

CRYING THROUGH SOUNDS: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF FARZANA AQIB'S *WHERE IS MY FARMER* THROUGH PHONOLOGICAL PARALLELISM

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Abstract

*This study explores how phonological parallelism enhances the emotional and thematic depth of Farzana Aqib's poem *Where is my farmer*. Using a stylistic approach, the research focuses on the repetition of sounds, such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance to examine how these patterns support meaning-making and highlight the poet's expression of grief, resistance, and social commentary. The poem was analyzed through close reading and documentation, identifying sound-based patterns and linking them to real-life issues faced by farmers in Pakistan, such as poverty, neglect, and despair. The study finds that phonological parallelism not only beautifies the poem but also strengthens its emotional impact and message. It concludes that sound devices in poetry can powerfully reflect personal sorrow and collective struggle, making them essential tools in socially conscious literature.*

Keywords: Phonological parallelism, stylistic analysis, Farzana Aqib, Pakistani poetry, alliteration, assonance, consonance, emotional expression, sound patterns, poetic resistance

Background of the Study

Poetry has long served as a powerful tool for expressing human emotions, personal struggles, and societal concerns. Through the use of sound patterns, imagery, and rhythm, poets often highlight deeper meanings and give voice to the voiceless. In recent years, the application of stylistic analysis, especially foregrounding theory, has gained importance in understanding how linguistic choices contribute to literary meaning (Leech & Short, 2007).

Foregrounding refers to the deliberate use of linguistic deviation or repetition to draw attention to particular parts of a text. This technique, often seen in poetry, helps readers emotionally engage with the content while also uncovering social or political undertones (Simpson, 2004). Phonological foregrounding, in particular, focuses on the repetition of sounds such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance, which enhance the poem's aesthetic and thematic impact.

In countries like Pakistan, where agriculture forms a major part of the economy, farmers frequently face challenges such as poverty, exploitation, debt, and even suicide. These harsh realities are seldom given adequate attention in mainstream discourse (Brar, 2023). Poetry that reflects these struggles can serve as a form of social commentary and resistance.

The poem *Where is my farmer* by Farzana Aqib, included in her poetry collection *A Stardust Drape* (2023), portrays the emotional and social struggles of a woman whose farmer husband is absent. The poem uses rich phonological patterns to communicate grief, loss, and socio-political concerns. This makes it an ideal subject for a stylistic and socio-political analysis, combining both qualitative interpretation and quantitative observation of sound patterns.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze the poem *Where is my farmer* by Farzana Aqib using both qualitative and quantitative methods. It aims to explore how repeated sound patterns like alliteration, assonance, and consonance create emotional impact and highlight social and political issues, especially those faced by farmers in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Stylistic analysis has increasingly become a valuable method in literary studies, particularly in the interpretation of poetry. Scholars such as Leech and Short (2007) argue that foregrounding, through linguistic deviation or parallelism, plays a central role in how readers

experience and interpret literary texts. This method focuses on how specific features like sound patterns, repetition, and deviation from norms heighten attention and emotional engagement. Leech and Short's model has become a foundation for modern stylistic studies, especially in analyzing how form and meaning interrelate. Their approach has been widely applied to understand both narrative and poetic texts in English literature.

Phonological features, such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance, are especially effective in poetry because they help construct rhythm, mood, and thematic resonance. Jakobson (1960) emphasized the poetic function of language, which centers attention on the message itself, particularly through its form. Building on this, Simpson (2004) notes that phonological parallelism creates a foregrounding effect that not only beautifies the text but also strengthens its semantic and emotional impact. In socio-politically engaged poetry, these sound patterns often reinforce urgency, pain, protest, or cultural identity. Researchers have applied these techniques in analyzing war poetry, feminist poetry, and protest literature to reveal deeper layers of meaning (Jeffries, 2010).

