

## A Stylistic Analysis of Shamas Faqir's Poetry

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### Abstract

*Stylistic analysis aims at outlining certain stylistic features of a text which are important in characterizing the text as well as the writer of the text. These style features are features at linguistic and non-linguistic levels which are used by a writer in a text for a particular end in his mind. This paper is an attempt to give a stylistic account of the poetry of Shamas Faqir who is a popular Kashmiri Sufi poet of nineteenth century. Shamas Faqir's poetry provides rich insights about the linguistic and non-linguistic nuances of Kashmiri language and Kashmiri literature. This poetry can serve as a subject of innovative research field for Kashmiri linguistics and literary studies.*

**Key Words:** Style, Stylistic Analysis, Style Feature, Consonance, Rhyme, Alliteration

**Introduction:** Shamas Faqir (AD 1839- 1916) is a well-known and popular Sufi poet of the nineteenth century. Shams Faqir's real name was Muhammad Sidiq Bhat and he was born in the spring of 1839. Shams Faqir died in 1916 (there is some confusion about this date). Shamas Faqir absorbed and accumulated the influence of a number of great spiritual masters of his time and his poetry speaks volumes of that spiritual experience. About 131 poems of this great mystic poet have been published. His poetry enjoys an unending popularity in Kashmiri culture and literature due to its artistic excellence and musicality. The spiritual poetry of Shamas provides very insightful ideas about the unique features of Kashmiri language and literature. This poetry can serve as a subject of innovative research field for Kashmiri linguistics and literary studies.

**Analysis:** The language used in Shamas Faqir's poetry presents immense possibilities of linguistic research and is a rich subject for the discipline of translation, stylistics and historical linguistics. Some of the most prominent stylistic features in the verses of Shamas are as follows:

1. Repetition of similar sounds ( Alliteration, Consonance and Assonance)
2. Repetition of same word or lexical item

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3. Repetition of a similar line ( known as Magical Line Technique (MLT) hereafter)
4. Repetition of a lexical item and its word forms
5. Use of synonyms or similar words
6. Rhyme
7. Rhythm
8. Use of antonymy and antithetical constructions
9. Use of Vocatives and Vacuous Syllables
10. A rich Symbolism

**Repetition of Similar Sounds, Syllables and Words: (Alliteration, Consonance and Assonance):**

Shamas's poetry possesses a unique music and repetition of similar sounds can be witnessed in Shamas's poetry frequently. By repeating similar sounds Shamas weaves a thought process that is unique and conveys the heights of the spiritual truths.

*rounI gandith shroun shroun boozum                      रोनि गंडिथ शरोन शरोन बूजुम*  
*rounI mItsrih shroun shroun kout gou:m              रोनि मेचरिथ शरोन शरोन कोत गौम*

I listened to the music after putting on the anklet  
Where does the music vanish when anklet was put off?

The above verses use repetition at more than one level that includes repetition of similar affricate sound "sh" which enhances softness of the verse, the musicality of this verse is further enhanced by the use of liquid and nasal sounds like "r", "m" and "n". Another verse that uses the repetition as a stylistic feature is as follows

*damI damI daman dam maey hyeti                      दमे दमे दमन दम मोय हैति*  
*gou:m yaksanou    गौम यकसानो*

(Repetition of syllable "dam")

Moment after moment I pondered over moments  
till I became one with Him

On analysis of Shamas Faqir's poems; one can find this repetition of similar sounds, syllables and words as one of the most recurring feature. Besides the selection of phonemes is made in such a way which enhances the musicality of the verse.

**Repetition of a Particular line (Magical Line Technique):** One of the prominent stylistic features of Shamas Faqir's poetry is the repetition of a Particular line which is one of the common stylistic device used by poets. An

analysis of this particular line which gets repeated in a particular poem reveals that this line is important in more than one way. This repeated line as used in Shamas is used for functionality at more than one level. As a stylistic feature; this repeated line becomes important for formal and functional dimensions. At formal level; this line maintains music in the poem by the style features of rhyme and rhythm. At the functional level; this line contains the central idea of the poem and serves as a background against which all other verses of the poem are woven together. On a closer analysis of this repeated line, one can easily understand that the whole poem operates on the magic of this line which shall be labeled here as the “magical line technique”. In Shamas’s poetry, this magical line technique establishes a background against which all other lines revolve. This line establishes a ground for the meaningfulness as observed in the poetry of Shamas. This line is rich in terms of sounds (phonological features), syntactic level, at the meaning level (semantic, pragmatic and philosophical level). It is a line that is rich in psychological, socio-cultural, folk elements as well as the sound, music and every type of meaning is so profound in it. Some representative examples of magical line technique include:

