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### REPRESENTATION OF DE-FAMILIARIZATION IN AHMED ALI'S ON THE DEPARTING SEASONS: A STYLISTIC FOREGROUNDING ANALYSIS

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

The research paper scrutinizes the stylistic and poetic patterns fictionalized in the poem, *On the Departing Season* by Ahmed Ali- one of the prolific literary figures in the progressive movement in the subcontinent, based on the undertaken research framework of stylistic foregrounding to highlight the defamiliarization technique implied by the poet that can offer an alternative understanding to the already taken studies on the art of the poet. Moreover, a notable body of research can be found out on Ahmed Ali as a novelist from diverse perspectives; however, his poetry has not been plumbed into that has created a research gap to be filled in. The study, therefore, contends that the used patterns are motivated for diversity of alternate meanings in the poem. The poet through the vivacious technique of the defamiliarization in his poetry not only epitomized his native and colonized thoughts fraught in the indigenous flora and fauna to the world but the artist also applied the abrogation

strategy of English by defamiliarizing it from what's called a standard colonizers' language i.e., English.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Background Of the Study*

Before the advent of the progressive movement in the sub-continent, Urdu literature was not so vibrant to represent the socio-cultural concerns. The literature in Urdu was disconnected with the tangible realities of life. However, it was the progressive movement that has brought realism and representative illustration of the social life around. This is contended by Dr Saleem Akhtar, "Never before was Urdu literature proved a vehicle for some movement nor was creativity considered a tool to profess some manifesto..." (1971, p.221). One of the common features of the literature in the hands of progressive writers was to voice against capitalism because progressive writers were arguably ideologically motivated by communism. Their literary art considered communism is the only viable solution to the prevalent of socio-economic exploitation of a common man at that time. The progressive movement in the sub-continent was robustly led by the prominent literary figures of the time –Ismat Chughtai, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Saadat Hassan Manto, Krishan Chander, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Mumtaz Mufti, Mirza Adeeb and last but not least is Ahmed Ali. The movement got impetus from the prevalent hostile emotions and reaction of a common man against the British colonial rule.

The novelist, Ahmed Ali (1910-1914) is known as a gigantic literary figure in the list of the progressive artists of the sub-continent. An adherent writer to the historical progressive movement in India and Pakistan, his art is arguably a vibrant representation of the leading objectives of the movement. "Of all these Progressive writers Ahmed Ali (1910-1994) occupies a prominent place. He is a socially committed writer who firmly believes in the betterment of social life. He is a prolific author of poems and world-class novels, translator of the Koran and the ghazals of Ghalib, and critic of poet T. S. Eliot" (kumar, 1994, p.57). The poet has a versatile stature; he equally did translation of Urdu renowned poet, Ghalib into English besides his translation of the Holy Quran etc. That is why, he wrote in English and Urdu equally. His literary journey started at an early age as a fiction writer, he wrote many short stories in Urdu. Although the artist is using the language of colonizers, English as the medium of his artistic expression, yet he preferred his indigenous literature, flora and fauna in his art to be transported through English language. Dr Tariq Rehman in his work, *A History of Pakistani Literature in English*, argues:

The function of poetry was mostly rhetorical in Urdu speaking culture and that is how it has been used by the characters. The couplets are, therefore, clichés which substitute a hackneyed formula for an intellectual response to a given experience. But, of course, the couplets prefacing chapters are intellectually relevant and emotionally evocative.

(1991, p.42)

Ali's novel, *Twilight in Delhi* has been applauded to be one of the finest ones in Asian literature. In an interview with Carlo Coppola, Ahmed Ali remarked about his work, "All the greatest living critics of England at that time wrote the finest, most glowing reviews of it. They paid compliments to my English, to the lucidity of my style, the depiction of life which was so vivid" (Ahmed Ali, 1994, p.20). The novel's plot is the fictional account of the Nihal family that symbolizes a traditional way of life in the subcontinent and its reaction to the winds of change blowing during the British rule. The novel has multilayered and multidimensional appeal that is unfolded through the imperialistic attitude of the colonial power to the native people of the subcontinent. It is revealed through the pages of the novel how it's proving hard for the native Indians to cope with the emerging change in a hybrid culture. Mir Nihal, a pivotal character, wails for the loss of their ancestral culture in the words, "New ways and ideas had come into basing. A hybrid culture which had been nothing in it of the past was forcing itself upon Hindustan, a hodge-podge of Indian and Western ways" (Ali, 1994, p.5).

