of D. H. Lawrence famous novel *Sons and Lovers*. Generally, we all know that helps the readers in giving a good comprehension of the meanings and worth of a work. It is aptly acknowledged that it is style which makes one and his writings different and unique from the rest of the authors. This researcher (Niazi) analyzes the novel *Son and Lovers* stylistically. In other words, he studies this novel while keeping in mind that what figures of speech the novelist uses. Similarly, he looks for lexis, Phonology and coherence etc. The readers come to know from this research that the novelist, Lawrence, chooses complex language or vocabulary to describe incidents and events. In addition to it, it is this research which makes the readers to know that the novel can be divided in two parts. The first part has six chapters whereas the second part has nine chapters. Likewise, this research unveils the hidden connotations of the novel which are associated with family, Oedipus complex and psychology.

Mughair and Mahadi (2014) dissect the popular address of King Martin Luther's *I Have a Dream*. Firstly, the analyst looks over the writing style of the writer and then he stylistically examines the speech. He puts focus on the setting of the speech. He also looks for figures of speech used by Martin Luther. The delivery and the structure of the speech is rational and the order of it, is well established. As a result, the concept and the theory which the author wants to communicate come into the mind of the listeners. The speaker frequently incorporates the figures of speech like metaphor and parallelism etc. This analysis brings forth the better understanding of the speech.

Maratabali and Wajid Riaz study the stylistic deviations in one of the E.E Cumming's poems "She Being Brand". E.E Cumming is famous for not following the traditional style of writing poems. The analysts find out that the poem has twenty four Graphological deviations. Graphological deviations in the poem include capitalization, word splitting and hyphenation etc. Similarly, the researchers find morphological and grammatical deviations. Likewise, they notice that poem also does not follow the syntax rules. It shows that it has syntactic deviations as well. They discover that all these deviations polish the expression of Cumming poetry and convey his messages more effectively.

Dr. Abdul, Maryam and Hamid Khan (2020) explore the figures of speech in Maki Kureshi's poem "Kittens". They stylistically analyze the poem. Their aim of research is to find out the poet address and the condition of the people of Pakistan through inculcating different literary devices in the text. This research finds out that the poet utilizes Similes, personification, assonance, metaphors and imagery in order to present a vivid picture of hardships and misfortunes of the people after the partition of subcontinent. In other words, the poem retains figures of speech which play an important part in the depiction of partition's horrors. The language and vocabulary of the poem is lucid. The poet does not focus on the proper rhyme scheme. This research makes the reader to know the motive of the poet.

To cut it short, all of these critics miss to throw light on stylistic aspect of Alamgir Hashmi's poem "Singing on in the Old; Or The poem as a Foundling". In this research work, the researcher attempt is to read the poem from stylistic point of view and find out the figures of speech which play an important role.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The focus of this research article is on the analysis of a poem “Singing on in the Old Culture; Or The as a Foundling” authored by Pakistani poet, Alamgir Hashmi. It has been analyzed from stylistic point of view. This research is analytical in nature. This study employs qualitative research method as an instrument with the aim of analyzing the selected poem of Hashmi stylistically, especially keeping in view the use of literary devices in the text. Besides, as a data essential for this study is all about the text content. So the present research has been carried out with a concentrated reading of the selected poem. Moreover, research articles have been taken into consideration for the better understanding of the poem. Furthermore, the research is deductive in nature. Thus a creative aspect of the researcher is involved.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The theme of the poem is reflected through the use of language and words in it. From the very structure of the poem, it seems as if two identities are in conflict. The first one is Europe and the second is Asia. On the one hand the noun “she” in the poem, is representing the Europeans whereas on the other hand the noun “He” in the poem, is representing the Asians. In terms of post-colonial studies, the former one is represented as self and the latter one is represented as other. The Europeans consider themselves superior and the Asians inferior. They colonized them over two hundred years. So, they consider themselves as torch bearers and civilized who want to civilize the uncivilized and savage people, according to Europeans, of Asia. In this poem, Hashmi shows to the readers that how Europeans cunningly intrude and embody themselves like a pure substance; and help others by bringing enlightenment. As in the beginning of the poem, the poet rightly says:

She: My surface is silk Purified to light. (01-02)

But those who are not the blind believers and have some ability of thinking, they begin to explore and to observe Europeans. They start looking whether Europeans really want to improve their system and develop their people or they have evil intentions and purposes behind their colonialism. So the colonizers, who think and consider the colonized one as a “size of a titmouse” get infuriated and stop such sort of influences against them through ideology and violence (13-14). As in the poem, the self “She” then questions at the end, “Whaat?/Is your text alright”(21-22). This line shows that the Europeans consider their text the right one whereas they consider wrong the text of Asians. In this way, the poem very clearly depicts the picture of colonialism and its manipulation. We can deduce that the theme of this poem is colonialism and its suppression and exploitation over the common people in the east.

