

Foregrounding of Hope and Courage for Social uplift in the Poetry of Hamid Khan

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Abstract

Hope and courage are foregrounded in most of the poems of Khan. This paper focuses on the projection of hope and courage foregrounded in Khan's poetry. For this purpose, both the collections of Khan, "Velvet of Loss" and "Pale Leaf (Three Voices)" are used for the data understudy. Only those poems are selected that carry the theme of hope and courage. They are: hope, Ego, New Life, Trust, The Dawn, April Symphony, Abaseen, New Year, and Being Together. So, Khan here gives the message of sticking to hope as it enhances one's courage.

Key Words: social uplift, Hamid Khan, Pakistani context, encouragement

Introduction

Pakistani Literature in English has become a separate subject of interest for young scholars. This was made attractive by the epoch-making venture of Tariq Rahman in the form of writing the *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* in 1990. It covers all the known literary works by the writers of Pakistani origin both inside and outside of Pakistan. It gives special attention to poetry, though it contains lists of dramas and novels as well. Moreover, it provides a guideline to young scholars for searching an area of exploration of their choice. Wilma Blue (first para) comments on Tariq Rehman's book, *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* that it is like an encyclopedia. One can learn a lot from it. In the same line of review, Mary Tobin (first para) states the Tariq Rehman's *History* gives you useful facts about the nature of Pakistani literature in English.

Omar Tarin, Ilyas Khan, and Majied (2015) trace Pakistani Literature in English to the 1920s. It was the time when the sense of nationalism was getting strong foothold. They discuss the notable writers of the sort, such as Chattopadhyay, M.A. Rashid, Raja Rao, Sarojini Naidu, and Mumtaz. Besides, there were a travelogue by Sake Deen Mahomet, and translations from Bengali into English of Rabindranath Tagore by himself. In this connection, Hamid Khan, too, needs proper attention, as he, like many other local writers, tries to attract our attention towards the problems of the modern man, especially those of Pakistanis.

Hamid Khan is a local poet writing in English. He did his PhD in English. Khan writes poetry in English centering both local and worldwide issues and human failings such as war, oppression, women rights, corruption, and hypocrisy, to mention a few. He does so through the tools of foregrounding, i.e. deviation and parallelism. His poetry is very terse and stenographic and, more often, grips the reader's attention through unusual usage of linguistic choices. Moreover, his poetry carries deviation on various levels, such as syntactic, semantic and graphological. As far as parallelism is concerned, he maintains it through phonemes as well as repetition of certain words that connote socio-cultural implications especially in the context of Pakistan and generally elsewhere in the world. It is needful to explore the hidden messages, in such type of poetry as Khan's, through the tools of foregrounding.

Method

Toolan (1990) states that stylistic analysis that it can be used even for the teaching of language and of literature. He further avers that it helps in exploring the diverse reading of similar texts and

“It can be used to assist in seeing features that might not otherwise have been noticed. It can shed light on the crafted texture of the literary text, as well as offering a productive form of assistance in completing interpretations, making them more complex and richer. Stylistics can thus be used both as a descriptive tool and as a catalyst for interpretation.” (42)

In this connection, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) opine that despite the fact that both poetic and conventional languages integrate conceptually on the basis of certain principles, they are different at the same time. For instance, the divergence in the grammar of a poet is based on the poet’s perception of the world around them.

Likewise, Leech (1969) states that without going back to linguistic notions and concepts much of the terms of literary criticism cannot possibly be explained such as metaphor and irony, etc. Stylistic analysis can be carried out through various levels, such as at the level of: graphology, phonology, morphology, and lexico-syntax. About lexico-syntax level of analysis Tallerman (1998) quoted in Imran Hussain & Sana Mansoor (2017) states that “Lexico-Syntactic choices are obtained through devices such as piling of usual collocates, unusual collocates, archaic words, particular parts of speech, metaphor, simile, oxymoron etc” (P. 1) It depends upon the choice of the researcher whether they choose one, two or more levels to look through a piece of literature. In this connection, Leech and Short (1981) states that there are four ways to analyze texts: syntax, phonology, semantics and graphology. Alabi (2008) explains that graphological features include the foregrounded punctuation marks, italics, spacing, and size of print, etc.

Again, I. A. Richards (1929) points out four types of textual functions and meanings that are, sense, feelings, tone, and intention. In addition, Jakobson’s (1961) six functions are more elaborate in this connection. They are: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, poetic, and meta-linguistic. Among them the poetic function stands out which according to Jakobson (1960: 358) “the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination’. On the other hand, Halliday’s (1967) describes three major functions viz., “ideational, interpersonal and textual” (Leech & Short, 1981, p. 30), though Fairclough (1995, p 4) explains that written texts are “multi semiotic” and exploit various forms of graphic designs apart from sound effects, diagrams and photographs.