*makI madinas bar chiy vathiyae*

मके मदीनस बर छिय वेथिये

*naeri latiyae rouf kara:n*

नेरि लतिये रोफ करान

The doors of Mecca and Madina are slightly open

Leave this abode while you are performing Rouf (a joyous dance)

Or

The doors of Mecca and Madina welcome you

Go there in a blissful state

“*naeri latiyae rouf kara:n*” (*Go there in a blissful state*) line is constantly repeated in this poem which maintains the music (rhyme and rhythm) throughout the poem in addition to repeatedly foregrounding the central idea of the poem which is achieving the mystic bliss of the Union with the God. All other lines in the poem complement this central idea of the achievement of the mystic in mystic journey. Thus repetition of line as a style feature becomes important in both formal and functional manner in the poems of Shamas. Another such example of the magical line technique is as follows

*dyev sI:t thavnay ahli dilan*

दयव सौत थावनय एहलि दिलन

*khasul-kha:s chuy manz kha:san*

खासुल खास छुय मंज़ खासन

So that you will be among those deserving a heart

The most unique is within the unique

Or

So that you will be taken to your destination

The most unique is within the unique

“*khasul-kha:s chuy manz kha:san*” (*The most unique is within the unique*) line is repeated in the poem consistently which ensures the artistic excellence of this poem at both formal and functional levels. This line has rhyme, rhythm and alliteration of consonant “*kh*” at formal level while at functional level; it carries the central idea of the poem of finding God within each and every aspect of life. A magical line operates on many conceptual planes as one is strangely occupied by the meaning of various kinds. An entanglement of various senses occurs and one is overpowered by this multiple operating meaning network or sense networks. The alternative translations of one of the above given magical lines are as follows:

*maki madinas bar chiy vathiyae*                      *मके मदीनस बर छिय वैथिये*  
*naeri latiyae rouf kara:n*                              *नेरि लेतये रोफ करान*

The doors of Mecca and Madina welcome you  
Leave yourself in a joyous dance  
Or

The doors of Mecca and Madina welcome you  
Run to it in a joyous dance

Every line that repeats itself in the poetry of Shamas (magical line) has multiple conceptual correlates and it can be translated in many possible ways but a single translation will never suffice for a discerning reader and a reader has to translate this verse in multiple ways to understand various dimensions of the meaning of the given line. This open endedness at the meaning level accounts for the greatness of art and is very much true in the verse of Shamas Faqir. Another such example can be discussed as follows:

*deedav si:t vuch deeda:r*                                      *दीदव सौत वोछ दीदार*  
*deedan ti deedan chuy miltsa:r*                              *दीदन ते दीदन छुय मिलचार*

Open your eyes to this divine vision  
It is a union between eyes

Or

Wake up and be blessed with this vision  
Eyes are in union at that place

Or

Open your eyes to this blessed vision  
Get absorbed in this divine sight

This multiplicity at the meaning level is a style feature that can be associated with every magical line that gets repeated as a stylistic feature in the poems of Shamas Faqir.

**Repetition of a word with slight Variation and Use of related word forms of a Lexical Item:**

One of the style features that is consistently found in Shamas Faqir's verses is the repetition of a word with slight variation and use of different word forms of a lexical item. This style feature accounts for intensity of the poet as well as acts as a mnemonic device that enhances the understanding as well as memorizing of the verses of Shamas Faqir. Consider the following examples:

*adI mouy chovum da:mI da:may*                      अदे मोय चोवुम दामे दामय

*az dramay tamna*    अज दरामय तमना

Then I drank wine sip by sip  
Today my wish is fulfilled

The repeated item in the above verse is *da:m(sip)* whose variant forms *da:mI(sip)* and *da:may(sip)* has been used in the above verse showing the manner of the act.

