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Gulzar as an Imagist Poet

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to show Gulzar through the prism of his imagery. Gulzar, who is unfortunately not admired as a great poet and his poetry, is not appreciated. He is outstanding with his unique art and craftsmanship. His characteristic imagery makes him stand out from rest of his contemporaries and those who preceded him both in the film world and literature. He uses unusual images and juxtaposes them effortlessly to a great effect. Gulzar creates images which keep readers as well as critics breathless. In Gulzar's poetry different images touch facts of life. These images sprout from the life and its surroundings and this becomes their beauty. His images depict day to day life with natural ease. The surreal imagery is the hallmark of his lyrics.

Keywords: Imagery, Drenched, Hallmark, Surreal, Unusual, Variation, Experiments.

One of the dominant elements of poetry is the usage of image by a poet. Poets express their feelings or experiences by means of various images. According to Perrine, "Imagery may be defined as the representation through language of sense experience". (Perrine 45) Thus, imagery means a sense experience. It means an imaginary thought which words make with sounds and shapes. In order to reach image to audience the basic thing which is important is that the words should lay same impression or impact on the readers that was created in poet during its creation. This is the basic quality of an image, but poet on the basis of his sounds and shapes of words creates images. The feelings he creates with the images get sprouted in the mind of a reader so that a reader feels a similar taste. Impassionate style in poetry, unity and uniformity what a poet desires is much important for imagery. In an image there is always harmony of two or more than two images which produces deeper meanings. T. S. Eliot begins his famous poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" with these lines:

Let us go then, You and I

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherized upon a table

Here two known images are connected. The beginning part of these two images is important. One image is the evening which is lying unconscious against the sky. In the second image a patient is shown lying on the stretcher after anesthetized. These two images depict unconsciousness, illness, stillness and weakness. Here the image of evening is juxtaposed with the image of patient. Like English poetry, in Urdu also there are so many poets who are considered to be great imagist with their outstanding imagery such as Ghalib, Mir, Faiz, Iqbal, Sahir, Akbar Allahabadi, Faraz etc. One among them is Gulzar, who is unique in his imagination and creates an imaginary world that keeps readers breathless. In his poems the images which are shown are laced with known images of day to day experience. He creates such images by

which we reach to their depth of meaning. In many of his poems there are two to three images combined in such a manner that by shaping an image one takes less time to reach the depth of meaning. We have a few lines from a poem “Ansoo-1” “Tears-1”:

Ekbhigahuwa, chhelkachhelka, wohlafizbhihai

Jubdardchhoye to ankhoenmeinaajaatahai

Kehnekeliye lab hiltehain

Ankhoen se adahojatahai!! (RaatPashminey Ki 53)

A drenched, peeled, that word

When pain arises it is seen

Lips move in order to say something

Eyes tell something!!

We have seen barks, drenched ones also, but a word drenched (filled with tears) peeled, the ‘word’ that is uttered with low tune is the indication of making one-to-one-equation of ‘image’ and ‘meaning’. An aptly clear example of similar equation can be found in a poem “Ansoo-3” “Tears-3” as:

Sheeshemubteksehmasachup chap khadahai

Bhigabhigaththraththra

Boondeinpatapatakarkay

Tip tipkartitoottihain toseskikiawazaatihai

Barishkejanekebaadbhi

Dyartektapkarehtahai

Tum kochhodaydaerhoyihai

Aansooubtak toot rahehai (RaatPashminey Ki 55)

Image= teak stands silent as if terrified

Drenched and shivering

Drops skid over leaves dripping with sound of sigh

Even after the rain

It continues to drop water

Equation=it has been long ago you left

While tears still drop

This poem is pure like the rain which had dropped little while ago. In Gulzar's poems images sprout like branches. In these two concurrent images, on the surface, one meaning can be seen burning like a flame, but beneath it several flames can be seen burning. Gulzar creates such images which keep readers as well as critics breathless. Like we have a song from the film *Khamosh* that made Urdu poets stunned. We quote a few lines from it:

Pyarkoyibolnahi, pyarkoyiawaznahi

Ekkhamoshihai, naruktihai, nathhertihai kahein

Noor kiboondhaisadiyon se bahakartihai (100 Lyrics 26)

Love is neither a word nor a voice

A silence, which neither stops nor stays anywhere

It is drop of light that flows for ages

Here an image is created that love is a drop of light that flows for ages. Neither it extinguishes nor does it stop anywhere. It is continuous process that flows for ages. The surreal imagery is the hallmark of most of Gulzar's lyrics. The startling imagery of the song left film industry as well as common masses elated. His imagery is unusual which makes him stand out of the rest who preceded him in the world of film and literature. An example of similar unusual imagery can be found in a poem "Rooh Dekhihai Kabhi" "Did you Ever See the Soul". We quote a few lines from it:

Roohdekhilai,

Kabhi rooh komahsooskiyahai

Jagte jeete hue doodhiyakohre se lipatkar

Saanslete hue is kohre komahsooskiyahai (Chand Pukhraj Ka 83)

Did you ever see the soul?

