

FROM SOIL TO SOUL: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF PHONOLOGICAL PARALLELISM IN FARZANA AQIB'S POEM

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1. Abstract

This paper offers a stylistic analysis of Farzana Aqib's poem *From Soil to Soul* (2021), highlighting its use of phonological parallelism. The poem's resilient tone is conveyed through repetition of sounds and the careful alignment of its meaning. Employing the stylistic tools of phonological patterning, this study investigates how the poet affirms human value and existential connectivity, even in fragmentation. The research is based on qualitative content analysis with a stylistic framework.

2. Keywords

Farzana Aqib, stylistics, phonological parallelism, resilience, identity, sound symbolism

3. Background of the Study

Modern poetry often uses minimalistic language and vivid imagery to express profound philosophical and existential concepts. Farzana Aqib's "From Soil to Soul" emerges as a metaphysical poem that encapsulates the transformation of matter into spirit, reinforcing ideas of resilience, transcendence, and cosmic unity. As stylistics bridges literature and linguistics, this study applies stylistic tools to uncover deeper layers of meaning in the poem.

4. Problem Statement

Despite the growing prominence of Pakistani English poetry, many contemporary poets like Farzana Aqib remain underexplored in terms of stylistic and linguistic analysis. There is a lack of research on how phonological parallelism in such poems enhances thematic depth and aesthetic experience.

5. Literature Review

Parallelism enhances literary themes through repetition and contrast (Leech & Short, 2007). Studies show it emphasizes ideas (Leech, 1969; Wales, 2014), shapes perspectives via opposing meanings (Semino, 2008), and reflects social realities through language (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014).

Shah et al. (2022a) analyze Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess* using phonological stylistics, highlighting how sound patterns like alliteration and pauses reflect patriarchal authority. Their study suggests that Browning's use of phonological parallelism reinforces themes of male dominance and female subjugation in Victorian society.

In a related study, Shah et al. (2022b) explore graphological features such as punctuation and layout, showing how these visual elements contribute to the poem's power dynamics. Both analyses demonstrate that Browning's stylistic choices are deeply tied to socio-political commentary on gender roles. Moreover, Shah and Khan (2025) analyze how word repetition and contrasts in Aqib's (2021) poem *From Soil to Soul* show struggles and strength. Using stylistic theories (Leech & Short, 2007; Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014), they prove how repeated phrases like "will still" and opposing ideas (crushing vs. surviving) highlight oppression and resistance. Their work fills a gap by studying these techniques in postcolonial feminist poetry, showing how language expresses marginalized voices.

While examined in classical poetry, its role in postcolonial feminist works like Aqib's (2021) *From Soil to Soul* remains underexplored in terms of phonological parallelism. Thus, a gap appears in the phonological interpretation of the poem *From Soil to Soul*. This study analyzes the repetitive sounds in the form of alliteration, assonance, and consonance in the poem.

6. Theoretical Framework

This analysis is grounded in:

Phonological Parallelism: Jakobson (1960) and Leech (1969) define this as the repetition of similar sound structures (e.g., alliteration, assonance, rhyme) to reinforce poetic effect.

7. Methodology

Design: Qualitative content analysis

Data Source: The poem *From Soil to Soul* (2021) by Farzana Aqib is from one of the poetry collections named *A Stardust Drape*

Method: Close reading and stylistic analysis focusing on sound patterns such as alliteration, consonance, and assonance. The sounds were then rearranged into meaningful anagrams while keeping the sociopolitical context of Pakistan.

Tools: Jakobsonian and Leech models of stylistic and grammatical analysis

8. Analysis and Discussion

Short Summary of the Poem

The poem portrays resilience as it describes how much one is ground, crushed, and hurt. They remain precious. Thus, it shows that the poet does not accept defeat and gives up. It highlights the speaker's relation with the greater plan and the connection between the physical world and the spiritual.

Re-arrangement and Modification of Alliteration, Consonance, and Assonance through Anagram

Leech and Short explain that “patterns of repetition and variation in sound, such as alliteration and assonance, are integral to the stylistic texture of a text, drawing attention to significant words and enhancing aesthetic appeal” (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 130) as that can be seen in case of the words mist and tribe.

Table: Meaningful Anagrams.

No	Rearrangement of Sounds	Meaningful Anagrams
1	The combination of /m/ (consonance), /i/ (assonance), /s/ (consonance), and /t/ consonance suggests the word.	Mist
2	The combination of /t/ (consonance), /r/ (consonance), /ai/ (assonance), and /b/(consonance) suggest the word.	Tribe
3	The combination of /s/ (consonance), and /ai/ (assonance) suggests the word.	Sigh
4	The combination of /t/ (consonance), /ai/ (assonance), and /m/ consonance suggests the word.	Time

a) Mist

The sounds suggest the word Mist that signifies various concepts such as unpredictability, ambiguity, and confusion. It is the uncertainty about something. If a thing is confusing, then it is not clear. It contains absurdity that cannot be recognized easily. The title of the poem is *From soil to soul* where the word soil represents body and physical appearance while the soul indicates the spiritual thing which is not visible. It does not have a physical existence. Hence, the body or physical appearance in turn implies the human existence on earth. It may

