

Stylistics Analysis of the Poem “Hope is The Thing with Feathers”

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Abstract— Uncovering the meanings from a literary text is a practice common among the researchers. The work aimed to analyze the poem from stylistics orientation. For this purpose, ‘Emily Dickenson’s’ untitled poem” hope is the thing with feathers” has been chosen. The stylistics techniques and methods are being used for stylistics analysis. The analysis is done at graphological, grammatical, phonological and lexical levels. Hence, this query is supportive in a sense to know about the style, structure, theme, her personal views and attitude through the analysis of the poem.

Index Terms— Stylistics, Emily Dickenson, Literary Text, Phonological, Grammatical, Lexical, Graph Logical, Structure, Theme, And Writer’s Attitude.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Stylistics is the study of literary language from stylistics coordination”(Widdowson, 2014).

‘Stylistics’ is a word which is derived from ‘style’. And ‘style’ is the outcome of the Latin word “Elocutio” which means style. Moreover, ‘stylistics’ refers to the study of style; it may be the style of a person or the style of a writer. According to Leech (2014), “style is a way in which something is spoken, written or performed”. Writers use different styles according to their own perception to be looked different from the others. Additionally, style may vary from culture to culture and it also tells us about the mindset of the writer. Haynes (1989) has the views that “style is the study of distinctions” (3). Style is a kind of expression which varies according to the context. Further, style and variety are the two sides of the same coin. LAWAL (2004) has the considerations that “style is an expression which covers different aspects of language: diction, sentences, and phrases that are closely allied with the subject matter” (6).

Short and Leech (1981) have the considerations that ‘style’ is used by the writers according to the context, and it has unquestionable meanings (10). According to their views, style may be written and spoken, may be applied on literary and non-literary text but if we focus on the traditions than the ‘stylistics analysis’ goes in the favor of literary text (11). Hence, stylistics has broadened its vision from literary to non-literary text. Wales (2014) has opined that stylistics is not only focus on the formal features of the text but also highlights the interpretation of the text either it is literary or not. Carter (1996) said that stylistics is the process of

scrutinizing the text from different perceptions or methods (5). Birch (2005) expressed that language and style always remains under the supremacy of the words (10). Carter (1996) viewed that every text and writing style is different to others due to ‘linguistics levels’ (14). Short and Leech (1981) argued that style is a “dress of thought” (15). They have the views that it is the basic idea of the style to distinguish that what the writers have said, and how it is being presented in front of the readers. However, most of the time it seems that ideas are being covered by the writer and it ups to the readers that how he/she can perceive and interpret that vary idea (15).

Stylistics is defined by scholars through different perspectives. Freeman (1981) defines “stylistics is the sub-discipline which started in the second half of the 20th century” (1). By the views of Short and Leech (1981), “stylistics is the study of style, it describes that what is used and how is used to make of language” (13). Short and Candlin (1988) has defined, “stylistics is an approach which helps to study literary text” (183). Widdowson (2014) proposes that stylistics works as a mediator between linguistics and literary criticism (3). Moreover, Carter and McCarthy (2014) has the same considerations that stylistics functions as a bridge between linguistics and literature (161).

II. LEVELS OF STYLISTICS ANALYSIS

The levels of stylistics analysis are given as below:

A. Graphological Level:

Leech (2014) believes that “graphology goes beyond orthography. It refers to the whole system of writing: punctuation, spacing as well as paragraphing” (39). Moreover, Alabi (2007) has the opinion that among all other features graphology also entail the foregrounding of quotation marks, full stop, Colon, semi Colon, comma, hyphens, ellipses, capitalization, spacing, question marks etc. (170).

B. Phonological Level:

Ofuya (2007) has the views that “phonology is the study of the organization of the sound patterns in a very language” (14). Lodge (2009) has the opinions that “phonology is the study of linguistics organization” (8). Phonology devices may entail: rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration. These devices can be ascertained by foregrounding repetition.

C. Grammatical Level:

This section may discuss both the levels like phonological and syntactical level. Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) have the opinions that “morphology is the study of the words, their internal structure and how they are formed” (1).

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Morphological devices may entail: affixes and coining. Tallerman (2014) intended that syntactic level is the “construction of the words” (1). It deals that how words and phrases are combined to form a sentence. There is a tremendous need to be distinguished among phrases, words, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and clauses. And analysis is made to find out fore-grounding and deviations.

D. Lexical Level:

The term lexis means vocabulary which is used in a language for particular purpose. It is the study in which single word or idiom is used in diverge linguistics context. Lexical level can be ascertained through collocates, simile, metaphor, oxymoron etc.