In the context of South Asian literature, especially Pakistani poetry, stylistic studies remain relatively limited, although there is growing interest in analyzing how form interacts with themes such as gender, identity, and socio-economic struggle. Recent work by Brar (2023) explores how literary texts reflect the agricultural crisis in Pakistan, especially from the perspective of marginalized communities. Farzana Aqib's poem "Where is My Farmer" can be seen as part of this evolving tradition of poetic resistance. The use of repeated sounds in her work provides an entry point for both qualitative interpretation and quantitative analysis, offering insights into how form can echo the socio-political voice of rural women and farmers.

Lastly, Farzana Aqib's poem *Where is my farmer* has not yet been examined in detail through the lens of "phonological parallelism", despite its rich auditory texture and its potential to reflect rural grief and resistance. This study addresses this gap by offering a focused stylistic analysis of the poem's sound devices to reveal how Aqib's use of repetition in sound contributes to both aesthetic appeal and social meaning.

Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods stylistic approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative elements to investigate how phonological features, such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance, contribute to emotional depth and socio-political commentary in Farzana Aqib's poem *Where is my farmer*.

1. Research Design

The study follows a mixed-method research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative dimension involves interpretive stylistic analysis grounded in linguistic foregrounding theory. Moreover, the quantitative dimension involves numerical identification and categorization of repetitious sound patterns (e.g., frequency of specific alliterative or assonantal sounds), thus lending empirical support to interpretive claims. This dual approach enhances the depth and rigour of the analysis by aligning objective sound patterns with subjective thematic interpretations.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study is primarily informed by Foregrounding Theory as developed by Leech and Short (2007) in *Style in Fiction*, which highlights deviation and parallelism as mechanisms to draw readers' attention to stylistic features. Additional theoretical underpinnings include:

Roman Jakobson's notion of the poetic function of language, focusing on how formal structures like repetition shape meaning.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), emphasizing how linguistic choices, including phonological ones serve ideational and interpersonal functions.

3. Data Collection

The primary text is the poem *Where is my farmer*, located on page 148 of Farzana Aqib's poetry collection *A Stardust Drape*. The selection was based on purposive sampling, chosen for its rich sound patterns and its thematic resonance with the socio-political struggles of farmers in Punjab and Pakistan. Data was collected through document analysis.

4. Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis involved a combination of quantitative enumeration and qualitative interpretation, carried out in the following steps:

Identification and Quantification of Phonological Patterns: Instances of alliteration, assonance, and consonance were identified and counted numerically to observe patterns and intensities of repetition.

Semantic Grouping: Repetitive sounds were linked to word clusters (e.g., "family", "fee", "fever", "films", "equipment", "pandemic") forming semantic fields.

Socio-Political Interpretation: These word clusters were then interpreted in light of social, economic, and political realities, such as economic disparity, farmer suicides, healthcare issues, and pandemic-related suffering.

Intertextual and Contextual Justification: External sources (e.g., SAMAA TV, Brar 2023, news articles, reports) were consulted to validate the thematic interpretations and ground them in contemporary socio-political contexts.

5. Validity and Reliability

Validity was ensured by triangulating poetic data with real-world socio-political evidence, maintaining a strong link between literary form and social function. Reliability was addressed by applying a consistent analytical lens, foregrounding theory supported by phonological parallelism and frequency analysis throughout the study.

6. Ethical Considerations

No human subjects were involved. All interpretations are based on publicly available literary and journalistic texts. Proper attribution and citation practices were followed to ensure academic integrity.

Analysis & Discussion

Poem : Where is my farmer

Short Summary of the Poem

The title of the poem is "Where is my farmer" and it lies on page number 148. In this poem, the farmer is no longer with her, which is why she is crying. Besides, she frequently asks about the farmer who has promised her to make her taste the salt of his fields. Furthermore, one day, she is conveniently viewing all the nearby village spots alone. For instance, a fresh evening breeze and sunset vista.

Rearrangement and Modification of Sounds

Leech and Short (2007) state that "the rearrangement and modification of sounds in literary texts is a powerful tool for foregrounding, enhancing rhythm and evoking specific emotional responses, thereby enriching the overall aesthetic experience" (p. 106).

Table: Meaningful Anagrams.