be the surrounding environment or each thing that exists. In this connection, the suggested word *mist* recommends the unpredictable, confusing, and ambiguous nature of humans which cannot be trusted easily. The poet might think that one should not blindly believe in this world as it is full of betrayal. Nobody is pure in this world. There is politics in every corner of the world. Everybody changes his/her color accordingly. However, in the title of the poem that is *from soil to soul*. The poet suggests the readers to be as pure as the soul which does not have a stain. In short, the speaker of the poem wants her readers to be honest, loyal, and sincere. It implies the journey of people in Pakistan from impureness to pureness. It simply demands the transformation of human beings. In addition, *mist* is mostly found in the morning and evening time. It suggests the transformation of night into day and day into night. In simple words, it represents the change. On the one hand, it signifies the light, hope, and optimism when the night turns into a day. This suggests that the struggle, miseries, or difficult times lead to happiness or personal growth. It also indicates that there is a day after night. The darkest moments of life are for sometimes. After that, it turns into the happiest moments of life. While on the other hand, it signals the darkness and pessimism when the day turns into a night. This implies the ups and downs and rise and fall of the situation of people in Pakistan. Thus, it suggests the life of the middle and lower-class people where days and nights occur.

b) Tribe

The sounds such as alliteration, consonance, and assonance imply the word "tribe". Besides, the poem understudy reflects the theme of resilience which is witnessed from its lines such as Hack me into pieces, I will still remain precious, pluck me from the branch, I will still be blossomed, smash me, crush me, grind me, I will still spark, like stardust. Thus, there are various tribes in Pakistan but the readers are attracted to the tribe of Pashtuns as they are too famous for their resilience. In the tribal areas, they faced extremism and terrorism. But they still somehow managed the situation and would adapt to the challenges accordingly. Furthermore, Pashtuns have led various movements of resistance in the history. One of them is about Abdul Ghaffar Khan who led the non-violent resistance movement against British colonial rule. He was trying to resist their imperialistic attitude and culture through peaceful resistance. In this connection, it also suggests that the women in Pakistan have been suffering for decades. The speaker of the poem in this sense wants all of them to be resilient, as it is one of the unstoppable activities in Pakistan. It is witnessed from the presence of verbs in the first seven lines of the poem, such as hack, remain, pluck, blossomed, smash, crushes, grinds, and spark, as their presence reflects the happening of an action or activity. Thus, it suggests the ongoing and unstoppable activity of women's maltreatment in a patriarchal society.

c) Sigh

The sounds suggest the word *sigh* as it shows sadness, disappointment, relief, and exhaustion. It implies the sadness and disappointment of the common people for the miserable condition of Pakistan, as it is getting worse economically, politically, and socially. It is not even suitable for living. On the other hand, it also represents the speaker's sadness and disappointment for Pakistan because nobody wants to stay in it. According to the International Labor Organization (n.d.), more than 11 million Pakistanis have gone abroad for jobs, a trend that has been ongoing since December 2019. In this connection, the poet feels very much worried for Pakistan, that if it persists, what will it make of Pakistan? In short, the speaker of the poem suggests staying in Pakistan as it is our own country. Good things will also start happening.

D)Time

The sounds give birth to a word *time*. In the poem, only two-time factors have been mentioned, and they are present and future time factors. On the one hand, as far as the present time factor is concerned, it suggests issues and problems in Pakistan that are currently going on such as political instability, unemployment, inflation, unhealthy economy, social inequality, challenges in education and healthcare, the impacts of climate change, its wrong strategies and so on. On the other hand, as far as the future time factor is concerned, it gives us the hope that everything will settle slowly and gradually over time. The lines that show the future time factor are I will remain precious, I will still be blossomed, and I will still spark. The said lines are optimistic as they give the readers hope regarding a better Pakistan, which is in the making. It encourages the Pakistanis to be resilient for some time. It will become precious one day. In short, the present time factor sheds light on the continuing issues, while the future time factor leaves the readers hopeful.

9. Findings and Conclusion

The poem *From Soil to Soul* by Farzana Aqib is a deeply evocative piece reflecting themes of resilience, transformation, and existential affirmation. Through the metaphor of bodily fragmentation, the speaker asserts unwavering inner value and spiritual endurance. The poem's sound structures create an anagrammatic resonance revealing four key semantic themes—Mist, Tribe, Sigh, and Time—each explored through stylistic devices.

a) Mist: Symbol of Uncertainty and Moral Ambiguity

The mist represents life's transience, moral ambiguity, and the transformation of confusion into clarity.

b) Tribe: Allusion to Collective Resilience and Historical Struggle. The phonemes imply collective endurance, especially of Pashtuns and oppressed women.

c) Sigh: Expression of Disillusionment and Hope

A symbol of exhaustion and emotional burden, yet also catharsis and spiritual hope.

d) Time: A Dialectic of Despair and Hope. The contrast of present despair with future optimism encourages resilience and belief in transformation.

In short, the poem uses stylistic devices—especially phonological parallelism—to create symbolic layers that reflect social, emotional, and spiritual struggles. The analysis demonstrates that such patterns enrich both form and meaning, emphasizing the poem's central message of resilience and transformation.

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