In this paper, the poems are analyzed on the basis of foregrounding. The main tools of foregrounding are deviation and parallelism. This categorization is mentioned by Martindale (2007), quoted in Lesley Moss (2014) which is also supported by Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006), and Shen (2007).

Analysis

The poems, *Hope, New Life, Bliss, Being Together*, and *Ego* occur in *Pale Leaf (Three Voices)*, whereas the rest of the poems understudy are part of Khan’s collection, *Velvet of Loss*. Following is their detailed analysis.

Hope

The baby is advised to look up to God and seek His help as there is nothing else but disgrace if he expects the dust (humans) to help him. He should always be hopeful for better. The repetition of the consonant sounds can be put into the word form of *bowed* that foregrounds the stresses to bow before the Creator and not to bow before the creation.

There is dash in the second and third lines, hence, foregrounds the ultimate misery and bad days that will occur in case one falls prey to worldly assistance. Through the word *boy* the childish behavior of humans is brought to the surface that they are unwise enough that they do not seek God's help in time of trial and tribulations. Similarly, the fear that emanates from the dust is deviant. The dust is made horrifying and is brought in juxtaposition with the sky (God) that can minimize the intensity and even eliminate the fear thoroughly, hence the instruction is implied as to avoid human help and directly recourse to God in time of calamity.

Ego

The speaker of the poem followed his ego, though it was despised by God, hence he climbed down. Humans give great importance to their ego and this is foregrounded through the personification of ego. The start of the poem with the pronoun *I* too supports this fact. The concept of ego is negatively forwarded through the use of synecdoche in the sentence *The sky looked down upon me*. Moreover, gathering of the scattered shadow foregrounds the shattered spirits within on one side and steadfastness on the other.

The dominant theme of the poem is the reawakening of consciousness towards negating the egotistic approach which is foregrounded through the consonances that occur in the poem. By combining the phrases, in which the repetition of sounds occur, can be regrouped thereby giving way to the sentence *down upon, I ran down to gather the bits*.

Bliss

The speaker of the poem prays that he may see his beloved! He is in need of a kiss in order to appease his desolate heart. The pangs of separation are foregrounded through the noun phrase *bruised heart*. The agony of loneliness can be minimized through a *kiss*. It is not an ordinary kiss rather a *genuine kiss*. The qualification of *kiss* through the adjective *genuine* does not generally go normal, hence it foregrounds that previously the attachment of the beloved with the speaker of the poem was not based on sincerity that is why the poet is making prayer for genuineness. Seeking God's help too suggests that there is not only the absence of the beloved but also the absence of true love. The speaker of the poem does not want to be interrogated as to what is right or not, rather he is in need of sincere love. The signs of exclamation foreground lack of sincerity in relationships as they are based on *heresies*. The idea of reunion is embodied in the phrases where the parallel sounds occur. These phrases are put in proper syntactic order, hence they give the thematic sentence, i.e. *ask not too many questions; come to me (as your union with me is) stored for me in the treasures of the skies*. (Parenthesis is mine).

New Life

It is unbelievable as to how the speaker of the poem got successful, though it is a fact. He has gained great experience. He has also got the experience of highly spirited youth whose desires are not fulfilled. Setting aside all the hardships of life, the speaker is hopeful for *new life*.

The abrupt beginning with the pronoun *you* foregrounds the generalization of the message of hope. Similarly, the nightmares are restricted to old men only and the end of (all) the young men is restricted to dusty rooms foreground the ill doing of man through the course of time on one side and to lack of activity and hard work on part of the young ones on the other. Through the code-switched word *Babus* the condition of the local people are foregrounded.

Moreover, the consonances and alliterations that occur in the words and phrases foreground the message that it is true that those who dream only will die without achieving any goal in their life. These words and phrases are: *And I myself am trying hard to not to believe it too* (alliteration of /t/); *but it is true* (consonance of /t/); *having seen too much of life* (consonance of /f/); *dream high dreams* (alliteration of /d/ and /m/ consonance); and *end in some dust rooms* (consonance of /d/).

Trust

The *Trust* shows the gap of misunderstanding between the speaker of the poem and the pronoun *you* (a universal pronoun) telling about his beloved and everyone around him at the same time. The speaker starts to worship God instead of expecting from humans. He thinks that no one is fool enough to understand what is being done against them. The phrase *prayer beads* is put at the extreme end to the word *chasm* thereby giving the idea of filling the gap through religious practices as it enhances one's hope. The thin trust and feverish touch to the prayer beads are juxtaposed to foreground the idea that religion is the last hope in time of hopelessness. The combination of the phrases that contain consonance gives the sentence, *the thinning of trust is the retreat that matters* which foregrounds the importance of trust in all matters of life.