No	Rearrangement of Sounds	Meaningful Anagrams
1	The combination of /f/ consonance, /æ/ assonance, /m/ consonance, /i/ assonance, /l/ consonance, and /ə/ assonance suggests the word.	Family
2	The combination of /p/ (consonance), /ə/ assonance, /t/ consonance, /d/ assonance, /k/ consonance, /ʌ/ assonance, /r/ consonance, /i/ assonance, /n/ consonance, /m/ consonance, and /v/ assonance suggests the word.	Productive Economy
3	The combination of /f/ (consonance), and /i:/ (assonance) suggests the word.	Fee
4	The combination of /f/ (consonance), /i:/ (assonance), /v/ consonance, /r/consonance, and /ə/ assonance suggests the word.	Fever
5	The combination of /w/, /p/, /k/, consonance, /i/ assonance, /n/ consonance, /m/ consonance, /ə/ assonance, and /t/ consonance suggests the word.	Equipment
6	The combination of /f/ consonance, /i/ assonance, /m/ consonance, and /l/ consonance suggests the word.	Films
7	The combination of /p/ consonance, /k/ consonance, /æ and e/ assonances, /n/ consonance /i/ assonance, /m/ consonance, and /d/ consonance suggests the word.	Pandemic

a) Family

The sounds such as alliteration, consonance, and assonance engender a word family. It brings about an idea regarding the family of a farmer who does not spend their life comfortably as the farmer cannot earn that much money from farming. Their lives are very miserable. Besides, even the basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothes are not fulfilled. They do not get that much earning what they deserve. In this connection, they also suffer from the inferiority complex which puts stress on their mental health. That is why, depression occurs in their lives which in turn becomes the main cause of their suicides. The farmer's suicides take the scholar to Punjab as most of the suicide cases occur in Punjab.

Furthermore, (Brar, 2023), unfolds the harsh reality of farmer's suicide in Punjab as this issue has been oppressed and suppressed for decades. It is not represented through social media because it is given less attention. In Punjab, suicide cases have the highest rate and it has various causes and reasons which are deeply rooted. The reasons overlap with one another. For instance, the farmers are not backed up by the government, failure of crops, debt, and the unexpected or unpredictable condition of weather. The farmers in Punjab greatly depend on expensive inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery. The prices of crops are unpredictable which contributes to the unstable financial condition. That is why, they suffer from higher debts.

Moreover, due to the unavailability of water, tube wells have been used by the farmers which act as a financial burden on farmers. Besides, the excess of water in the form of rain, floods, and infestations plays a pivotal role in depriving the farmers of their earnings, as it causes crop failures. It happens due to natural disasters.

To cut a long story short, other various causes contribute to this problem which make it more challenging for the farmers to repay the loan. Thus, the government must take serious action against this issue which is still unstoppable, as it is causing suicides.

b) Productive Economy

The sounds also suggest the compound word Productive Economy which leads the scholar, in this context, towards the linkage between the productive economy and the agriculture sector. It offers that there is a connection between the country's economy and farming which belongs to the agriculture sector. According to (SAMAA TV, 2021), the previous government which was run by PTI for several years gave importance to farmers. Besides, the then Prime Minister Imran Khan invited farmers from every corner of Pakistan to discuss agriculture, as it was misused by the cartels and mafias at that time. According to the chairman of the Pakistan Kisan Foundation Syed Mahmood Ullah Bukhari, they have never been taken seriously before, as it is happening for the first time in history. The above lines were his words for the then Prime Minister Imran Khan. That is why; he thanked him from the depth of his heart for being very cautious towards agriculture, as it can cause the growth in country's economy if treated properly.

In this connection, the poet agrees and supports Imran Khan's views on agriculture from the suggested word productive economy. (Saleem, 2021) claims that the interference of the then Prime Minister Imran Khan in agriculture was very beneficial for the sugarcane growers as it gave them 90 billion in profit. The intervention was about the Sugar Factories Control Act 2021, which was passed by the Punjab Assembly. Besides, Imran Khan marked the agriculture sector as one of the prominent donors or givers in the economic rise and success of the country. He further promised the representatives of the farmers to keep the country safe from the exploitation and bad actions of mafias.