Besides his fictional contribution, his poetic works have equally attracted much scholarly and critical contemplation from the literary circles. His international exposure and his international trip to China have stirred a literary waves and impact on his already sparked poetic imagination further. He remarked about this, "It was only in 1947, in China, that I discovered the right mode of communicating intimate and personal emotions which could stand as poetry. His method of impersonalizing personal experience is suggestive of Eliot's notion of the 'objective correlative'" (Coppola, 1980, p.65). The resourcefulness of his background in Chinese lyrical poetry, Urdu, Persian and English Romantic speak volumes of his versatile understandings that have helped him equipped with diversity.

Ahmed Ali's the first volume of poetry, *Purple Gold Mountain: Poems from China* (1960), contains almost 60 short poems. It consists of the three major sections, namely Preludes, The Flowery Middle Kingdom and Exile. The poem, *On the Departing Seasons* –the present research plumbs into, is one of the brief poems in this collection. Although it is a short type of an elegy yet it is loaded with far-reaching nostalgic thoughts elaborated figuratively in catchy figures of speech, full of past recollections and reminiscences of his passed away friends.

The poet through his own individualistic trait composed his poetry that used English for his indigenous voices and concerns. Coppola remarked, *Between West and East* and has served as an important, though often unrecognized, intellectual bridge and artistic link between these two polarities. Through his creative writings, scholarly publications, and translations, Ahmed Ali brought Asia and some of its choicest literary works to the attention of the often-indifferent West. (Coppola, 1994, p.53)

### ***Research Questions***

The study attempts to pursue the research questions as follows

1. What is the significance of the stylistic deviation in the context of the selected poem by Ahmad Ali?
2. How does the novelist adopt and contextualize English language through his technique of defamiliarization to make it having an indigenous colour?
3. Why does the poet use defamiliarization approach to represent his own native culture in opposition to the colonizers' culture?

### ***Research Framework***

The research follows a qualitative method for analyzing the selected poem by Ahmed Ali in the light of the undertaken framework of stylistic foregrounding to highlight how the defamiliarization approach is used to abrogate the colonizers' language for the natives' interests.

The theoretical concept of stylistic foregrounding is aimed at projecting a literary or non-literary piece more effectively through the deviation and parallelism. That has a substantial role in stylistic interpretation and understanding of a text, "The theory of foregrounding is fundamental to the stylistic analysis and interpretation of texts, whether literary or non-literary, in the sense that it underlies our efforts at interpretation" (Awonug & Chuanya, 2018, p.69). It therefore carries a substantial significance to follow the suit of stylistic foregrounding for reaching an alternative understanding of a discourse or a text.

The concept of stylistic foregrounding is originated from painting. It is contrary to the concept of backgrounding. It is further divided into the two types: deviation and parallelism. "It comes in two main guises: foregrounding as deviation from a norm and foregrounding as more of the same" (Simpson, 2004:50)

### ***Foregrounding***

Foregrounding is further branched off into deviation and parallelism (non-deviation). In Simpsons' words, it "comes in two main guises: foregrounding as a deviation from a norm and foregrounding as more of the same" (Simpson, 2004, p.50). However, non-deviation is a stylistic technique of repetition of forms and structures to create a parallelism between/among texts and discourses.



### ***Grammatical Deviation***

This deviation is carried out at the grammatical level in which rules and principles concerning a sentence structure and other aspects are departed from in order to bring about a defamiliarization in a text or a discourse.

### ***Phonological Deviation***

Poetic license to depart from the conventional pronunciation so that a writer or poet may better achieve his/her envisioned communicative effect. It is carried out through phonological irregularities like Omission namely, Aphesis, Syncope and Apocope.

### ***Graphological Deviation***

Graphological level in linguistics is concerned with a type of print, punctuations, grammetrics and indentation. Similarly, graphology is the study of encoding of meanings in visual symbols. Graphological deviation is, therefore, to neglect the conventional rules of punctuations etc. that are in vogue.