*siyaehi manz chu aabi haya:t*                      सियोही मंज छु आबि हयात

*siyah nuras dapa:n nurI za:t*                      सियाह नूरस दपान नूरि ज़ात

The darkness contains the life giving water

The black divine light is called the divine light of God

The above lines contain the use of the word form "*siyahi*" and the base form "*siyah*" of the base word "*siyah*". Besides the same verse contains the word forms "*nuras*" and "*nurI*" of the root word "*nu:r*". Another such example is:

*kha:bas*    *manzay*                      *kha:b*    *dyoushum*

खाबस मंजय खाब ड्यूछुम

*kha:bas kus taebe:r kara:y*    खाबस कुस तोबीर करे

I dreamed a dream within the deeps of another dream

Who shall comprehend the meaning of this dream?

The above verse uses the stylistic device of repetition of the root word "*kha:b*" along with its word form "*kha:bas*" which effectively renders the dream like sensation or bliss that a mystic receives on the vision of the God. This repetition of a lexical word along with its variant word forms is one of the most recurring style feature in the verses of Shamas and is used very effectively throughout all the poems of Shamas.

**Use of Synonymy and Similar Words as a Stylistic Feature:**

Another stylistic feature that was analyzed was the use of synonyms and similar words. Use of synonyms is a very common practice in Kashmiri poetry and same is true for the verses of Shamas. Use of synonyms becomes very expressive in Shamas as synonymy fills the requirements of the poet at both formal and functional levels.

*kru:th pyoum aeshqun manzilou*

करूठ पयौम अशकुन मंज़िलो

*mouklun chu dushva:r mushkilou*

मोकलुन छु दुखवार मुशकिलो

The destination of love was a tough one for me  
To be free is far from possible

The above verses conceptually express the mystic struggle of a mystic for reaching his beloved. In order to portray the difficulties, in order to show the intensity or extent of difficulty; synonymy has been used as a stylistic device. The used synonyms are “*dushva:r*” and “*mushkil*” both of which mean “*difficult*”. Repeating both synonyms one after another; the poet successfully renders meaning of “impossible” or “far from possible”. Another example is

*mekhanI andar gouvu:m nida*

मेखाने अनदर गौवुम निदा

*changou:-raba:b sa:zou:-nava*

चंगौ रबाब साज़ो नवा

I was called from the inside of the wine house  
chang and raba:b; music and melody

The above verse uses the similar words “*chang*” and “*raba:b*” which are both musical instruments and also the repetition of similar words “*sa:z*” and “*nava*” which mean music and melody. Here the repetition of both music and melody (“*sa:z*” and “*nava*”) and the musical instruments (“*chang*” and “*raba:b*”) intensify the appeal of the call from the wine house. Use of synonymy and similar words enhance the meaning potential of mystic expression in Shamas and in a way increase readability and comprehensibility of these poems.

#### **Use of Antonyms and Antithetical Expressions as a Stylistic Feature:**

Another stylistic feature that is very frequent in Shamas Faqir’s poetry is the use of the sense relation of antonymy and antithetical expressions. The use of antonyms and antithetical expressions is used in a meaningful way and is used for many conceptual purposes in his poems. Consider the following examples:

*maer maer chum zindagi deva:n*

मौर मौर छुम ज़िनदगी दिवान

*mou:y chus chava:n mou:y chus chava:n*

मौय छुस चवान मौय छुस चवान

He bestows me with life by killing me again and again  
I drink wine I drink wine

The above verse uses the antonyms of “*marun*” and “*zindagi*” (Life and death) in a paradoxical manner. This use of antonyms ensures the rendering of mystic experience as a paradoxical one. Shamas achieves the device of unsaying by

using antonymy as a stylistic feature. Similarly, the following verse uses the antonyms of Lion and Lamb:

*poukhtI ka:r faraq kar shaeran tI sha:lan* पोखते कार फरक कर शौरन ते शालन  
*chou:vnas mourifat mou:y* चौवनस मोरिफत मौय  
 Oh righteous man! Differentiate a lion from a lamb  
 He made me drink the wine of marifat (ecstasy)

The use of antonyms is also useful here in the sense that it enhances the readability of his poems. By using an antonymous word pair “*shaer*” and “*sha:l*” (lion and lamb) in the said verse, Shamas achieves rendering of clarity of vision of a mystic before whom all the universe is like a transparent sheet and he can clearly see and visualise the meaning of each and every phenomena. Antithetical constructions are also very common in Shamas and build a contrasting point of view so that the central message becomes clear to the reader with a clear and intense expression.