E. Poets Biography:

Emily Dickenson is one of the greatest poets in the history of American literature. She was born on 10th December 1830 in Massachusetts. She was bright student; her poems were source of delight for her class fellows. Her father was very strict so, she remained differential to all male figures. By the 1860, she isolated herself from the society. Her life was very simple. She was very famous for her unusual and seclusion life. She confined herself to her house, because she was very shy. However, she had written poetry of great power; questioned the nature of immortality and death. Her lifestyle was very interested to all. Emily Dickenson’s is remembered for her unique poetry. She wrote 1700 letters and due to these letters she came into contact with society. She died at the age of 55 from a bright disease, which is caused by kidney’s degeneration. Her poetic style and form was inconsistency which reflected her inherent power and added to the popularity of her poems. After her death her sister Vinnie had been instructed to burn her letters but she refused all such kinds of proposals and old manuscripts were preserved by her sister. The first edition of her poems was published in 1893, with the help and encouragement of her long standing’s friend Terrence Higginson. Her poems soon received extraordinary praise from the well-known American magazines and newspapers.

III. INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM

Emily Dickenson in her ‘untitled’ poem “hope is the thing with feathers” discusses hope as the quality of the human soul. She compares hope with a little bird. She reveals that hope is the single thing that always remains in human heart and singing the song without any word. She depicts that hope is ever reaming thing that is clearly seen in her words “at all”.

She reveals that hope rescues human in crucial situations. She compares human struggle with storm. She explores that hope keeps our spirit up even in a storm. Hope keeps us warm and encourages us to face all the situations with patience. Hence, a violent storm cannot destroy us because hope always remains with us. Hope is GOD gifted quality that remains in every human heart. “Gale” and “storm” are the words that highlight those violent situations. Dickenson portrays bird and hope as supernatural things.

In the final phase of the poem Emily Dickenson talks about her own experiences. She reveals that hope helps her to survive in a difficult situation. She explores that hope is like a

songbird that can always be heard and migrates from climate to climate. She uses the phrase “it asked a crsumb” that shows that hope asks for nothing in return instead it gives courage and sustains us. It keeps us winning in problematic eras.

IV. THEME OF THE POEM

The theme of the poem is revolved around the “Hope”. Emily Dickenson reveals through her poem that hope is the thing which remains in human hearts; it leads us far away from despair and encourages us in an extreme situations. Hope never takes away us, it always gives us more. She uses the metaphor of “hope “by comparing with bird that sings all the time when there is no word to sing. Hope is like a bird that dwells within everyone. Further, she says that in the time of great challenges hope encourages us and keeps us warm. The bird sings in “the chilliest land” and “on the strongest sea”, it sustains us. However, in all these difficult situations, poet still has believed in GOD who has created hope in man’s heart.

V. HOW THEME IS FOURGROUNDED

The theme of the poem is foregrounded through vocabulary items. Theme of hope is highlighted through different words for instance; Dickenson has used the word “feathers” and “sing” which show that hope is like an innocent bird, which is always singing in human heart. Moreover, she reveals that the words like “Gale”, “storm” “abash” ,”extremity”, “chilliest” and “warm”, which show that hope remains with us in violent times and keeps us calm and winning. However, hope asks nothing in reward which is shown through the vocabulary like “crsumb”. She has foregrounded the theme of hope by using these words.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Stylistics Analysis of the poem “Hope is a thing with feathers” will be hold up under different levels: graphological, phonological, grammatical and lexical levels. These levels pave the way for the analysis of the poem. The whole analysis will be done by keeping in mind the specific features of these levels.

VII. STYLISTICS ANALYSIS OF THE POEM “HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS:

A. Lyrical Poem:

If we glance on the poem then we would be able to know that this poem is lyrical because it is short poem and a single person expresses her feelings and emotions. Most of her poem have no title and are recognized through the first line of the poem. Finally she has used common meter.

B. Graphological Level:

- The whole poem contains three stanzas and every stanza contains four lines. First line of each stanza is longer than the others.
- It is a lyrical poem because it reflects the personal experience of the poetess. It is written as a whole.
- There is usual capitalization. But she has used some words at the center of the poem that the first letter is

capital for example ‘Gale’ is used in the first line of the second stanza and ‘Bird’ in the third line. Further, the word ‘Sea’ in the second line of the last stanza and ‘Extremity’ in the fourth line of the third stanza has been used by her. Moreover, there is a significance of this capitalization because the poet would like to emphasize on these key words to highlight the major theme of the poem.

- She has used no punctuation in the first two stanzas however, in the last two lines of the last stanza comma is used after extremity and full stop is being used at the end of the third stanza.
- Moreover, dashes are used in the whole poem. In first stanza dashes are being used at the end of the lines and at the center of the last line. Hope is mentioned in inverted commas which shows that the theme of ‘hope’ is revolved around the whole poem. Further, in second stanza dashes are used at the end of the lines and at the center of the first line. At the end, we can analyze that dashes are also used at the end of the first two lines in the last stanza and between the third and fourth lines. However, comma is being used at the end of the third line and full stop is putted at the end of the last line of the poem.
- Apostrophe is being used only one time in the whole poem which is mentioned in the first line of the last stanza. For example I’ve.