Or even felt it

Embracing the milky mist

Did you ever feel the mist breathing

It is an unusual imagery where poet describes soul which he visualizes and feels becomes a part of reader's experience. It is his genius to construct such images which one can rarely find in Urdu poetry. Similarly there is poem "Mujhhe Mera Jism Chhodkar Beh Gaya Nadimein" "My Body Left me, and Floated Down the Stream" where unusual imagery can be seen:

Mujhamera jism chhodkar beh gayanadimein

Abhi asi din kibaathaimain nahayanayutrathaghat par jub

Ththarrahatha

Wohchoukepanikisardtehzeeb, der gayatha

Mein soochta4tha, bagarmeraywohkisekategateezdehara

wohbehtaypanikiberukhijantaneheinhai (PandrahPaanchPachhattar 101)

My body left me, and floated down the stream

It was the moment that day when I came to the bathing place

I was shivering

The coldness of water, scared it

I had thought, how will it cross the rapid currents without me

It is not aware of the indifference of water

It is an unusual imagery where the poet imagines of losing his body which floated down the stream and he is watching it on the other side. Here the implication is about body and soul. While the body shivers the soul calls from the other side. To produce such imagery is unique by its own and makes him distinguished from rest of other Urdu poets.

Gulzar has produced different images of moon at different situations. He has interpreted the image of moon in several ways. Gulzar himself says that he is fascinated with the images of moon. Gulzar says, "I am attracted by the imagery of the moon". The word *chand* appealed him much. Image of the moon comes to him differently and vary according to the situation. He says once laughingly "I have a copyright over moon". We quote a few lines from a "Patjhad" "Autumn" where images of moon come to the poet as:

Jab jabpatjhadmeinpedon se peelepeelepaate

Mere lawn meinakargirtehain

Raatkochand par jakemeinaakashkotaktarehtahoon

Lagtahaikamzoorsapeelachandbhishayad

Peepulkesokhaepattesa

Lehratalehrata mere lawn meinakarutrayga! (Chand PukhrajKa 144)

When in autumn dry yellow leaves

Drop in my lawn

I gaze at the sky during nights on my roof

It seems that the fragile yellow moon perhaps

Like a dried *peepul* leaf

Fluttering would drop in my lawn!

Here image of the moon comes to the poet in the form of dried *peepul* leaf which falls in winter fluttering. He imagines moon as a fragile thing dropping from the sky like a dried *peepul* leaf. He tried another variation in the *Mere Apne* song when he says:

Roz akeliaaye

Roz akelijaaye

Chand katorialiye, bhikhaaranraat (100 Lyrics 97)

Arriving every night, alone

Departing every night, alone

Chand holds bowl of beggar night

It is amazing to see moon has been compared to a begging bowl in this poem. He has done different experiments with the imagery of moon at different situations. There is again unusual imagery of moon. In a *Trivaini* poem, there is description of a night which is beautiful with no one desiring for the dawn.

Kuchintizaarmein, kuchhijr, kuchvisaalmeinthay

Bahut se log thaykalraatchandkashteemein

Magarsaharkikisikobhiaarzonathi (Trivaini 39)

Some were waiting, some in separation while some in intimacy

There were many boating moon previous night

But no one desires the arrival of dawn

Sometimes he welcomes the stars, the night and never wants the dawn to appear while on some occasions stars as well as night look disturbing him as he feels restless during night with their over brightness. Dawn is a metaphor for the state of mind of a heartbroken lover for whom light itself is an unwelcome sign. It is imagery where many people were boating moon. The first song that Gulzar penned for the film *Bandini* has also the imagery of the night in the beginning lines followed by the image of the moon in the last one:

Mora goraanglai le

Moheshyam rang dai de

.....

Badrihatakechanda

Chupke se jhankechanda (100 Lyrics 3)

Take away my fairness

Provide me with dark skin

.....

Oh moon, push clouds away

Moon, you peep stealthily

The imagery produced here is amazing which clearly indicates genius of Gulzar. Similarly in a song from the film *Maachis* beautiful imagery, live metaphors and similes are used which compel us to read and reread his poetry. We have a few lines of the song:

Chhodaayehum wohgaliyan

Jahantereparienke

Kanwalgirakartethay

Hanse to do gaalonmein

Bhawarpadakartethay

Teri kamarkebal pa

Nadimudakartithi

Hansiteri sun sunke

Fasalpakakartithi

Chhod aye hum who galiyen

We left those lanes

Where your lotus feet used to dance

When you smiled dimples adorned your cheeks

The river used to turn following the curves of your belly

Crops used to ripen listening to thy giggles

We left those lanes

In this song Gulzar's beautiful imagery, harmony among designing pattern of words is found which depict peak of his art. There is mixture of remembrances of childhood and youth which becomes the cause of creation of such poems for any poet. In a beautiful manner Gulzar

has given order to words and provided them with new meanings. “Lotus feet”, “dimples on cheeks”, “ripening of crops listening to thy giggles”, are such metaphors and similes which are rarely found in film poetry. Gulzar merges the unusual and usual images in both film and non-film poetry. The mixing of usual and unusual images enhances the aesthetic value of poetry which is effortlessly done by Gulzar. It is here impossible to enumerate his poetry depicting imagery in this brief assessment.

Gulzar succeeded in bringing the new image pattern to audiences. He writes for readers, but on the basis of images his intelligence is conveyed which is part of his art. He knows how to elevate a poem to higher realms of beauty. In Gulzar’s poetry different images do not run away from the facts. These images sprout from life and its surroundings and this is their beauty. His images depict day to day life with natural ease. Thus it could be said Gulzar provided vigour and taste to Urdu poetry with his amazing and unusual images.

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