## Figures of Speech

Gautam (2014) has defined the figures of speech, in his book, *Figures of Speech in Fag-golden Tales*, as the manner of narrating some incidents, events and feelings. They are also called literary devices or poetic devices. They are used by the author in order to beautify and polish his language. These devices help the readers in grasping the real meaning and message of any poem, essay and novel. Similarly, Gray (2003) explains figures of speech as a method or way of expressing something (idea or concept) that does not follow the set norms of language. Generally, these poetic or literary devices are employed in literature, writing poems and in

speeches for oration to give metaphorical touch to a literary text. In other words, they are used to comprehend those meanings which are hidden in the lines. There are many figures of speech which the writers incorporate in their works to make them more appealable to readers and productive. Some of the figures of speech utilized are: Anaphora, Alliteration, Assonance, Conflict, Consonance, Cataphora, Personification, Simile, Metaphor, Imagery, Paradox etc.

### **Imagery**

C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon in their book *A Handbook to Literature* states about imagery that it is the use of language to descriptively represent things, actions or even abstract ideas. Generally speaking, imagery serves as a vehicle for aesthetic experience and imaginative thought which the author intends to convey. Most commonly, the use of imagery suggests visual images as pictures. In other words, it is the depiction of some experience through language. It captivates the mental faculties of human being in order to create a particular sort of depiction. Being a poet, Hashmi, also uses imagery in his poem "Singing on in the Old Culture; Or the Poem as a Foundling" in order to improve the reader's experience. He, very skillfully, describes the small waves of a river which appear on the upper surface of water when someone throws a stone or pebble in it. For instance, as the poet writes,

"She: The ripple will reverberate." (9-10)

In the above mentioned lines, the poet is speaking as a colonizer. The colonized people tell him that they will try to break their chains of slavery and suppression by doing some sort of noise. The colonizers answer immediately that their act will create more problems for them. Instead of making problem for colonizers, it will re-echo towards them. Neither it will affect, nor will it break the master. Rather, they themselves will hurt. In other words, according to colonizer whatever the waves or obstacles the others will generate, the Europeans will turn the faces of those obstacles back towards them. So, their effort will, neither, bring any change, nor will it stop them from colonial rule.

### **Metaphor**

Generally, the two most common figures of speech are metaphor and simile. These two tools are natural in writing poetry. They are employed for the sake of comparison between two unlike things. When the poet intends to compare two things without using 'like' or 'as' in the poem, we call it metaphor. Actually metaphors describe much more than what is just the literal meaning of something. It develops a relationship of one thing with another through meanings. That is why; the poets or story tellers use metaphors in their works so that they may make the readers to think about the things in a new and interesting way. In a similar way, Hashmi, in the poem gives a figurative touch to his style of language. He uses metaphor in this poem in order to make his readers to look at it in different and new dimensions. In the very beginning of the poem, the poet uses metaphor for the colonizers. As he writes:

She: My surface is silk purified to light. (1-2)

Here, the poet is comparing the colonizer to light and purity. Their surface is clean. Actually, the poet is recalling the time when the colonizers for the first time intrude in the land of Asians. They represent themselves as torch bearers, pure, civilized and messengers of Christ. They portray themselves as pure and virtuous human beings so that the natives and indigenous

people of Asia may consider them good one and begin believing in them. The other metaphor, poet employs in line 13 and 14. This time, the poet who is speaking in the voice of colonizer, compares the colonized one with a small little bird which is known as “titmouse”. As the poet writes:

She: the size of titmouse? (13-14)

Actually the Europeans consider the native very small and inferior. They are of the view that the natives are unable to go against their rules and regulations; and if they go against them, they will not be able to do something on bigger level. According to them, natives and indigenous people are innocent and uncivilized. They do not know how to deal with the world. They are living in the dark. Neither they have mental capability, nor do they have physical ability to fight against the evils and other countries. As small birds are nothing before bigger birds like eagle and ostrich, likewise the natives and their efforts or plans against the Europeans seem very little, futile and unproductive.