## **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

Ahmed Ali's the first volume of verse, *Purple Gold Mountain: Poems from China* (1960) got published after his fictional works. It led to publication of his other works later namely, *The Bulbul and the Rose* (1960), his second work (novel), *Ocean of Night* (1964), the translation of renowned Urdu poet's works with the title of, *Ghalib: Selected Poems* (1969), *The Golden Tradition* (1973) and his translation of The Holy Quran was published by different publication houses. Further, his pen tilted towards translation of Pakistani Urdu Short stories about which Alamgir Hashmi remarked, 'Translation to him was an important medium of reading cultures and he remained engaged in this vast enterprise throughout his life' (1994, p.47).

How beautifully and artistically pathetic and sad feelings are expressed by the poet about his departed friends in this this mortal world! Although the poem, "On the Departing Seasons" is a short poem yet it is loaded with a long branch of meaningful representation. That can provide an alternative meaning if it is explored from the lenz of stylistic foregrounding. The poet in a dejected mood remembers his gone friends.

The poet has implied thoroughly a different and unconventional poetic style to bring about defamiliarization in his art. It is very much evident from each line of this terse poem.

The autumn wind blows  
 The summer beyond recall;  
 The leaves hurry along the road  
 The flowers of the spring have trod  
 Who knows the sorrows of the lonely heart?  
 One by one all old-time friends have gone. (Purple Gold Mountain, p.16)

The following technique of foregrounding is used by the poet,

The Graphological characteristics of the poem are used mainly to attract our attention towards the words used on a page at the first sight like unconventional usage of punctuations and paragraphing. "It refers to the whole writing system: punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing" (Leech 1969, p.69). A text layout, use of parenthesis, presentation, bullets, font styles and underlining craft a notable impact. The graphological features of a poem play a substantial role in its analysis before grammatical and lexical exploration.

The iteration of the article "the" in the beginning of the **1s, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>** line manifests an extra prominence and cadence about his pent up sad feelings that can better be stressed upon and transported through the usage of **the definite article** . The repetition of the definite article is to foreground the seasons of melancholy turning from the seasons of cheerfulness.

Next stage to explore is the phonological technique that makes the poem different and defamiliar due to the usage of distinctive style of the poet. The selected poem can provide with a significant understanding if it is foregrounded on phonological level. As for rhyme scheme, there is specific rhyming of the poem. Interestingly, it carries a unique style of the meter used. The flow of the central idea is so artistically woven that the first line consists of **4 words** leading to the **6 words** in the third, **7 words** in the fourth, **8 words** in the fifth, **and 9 words** in the six line of the poem respectively. The development of the central idea of the departure of dear ones from this world grows so logically and successively that makes the poem deviated one. Besides, the repetition of "the" is done four times in a six-line poem to create an emphasis for the missing of friends after their demise.

The poem can arguably be a significant addition to its readers' understanding if it is studied semantically to know how the poet used semantic parallelism and semantic deviations. Ahmed Ali has conveyed the idea through an excessive use of metaphorical language. It seems that the poem is replete with the metaphors of seasons. It starts with, "The autumn wind blows". The setting of mourning that is an elegiac form is expressed with the support of the metaphor of autumn season that is symbolized for decay and degeneration. It is further linked with a nostalgic pleasant idea of the summer at a time when friends were living and surviving in this world but according to the poem, now that bygone time cannot be retrieved and recalled, "The summer beyond recall". The sweet memories of the dead friends are compared with the leaves of the spring that are scattered on road in the autumn season.

### CONCLUSION:

Ahmed Ali (1910-1914) as a robust literary voice among the progressive artists of the sub-continent left no stone unturned to fictionalize his native culture to the spectrum of the world through his distinguishing style. As an aficionado writer to the progressive movement in India and Pakistan, Ali's art is arguably a lively depiction of the leading objectives of the whole movement. He through a vibrant voice of his poetry not only expressed his

native and colonized anxieties fraught in the indigenous flora and fauna to the world but the artist also applied the abrogation strategy of English by foregrounding and deviation from what's called a standard colonizers' language. The study has manifested that the tool of a native language and art(poetry) equipped with the pure localized imagination and understanding was a powerful blow to the imposed culture of colonizers. It is therefore lasting and potent representation and resistance through the stylistic deviation that was implied by the poet in his poetry to be different from the ruling class in depiction of the culture of the subcontinent.

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