*fana sapdakh fana faeni* फना सपदख फना फोनी  
*baqa billah chu rubaeni* बकाह बिलाह छु रुबोनी  
 You will be annihilated here forever  
 The life in God is supreme

The above verse uses two antithetical constructions the first of which uses repetition of word “*fana*” (annihilate) three times and the second construction poses the antonym “*baqa*” (life) in a very effective manner. Thus stylistic device of antonymy and antithetical constructions is used quite productively in Shamas Faqir.

#### **Use of Vocatives and Vacuous Syllables as a Stylistic Feature:**

One of the important style features in the poetry of Shamas Faqir is the use of vocative expressions and use of vacuous syllables. The use of vocative expressions adds a conversational style to these poems and acts as a binding tag between the speaker and the reader. Vocative Words like *lati* (female friend), *baeli* (young girl), *vyesi* (female friend) etc are very common in the poems of Shamas Faqir and add many formal and functional dimensions to his poetry as indicated in the below mentioned examples:

*kharI thouvnum ma:r matI* खारे थोवनम मारे मत  
*lmyou:n van tasay lati yee* मयौन वन तसय लतीये

A heartache is what that beautiful man gifted me  
 Oh Lati! Tell him of my dismal state

The above verse uses the vocative expression “*lati yee*” (Oh Lati! or Oh female friend!) as a stylistic device which helps in establishing the conversational style of these poems besides establishing a bond with the audience of these verses.

*myou:n vantasay baeliyae*

मयौन वनतसोय बोलये

*su lall antane saeliyae*

सु लाले अनतनि सोलये

Oh maiden! Tell him of my dismal state  
Invite that darling for my sake

Similarly, the above verse uses the vocative expression “*baeliyee*” (Oh bali! Or Oh maiden!) as a stylistic device which serves as an emphatic device to an innocent heart and establishes a close connection between the speaker and hearer to whom the appeal of invitation is made.

*bl kus gousay bl chus baybahas*

बे कुस गोसय बे छुस बेबहस

*ha:y vyaes ti vantam ba:vl kas*

हाय वोस ति वनतम बावे कस

Who I am, I am beyond discussion  
Oh female friend! Tell me to whom should I reveal the reality?

In the above verse “*ha:y vyes*” ( Oh female friend!) as a vocative expression and stylistic feature fills the gap between speaker and hearer by adding a conversational style to the poem. Thus vocative expressions as stylistic devices in the poems of Shamas successfully address the formal and functional requirements in an effective manner.

Another stylistic feature which can be outlined in the poetry of Shamas is the use of certain vacuous syllables which ensure musicality in the poems by maintaining a proper rhyme and rhythm . Certain vacuous syllables (*-aay, -ay, -taey, -natay, -loulou, -houhou*) are added to the lexical items in a productive manner as in the following examples:

*mashou:q denshith dra:v a:shaq lara:nI-taey*

माशौक डींशित दराव आशिक लारानेतय

*la:shak vlchtan kanh ti ma chu baeganI-taey*

लाशक वोछतन कांह तो मा छु बेगानेतय

*mati shamsav vonuth aeshqun afsanI-taey*

हा मति शमसव वोनुथ अशकुन अफसानेतय

*aashiq chu panay panI mashouq su panI-taey*

आशिक छु पानय पाने माशौक सु पानेतय

The lover rushed upon having a glimpse of the beloved  
Look! Indeed no one is a stranger in reality  
Oh austere Shamas! You narrated the saga of this love  
He is himself the lover, beloved indeed is He Himself.

The above verses form part of a very popular poem of Shamas which in itself is a cultural phenomenon. The whole poem is well known for its musical quality which is primarily maintained through the repetition of vacuous syllable “*taey*” which occurs at the end of almost every line giving this poem a unique music. The repetition of vacuous syllable “*taey*” at the end of each verse also enhances

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the readability of the poem and also acts as a pneumonic device. One can also easily notice the repetition of affricate sound “sh” in the above example which is repeated as much as eight times in the above example of about four lines.

zaero bam tai sha:yi gouv gum-ay ज़ेरो बम तमि शायि गोव गुमय  
yaeti su chum-ay tatl su chum-ay येति सु छुमय तति सु छुमय

The music and melody vanished at that place  
He is here; there He is!