### **Alliteration**

One of the most common among the stylistic devices, repeatedly used by the poets, is alliteration. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, alliteration is a device which uses the same sound or letter at the beginning of words or sentences. Except poetry, it is also used in prose like novels and essays etc. As a poetic device, it is used for creating and generating mood, tone and rhythm of the poem. In addition to it, it also impacts on the conveying of different meanings of the text or how do the readers experience the sounds or words. Generally, alliteration does not occur in the whole poem or a piece of prose. When alliteration is employed, it normally carries fewer words or two words. Mainly, it puts stress on the meaning hidden in those words. In a similar way, the poet has employed alliteration in this poem. As in the line 9 and 10, the poet writes:

She: The ripple will reverberate. (9 - 10)

In the above line, the reader can clearly see that the poet has used alliteration by starting of noun with the letter ‘r’ and then the main verb with ‘r’ which make a rhythm in the poem. In addition to it, in lines 17-18, the poet, once again, employs alliteration but this time more obviously. As he writes:

She: Where? What? wherefore?” (17 - 18)

Now, in these lines, the poet is creating and generating more rhythm and giving tone to it. The above mentioned line of alliteration is setting the tone of exasperation in the poem. The poet uses this stylistic device in order to create sound by using the letter ‘w’ in the beginning of each word in the poetic line. This line is more alliterative than the first one because it does not have any other word in between to make it less alliterative. With the help of this alliteration, the writer turns the attention of the readers to the main subject matter which is “white man burden”.

### **Symbolism**

M. H. Abrahams in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms* states that it is a tool employed to give things a wide meaning and a distinctive quality with the use of symbols.



Symbol is an object that denotes or suggests to other way of understanding the object. In other words, it represents things beyond their literal connotations. It transcends the actual meaning of the words and objects. As a result, it gives a broader and figurative meaning of the words to the readers which help them to understand the significance of symbols used in the text. Hashmi, in this poem, has used a symbol and he makes his readers to think on a deeper level or beyond the literal meaning of the word. In lines 19-20, the poet writes:

He: the deep structure of this Bodensee. (19 - 20)

In the above line, the poet incorporates the word “Bodensee” as a symbol for Europe. This word is used for Lake Constant in German language. It is a European lake which is connected with three countries— Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It is commonly known as central European lake. So, the poet, in the voice of colonized, is saying that he wants to check this structure of the whole Europe and also wants to figure it out whether they really care about the other people who are not Europeans or they have their own evil and malicious purposes behind this intrusion for the sake of spreading enlightenment. That is why the poet uses the symbol “Bodensee” because he wants to dive in this lake of Europe and wants to explore and to seek the answers of question which he has in his mind.

### **Rhetorical Questions**

Katie Wales in her famous book *A Dictionary of Stylistics* states that rhetorical question is asked for the purpose of getting answers from the readers or audience. It does not expect an answer. It is incorporated and asked for the sake of creating effect in the poem, novel or essay etc. In other words, rhetorical question is a type of persuasive question that can influence a person's response to an audience. In a similar way, Hashmi in this poem also asks rhetorical questions many times. Firstly, the poet, speaking in the voice of colonizer, asks question in lines 13-14. As it is written in the poem:

She: the size of a titmouse? (13-14)

In the above mentioned line, the poet does not need an answer because he knows that the colonized people are like titmouse and they are unable to do something against the colonizers. Secondly, he in the voice of colonizer asks another question in lines 17-18. As he writes:

She: Where? What? Wherefore?” (17-18)

In the above question, the poet does not want to get answer of the question. He puts these ‘W’ questions so that he may generate dramatic and rhythmic effect in the poem. This sort of rhythmic and dramatic effect reaches to its peak when the readers read the rhetorical questions in the last lines of the poem. As Hashmi writes:

She: What? Is your text alright?” (21-22)

Now in the above all mentioned questions, the worth noting point is that the poet emphasizes on the superiority of whites who are not ready to confess the fault of psychological, social, economic and physical exploitation of the those who do not come in the imaginary boundary of the west.

## CONCLUSION

Apparently, the poem appears as if two people (man and woman) are talking with each other but when it is interpreted stylistically, it discloses the hidden meanings such as colonialism and its suppression. The theme of the poem is entrenched in the diction, symbols, imagery, rhetorical questions and metaphor. So, Hashmi, through the medium of figures of speech, has conveyed his considerations about the people of sub- continent who suffered during the period of colonialism. The selected poem “Singing on in the Old Culture; Or the Poem as a Foundling” retains different figures of speech that play a vital role in the depiction of Europeans’ exploitation of the natives and indigenous people. The choice of words play is a significant role in making the poem explicit. This analysis brings forth the intentions of the author in a comprehensible way to the readers. With all the evidences given in the analysis, we may conclude that Hashmi has used an appropriate figurative language which unveils to the readers the theme and subject matter of his poem.

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