Furthermore, it was also explained in the interactive session with the farmers that economic growth is directly proportional to the country's agriculture sector. The greater and more successful the agriculture and industrial sectors without any cartel exploitation, the healthier the economy of that country. At that time, various crops like wheat, rice, maize, and sugarcane were produced in the larger amount which played an essential part in the economy. It should also be noted that the profit happened due to the correct policies of the government. Thus, it takes the scholar towards good governance that plays a decisive role in the country's growth. Hence, it recommends that a country should have good governance which is only possible when everybody is under the rule of law. Nobody should be above the rule of law. Everyone should get the same treatment.

In short, from the above discussion, it has been proven that agriculture also plays a momentous role in the development of the country including the economic, social, and political condition of that very country. Hence, on a serious note, the poet suggests that the issues regarding agriculture should be taken into consideration and treated properly.

c) Fee

The sounds also give birth to the word fee which is the payment or money paid to schools, colleges, and universities. It has caught the scholar's attention towards the fee of a farmer's children. They cannot pay their fees due to the financial issues. Hence, they do not get their education properly which makes their future absurd. In this connection, they are raised as illiterates who are harmful to society. To fulfill their needs, they follow the wrong path which leads them towards the bad people of the society. They turn into gangsters who are not only a

headache for society but the entire country. Thus, this is important to give serious thought to this problem to keep the country safe from such activities as the country has already suffered from such criminal acts for the past several years.

d) Fever

The sounds imply a word fever which indicates the health condition of the farmers. They work all day long in the field due to which they become ill and infected. The ones who are not farmers who suffer from fever and high temperature can take rest. However, during the fever, they cannot rest, thereby giving rise to various diseases. In this connection, it is caused due to working in a hot temperature. In short, the speaker of the poem believes that they should be given attention, as the work they do is one of the toughest jobs.

e) Equipment

The sounds give birth to word equipment which takes the scholar's attention towards the agricultural equipment and pieces of machinery. In Pakistan, most of the farmers are getting poorer each passing day. Their financial condition is very miserable. Hence, it indicates the poor farmers who do not have technological advancement. Additionally, the scholar infers that they should be given agricultural equipment and machinery. So that they may also get benefits from such devices. They are also human beings. They must be treated with ease and comfort. They have their large families who are also fed by them. Thus, in this regard, the speaker of the poem wants the farmers to be equipped with agricultural types of machinery. For this, the government must take a serious step in its favor.

f) Films

The word films is also taken from the modification and arrangement of various sounds. It leads the researcher's mind towards the Indian movies which are mostly based on their farmers. Their farmers are also in very miserable condition. Most of them have committed suicide. According to (Think Hike, n.d.), nine Indian movies are solely based on the farmer's ups and downs and their miserable life. It tells us how greatly their lives have been affected due to the issues regarding farming. They are Kisan Kanya released in 1937, Do Bisha Zamin in 1953, Mother India in 1957, Upkar in 1967, Manthan in 1976, Lagaan in 2001, Paan Singh Tomar in 2010, Kadvi Hawa in 2017, and Peepli Live in 2010.

In this connection, the released dates of the movies depict that this problem has been lying in India since 1953, exactly after the 6 years of independence. It indicates that this is one of the biggest problems in India. It also suggests that they have never tried to solve this issue. This has seriously caused pain and destruction in their country. Besides, the number of movies regarding the issues related to farming in India is greater than the movies in Pakistan. That is why; the Indian farmers have grabbed the scholar's attention towards themselves. Thus, the scholar has crossed the boundary because it not only lies in Pakistan but in India too.

g) Pandemic

The scholar also infers the word Pandemic from the sounds. It takes the researcher towards the recent pandemic that is COVID-19. This has further caught the attention of the impact of COVID-19 on farmers. (Yamanoo and Wasim, 2022), claim that in Pakistan, two provinces have largely been affected due to the pandemic such as COVID-19. They are Sindh and Punjab. Most of the farmers in Pakistan are found in these two provinces. From April 1st, 2020 to May 9, 2020, the government of Pakistan imposed a lockdown on Pakistan. Nobody could move to Sindh and Punjab. Throughout the entire year, the supply chain was affected. The consumption of the food was declined in Punjab and Sindh. They faced extreme hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, in 2020 and 2021, farmers in Sindh have gone through a great loss in tomato marketing. They had a bad experience during the pandemic. The poet believes that the

government of Pakistan must be prepared for another pandemic to stop the great loss from happening. They must show activeness in this regard.