The above verse uses vacuous syllable “-ay” at the end and in the middle for maintenance of rhyme at the end and maintenance of rhythm in the middle.

tsa:l a:shqou ashqI ti:r tI loulou च़ाल आशको अशके तीर ते लोलो  
rindI sapdakh zindI panI mar tI loulou रिन्दे सपदख ज़िन्दे पाने मर ते लोलो

Oh lover! Bear the arrows of love  
You shall become a rinda (spiritual master) if you die in this life

The above verse uses the vacuous syllable “loulou” and is a musical rendition of the state of a mystic experiencing the bliss of a mystic life. As a vacuous syllable “loulou” has that musicality which is very often found in many other Kashmiri songs but offers an expression of mystic bliss in Shamas Faqir. The same mystic bliss as well as mystic trance is carried forward with the help of vacuous syllables which form the whole line “lou lati lou” in the following example:

gaenzravI kyah aenzrae:vmati ग़ोज़राव क्याह एंज़रोवमतिय  
lou lati lou लौ लती लौ

How can I question the already solved?  
lou lati lou

Thus vocative expressions and vacuous syllables form a important stylistic features in the verses of Shamas and greatly enhance the musicality and conceptual value of his verses.

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**Symbolic rendering of Common Words as a Stylistic Feature:** A prominent stylistic feature of Shamas’s poetry is the symbolism which abounds and enriches the poetry of this great Sufi. His poems abound in symbolic rendering of common words in which common words of day to day life are mapped on to spiritual experiences in a readers mind. Common words like *river, pearl, diamond, love, beauty, crow, hoopoe, wine, music* etc attain a spiritual meaning in his poems.

dariyavI manz katrah dra:v दरियाव मंज़ कतराह दराव

*katras manzay dariyav tsa:v*

कतरस मंजय दरियाव चाव

A drop emerged from a river

And a river entered into a drop

The above verse uses the common word “*dariyav*” (river) but renders it in a symbolic way so that this river is a continuum, is a motion, is a state of stature, is a symbol of death and life or life in death. A river represents being and non-being. A river is a symbol of knowledge, a symbol of a complete whole. Thus river as a symbol is open ended and can be interpreted in many ways. River represents romanticism, life and death, materialism, being and non-being and is dependent on reader’s response to this particular symbol. This symbolic rendering of common words is one of the recurring features in the poems of Shamas as is obvious from the following examples as well:

*adI mouy chouyum damI damay*

अदे मौय चोवुम दामे दाम

*az dramay tamanna*

अज़ दरामय तमना

Then I drink wine in a stately manner  
My wishes are fulfilled today

The above verse uses “*mouy*” (wine) as a symbol and like Persian Sufi literature, the symbols of *wine*, *wine house*, *wine fetcher* represent different stages of a mystic path. The mystic quest, the mystic search, the mystic union, the mystic bliss, the mystic struggle, and many other mystic concepts are illustrated through the use of these symbols. Thus symbolic rendering of common words is one of the prominent style feature in the verses of Shamas.

**Conclusion:** A Stylistic analysis of Shamas Faqir’s poetry reveals that these poems can be analysed in terms of many stylistic features. Though inspirational in nature; the poetry of Shamas is full of poetic techniques that can be described fully in terms of different style features at different linguistic levels. The musicality and artistic excellence of the poetry of Shamas is based on a poetic technique which operates on the correlation of formal and functional dichotomy. The standard technique or stylistic feature of repetition at different linguistic levels is very common in Shamas. This involves repetition of phonemes, syllables, words, phrasal parallelism and antithetical construction. The analysis in this paper identified a strong repetitive line in Shamas which was named as a magical line technique; a technique which uses repetition of a common line which operates at many linguistic and non-linguistic levels and provides a background for the rest of the poem. The poems of Shamas exploit the meaning potential of Kashmiri language in terms of different sense relations like synonymy, antonymy and through antithetical constructions besides exploring the same by exploring a lexical item and its variant forms. The analysis reveals that use of vacuous syllables as a stylistic feature ensures musicality by maintaining a particular rhyme and rhythm. The vocative expressions in Shamas also serve as

stylistic features by maintaining the conversational style and hence binding the speaker and hearer of these verses. The symbolic rendering of common words as a stylistic feature in Shamas enhance the artistic excellence of his poems. To conclude, it can be said that a number of style features can be described in Shamas Faqir's poetry which can successfully explain the logic behind the musicality, readability and pneumatic qualities of these time tested verses. The artistic excellence of these verses can be described as a result of an effective poetic technique which is based on the judicious use of many stylistic features as described in the analysis above.

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