The Dawn

Night is giving way to *a new dawn*. The artist tries to *fight/ the evils/ of the night* as the surrounding environment is not wholly conducive. This poem is the combination of hope and struggle to fight the evils. The capitalization of the initial letter of the word *New* is deviant thereby stressing the break in continuity. This break is stretched to the foregrounded sentence that the artist is fighting the evils which gives the idea evils can be destroyed and reforms can be materialized through art, only then the darkness can be converted into light and enlightenment as is clear from the deviant phrase of *melting of the night*. The consonances of /n/, /t/, /f/, /l/, /s/ can be reshaped into words like *not so fool* which can further be converted into *not to be so fool* that the system will remain the same. It gives hope.

April Symphony

April Symphony starts with a question about the frequently visited streets by the broken hearts. Then the poem moves on to the second strophe that asks the day of the visitors followed by

Perhaps! The last strophe values the *April breeze* with sweet musicality and the fruitfulness of the earth. The war-torn city streets are foregrounded through the noun phrase *Remade world* which, again, is put parallel to *broken men* that foregrounds that the people are sick and tired of war and the devastation of war, hence it is doubtful as to whether they will enjoy the newly-built streets or not. This is applicable to the afghan-Russian war as well as war on terror with reference to Afghanistan and FATA. Moreover, the annoyance and hopelessness of the war stricken people is foregrounded through the use of question and exclamation marks in the second strophe and their lack of movement towards their once left houses and the city is foregrounded through the lack of verb in the same strophe. The personification of the April breeze provides a ray of hope for these displaced people. This idea is further strengthened through productivity of the earth.

The parallel phonemes (/n/, /i:/, /z/, /d/, /s/, /t/) can be anagrammatized as *neat days* thereby giving the idea that everything has got normalcy, though the devastative effects were so alarming that it shook the very belief in peace of the people.

Abaseen

The poem *Abaseen* opens with a question that asks the speaker about his inability to compose. The answer is given that it is bad to harp on the same string – to show that there is no hope; *Life is not/ a forgotten pond*, rather life is like water in *Abaseen* (the Indus) that moves on maintaining its freshness and vivacity. Through the word *Abaseen* the idea of movement and liveliness is conveyed. Hence, if one tries to avoid harping on the same string, then they can find topics of value by going to *Abaseen* that is a river which in turn symbolizes life. Moreover, the code-switching in the form of *Abaseen* further foregrounds the idea that creative artists should pay heed to domestic issues and problems. They should avoid the cliché of despondence as life is not like stagnant water rather full of diversity and liveliness like the river *Abaseen*. The alliterations and assonances too give us the idea of continuity. The phrase *Olympian god* gives the idea of unavoidability of an event. Thus it is conveyed that to avoid repetition in creativity is not impossible.

New Year

New Year is full of hope – *breeze, blossom, bouncy morning, rooster/ picking corns, fruit*, the chirping of the sparrows, strengthening of the dream, and revitalization of the year. The overwhelming joy is foregrounded through singing of the trees. The lack of verbs strengthens the idea of joy as lack of verb suggests lack of activity but feeling joy only. The foregrounded sounds can be ordered as *spiid is twds minds* which corresponds to *speed is towards mind*. This suggests that mind is boosted up and refreshed with the chirping of the birds.

Being Together

Despite the fact that both the lover and the beloved suffer but they are happy for being together. The adverb of affirmation at the beginning of the poem foregrounds the acceptance of sorrow as they share their perils together as is supported by the pronoun *our*. The idea of killing the problem jointly is also foregrounded through the repetitive assonances of /i/, and /u/ thereby corresponding to *I* and *you*. The overall effect the poem foregrounds is that of unity in thick and thin.

Discussion and Conclusion

Hope for the good days to come and the courage to do something for that are embodied in *Hope, Trust, New Year, April Symphony, The Bliss, New Life, Ego, Abaseen and The Dawn*.

The theme of hope in the poem, *New Year* is foregrounded through various linguistic choices. Through the transferred epithet, *singing* of the trees, the overall jubilant mood is projected. Moreover, the lack of verb foregrounds sitting and having fun; no activity at all. Similarly, Khan has maintained the repetition of phonemes in such a way that, by grouping them, they give the corresponding sentence *speed is towards mind*. This suggests that mind is boosted up and refreshed with the chirping of the birds.

The same message of hope and courage is extended towards *April Symphony*. Though the poem's overall effect is the horrors of war, yet there is the element of hope as well which is foregrounded through the personification of the breeze and through the reference to the productivity of the earth. Through the repetition of various phonemes, Khan stresses that currently everything has come to normal routine after the war. This encouragement is carried out through the phonemes (/n/, /i:/, /z/, /d/, /s/, /t/) which is anagrammatized as *neat days*.