Findings

The stylistic analysis of Farzana Aqib's poem "Where is My Farmer" revealed significant use of phonological parallelism, notably alliteration, assonance, and consonance—which function as both aesthetic devices and carriers of socio-political meaning. Repetition of sounds like /f/, /s/, and /m/ across the poem created a sonic rhythm that mirrors the emotional pain, longing, and resilience of the speaker. These sound patterns were not randomly placed; rather, they were strategically foregrounded to intensify the poem's emotional atmosphere and thematic depth.

The repeated phonological structures consistently aligned with semantic fields tied to socio-political concerns in Pakistan, especially related to rural hardship, farmer suicides, economic marginalization, and state negligence. For instance, the frequent use of the /f/ sound in words like "farmer," "fee," "futile," and "funeral" suggested themes of loss, struggle, and financial despair. Similarly, assonant patterns echoed the internal suffering and unanswered questions of the speaker. These patterns reinforced the emotional urgency and protest embedded in the poem.

The study also demonstrated that foregrounding through sound created a strong emotional connection between the reader and the speaker. This stylistic strategy turned the poem into a socio-political commentary, where language is used not only to express grief and longing but also to critique systemic oppression and cultural silence around rural distress. The findings support the idea that phonological parallelism in poetry is not only a stylistic choice but also a powerful tool for resistance and voice.

Conclusion

This study concludes that phonological foregrounding, as theorized by Leech and Short (2007), plays a crucial role in enhancing both the aesthetic and ideological dimensions of Farzana Aqib's poem "Where is My Farmer." By closely analyzing alliteration, assonance, and consonance, it became evident that these sound patterns serve to highlight emotional pain, socio-economic critique, and a call for acknowledgment of the struggles faced by rural communities in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the study confirms that mix-method research, combining qualitative stylistic interpretation with quantitative observation of repetitive patterns, offers a nuanced and credible approach to literary analysis. It validates that even in modern poetry, especially that which deals with local or marginalized voices, sound and structure remain central to meaning-making.

Ultimately, this research affirms that foregrounding is not merely decorative; it is deeply functional, allowing poetry to transcend personal grief and become a vehicle for public consciousness, emotional resistance, and social change.

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Appendix

Where is my farmer

Where is my farmer
Where is my countryman
Where is my salt to the earth
Who promised me once
To let me taste
The salt of his corny fields
Sweetness of is ripening orchids
And a cold sip of his
Deep well waters
And the waft of his
Freshly ploughed earth
Who promised me

To make me suckle
The fresh warm milk
Direct from the teats
Of his bovine
Who promised me to
Burn the oaks
And some wood logs
To make me tea
On his earthen oven
In his clay pots
Where is my farmer
My countryman
My salt of the earth*
Today I am tasting
All those promises

Today I am seeing
All those scenic village spots
Yet alone
At my own
There is a fresh evening breeze
Knocking at my car screen
There is a beautiful sunset vista
Outside on the fields
And a concretely laid
Snakily road moving past
The posturelands
Across the cornifields
Herds of cows and
Grazing sheep
Every thing in best place
But not thee

My eyes are wet
And my lips are pursed
A chocolate box view
Of the country side hue
With aromatic air of feverfew
Enormously wide
Yet untouchable and not near
Just like your remembrance
So vivid yet obscure
Today your reminiscence is
Hurting fast
As if on my brain's windscreen
Few raindrops slap then smash
Like a moth
Against a speeding vehicle
Hitting and go all flesh

Farzana Aqib