The main purpose of apostrophe is to:

- Highlight the significance of the things.
- Show the possession on a particular thing.
- Present the direct speech.

C. Lexical Level:

Table 1

NOUNS	PRONOUNS	COMMON NOUNS
Hope Thing Feathers Soul Sing Tune Gale Storm Bird Land Sea Extremity	Many me	Sea storm Sing land Bird tune soul

Table 2

VERBS	ADVERBS	ADJECTIVES
Perches Stop Heard Abash Kept Asked	Never	Sweetest Sore Little Warm Chilliest Stranger

D. Grammatical Level:

In grammatical level we will be focused on the punctuation which is used by the poetess in the whole poem: colon, semi-colon, comma, full stop, question mark and dashes etc.

USE OF DASHES:

Dashes are very significantly used in the poem to show that:

- The poetess takes pause and looks for a new idea.
- The poetess contemplates what to say next.
- Dashes also show the hurdles and problems that are faced by the poetess in her life.
- Dashes modify and break up the rhythmic flow.

E. Use of Commas:

In the whole poem comma is used only one time in the second last line of the last stanza which shows the division of the sentences. For example, comma is being used after ‘Extremity’.

F. Use of Full Stop:

The poetess has used full stop only one time in the whole poem particularly at the end of the poem. Full stop shows the completion of the poetess’s mind. She has foregrounded the theme of hope in the poem. Further, she has firmed believe that hope cannot leave a man instead of crucial and extreme situations. She says, a man can leave a hope but a hope cannot leave a man. However, it also shows that she has great believe in God.

G. Phonological Level:

- Rhyme Scheme:

“Hope is the thing with feathers” is a rhyme verse form poem. The poem is contained sixteenth lines and each stanza having rhyme scheme ABCD-ABAB-ABBB. Moreover, there are some words being used at the end of the each line that create music: feathers, words, soul, all, heard bird, storm, warm, sea, extremity and me.

- Alliteration:

Alliteration means “letters of alphabets”. It is stylistics device in which a number of words, having the same first consonant sound, occur close together in a series. Further, alliteration device is also used by the poetess in the third, sixth and tenth lines of the poem. The lines of the poem are as given below:

- And sings the tune without the words-
- And sore must be the storm –
- And on the strangest Sea -

VIII. SCHEMES AND TROOPS IN THE POEM:

Troops and schemes are the particular speech figures that are used in the poem by the poet to create particular writing style.

A. Troops

Troops are the figures of speech having different meanings from their factual meanings.

B. Schemes

Schemes in the poem include figures of speech that deal with words order, letters, sounds and syntax rather than meanings of the words.

C. Anaphora

Anaphora is the repetition of the same words at the beginning of the clause or sentence. In this Emily Dickenson’s poem several examples can be found that are given as below:

- That perches in the soul –
- That could abash the little Bird-
- That kept so many warm –

- And sings the tune without the words –
- And never stops- at all –
- And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard –
- And sore must be the storm-

‘That’ and ‘And’ are anaphora’s in this poem

D. Metaphor

Glancing at the title of the poem it can be inferred that poetess uses metaphor. She compares ‘Hope’ with feathers/bird. Further, hope is an inanimate thing and poetess compares it with feather. It can be highlighted that ‘Hope’ keeps the ability to take someone up as bird flies with feathers in the sky. In fact, Dickenson’s aim is to highlight image of hope in our mind.

E. Personification

Viewing at the poem with concentration, it can be seen that poet uses personification. In the last three lines of the first stanza the poetess gives hope some animate characteristics. The following lines are given as below:

“...That perches in the soul -
And sing the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all - ...”

F. Tone

The poem brings optimistic and trustworthy tone. The poet compares ‘hope’ with the ‘bird’ and guides the readers that hope always remains with us even in the crucial situations. Moreover, it keeps us upward as like the bird flies in the sky. A man must remain firm and optimistic by the time of crisis.

IX. CONCLUSION

“Hope is the things with feathers”, a poem in which poetess describes the metaphorical description of hope as bird. She depicts that hope is always remained within us even though we cannot realize it. Further, hope remains faithful with us even in the hardships. Hope raises our spirits up. However, poetess has firm belief in GOD. Additionally, poem is fully analyzed by applying stylist’s techniques and methods. Analysis shows that whole deviations in the poem reflects her personal life experiences for example dashes show the hurdles which she has faced in her life.

X. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The main purpose of above work is to highlight the use of language which adds in the beauty of the poem. In addition, poetess style and the use of literary devices make the poem as a whole. Moreover, some specific characteristics are being analyzed through stylistics analysis which gives the poem its unique identity.

XI. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The work will be done solely stylistics, and the stylistics analysis of the poem will be conducted under the following levels: graph-logical level, grammatical level, lexical level and phonological level. Further, this analysis will provide an insight in the future studies regarding this field.

XII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There is a tremendous need to do the analysis of the whole poem with due attention but due to the shortage of time; it is not too much as it should be. The lackings being present in the material too.

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