The Dawn is also carrying the projected message of encouragement for a happy life. Through the capitalization of *N* in the word, *New*, the break in continuous gloom is foregrounded. Khan, further, uses semantic deviation by saying that the artist is fighting the evils of the night thereby stressing the need for true visionary and literary people, as they on their own entertaining and indirect way have the faculty of reforming the society. He projects this idea further through *melting of the night*. The repetition of the consonances /n/, /t/, /f/, /l/, /s/ too highlights the same idea of hope, as these phonemes can be regrouped and anagrammatized as *not to be so fool* that suggests that good days are not far away; one does not need to play fools.

The idea of courage and hope is also foregrounded in the poem, *Trust*. Through the unusual word combination, the idea of hope is projected by Khan. The thin trust and feverish touch to the prayer beads are juxtaposed to highlight the idea that religion is the last hope in time of hopelessness. This can only be gained by having trust in God's mercy which is foregrounded through the combination of the words and phrases that carry the repetition of various phonemes thereby giving the sentence, *the thinning of trust is the retreat that matters*.

In the poem, *Hope*, Khan has both explicitly and implicitly stressed the idea that whatever the case may be, one should not lose their nerve and continue trusting in God. He addresses the *boy* which foregrounds that humans do not know the power of having trust in the mercy of God. This idea is further supported through the repetition of phonemes that gives the word, *bowed*, by grouping them, which in turn highlights that to seek the help of the Creator only is the remedy of all the social and physical ailments. Similarly, through the deviated use of dash, Khan clarifies that bad days will be seen by those who seek worldly assistance. This same idea is also foregrounded through the statement that *fear* emanates from the dust.

Through the linguistic choice in the poem, *Ego*, Khan has foregrounded the concept of ego and its leading to fatality when one is obsessed with it. The message of hope is implied, as one can only save from the fatal clutches of egotism by giving away with it. This is projected through the deviant phrase, *gathering the scattered shadows*. Hence, the advice that one should always be humble and meek is projected. This, Khan achieves through the use of synecdoche in the sentence *The sky looked down upon me*. So, there is hope for the betterment if one gets conscious of the fruits of hope and courage to face the challenges and to avoid self-centeredness and egotism at the same time.

Bliss continues with the idea of courage and hope for the better. Khan, through his choices of words and punctuations, projects the idea that true can possibly achieved if the lover and the beloved are sincere to each other, hence the element of hope is implied through the call for sincere union and for this purpose they will have to seek the help of God. He supports this idea by the repetition of phonemes the combining of which can result in the sentence, “ask not too many questions; come to me (as your union with me is) stored for me in the treasures of the skies.” Lack of sincerity leads to lack of true love as is foregrounded through the sign of exclamation. So, this is the only way to get rid of the agony of heart. Khan achieves this effect through the deviant noun phrase, *bruised heart*.

Moreover, the generalization of hope is foregrounded through the abrupt beginning with the pronoun, *you* in the poem, *New Life*. Khan gives reference to the code switched word, *Babus*, which foregrounds the delaying tactics thereby leading to general lazy condition of today’s youth. This effect is furthered through the *nightmares* of the old people that shows the deep concerns of the mature people of the society that believe that nothing is gained without hard work. So, the message of hope is implied here that if one works hard and shuns laziness, they can work wonders. Similarly, Khan’s choice of repetition of phonemes too support this idea. These phonemes are /t/, /t/, /f/, /d/, /m/, and /d/. The sentences and phrases where these repetitions occur give us the conditional message that if one tries to achieve their goal then it is only possible through hard labour otherwise they die *in some dusty room*.

Through the poem, *Abaseen*, Khan stresses the idea that there are various issues one can write on; there is no need of harping on the same string. This he projects through the metaphor that life is not *a forgotten pond*. Moreover, he gives us hope to do something of value and get lesson from the freshness and vivacity of the river. Through the code-switched word, *Abaseen*, the centuries old principle of life is projected that those who are active and muster up courage to embark upon innovative ordeals will always succeed in every walk of life. This idea is further strengthened through the use of alliteration and consonance. The phrase, *Olympiangod*, gives the idea of unavailability of an event. Thus, it conveys the impossibility of freshness in creativity. Moreover, it also gives us the message that one is free to do whatever they want to do, as that would lame excuse on part of those who pretend that they are bound by religion or authority and they could cross certain limits. Hence, the message of courage and hope for the better is foregrounded through and through in *Abaseen*.

The poem, *Being Together*, carries the message of courage and hope. Here, Khan employs linguistic choices and parallel sound patterns that foreground his desired theme. He projects the acceptance of sorrow through the adverb of affirmation. Moreover, to stand united in every thick

and thin is foregrounded through the repetitive phonemes, /i/ and /u/ thereby corresponding to *I* and *you*.

Thus, the message of hope for the better and courage to change one's destiny through firm belief in the mercy of God and constant struggle to gain one's ideal is foregrounded dexterously through deviation and parallel structure.

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