# TRACING MEANING THROUGH SOUND: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF FARZANA AQIB'S *CHASE*

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## Abstract

This paper examines how phonological features such as repetition and anagrammatic restructuring create meaning in Farzana Aqib's poem *Chase* (2021). Using a stylistic approach grounded in Leech and Short's (2007) phonological theory and Abdul Karim Khan's (2020) anagram method, the research analyzes sound devices like alliteration, assonance, and consonance. The findings show that these sound patterns metaphorically reflect themes of loss, chaos, and cultural identity in the Pakistani context. This is the first study to apply anagrammatic analysis to Aqib's work, offering a new lens for examining sound and meaning in non-native English poetry.

**Keywords:** Farzana Aqib, phonology, stylistics, anagram, Pakistani English poetry, cultural identity
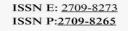
## Background of the Study

Stylistic analysis has emerged as a significant tool in understanding the aesthetic and functional elements of literary texts. In recent years, attention has been drawn toward the phonological aspects of poetry, particularly how sound devices influence meaning (Wales, 2011). Farzana Aqib, a contemporary Pakistani poet, uses rich phonological texture in her poem *Chase*, which captures the existential crisis of individuals misled by societal and personal misdirection. The sounds in the poem are not merely decorative but carry embedded meanings that reflect national concerns, such as lack of guidance, emotional defeat, and societal chaos.

## Statement of Purpose

This study aims to explore how sound patterns, especially repeated sounds and their rearrangement into anagrams, create meaning in Farzana Aqib's *Chase*. It focuses on how these sound-based anagrams work as metaphors to reflect deeper social and psychological themes such as the search for direction, feelings of loss, and the effects of disorder on both individuals and society. Hence this paper addresses this question:

1. How do phonological features, particularly sound repetition and anagrammatic patterns, contribute to the expression of social and psychological themes in Farzana Aqib's poem *Chase*?

## Literature Review

Farzana Aqib's poetry has begun to receive recognition for its thematic richness, especially her integration of Islamic history and cultural narratives into English verse, offering a unique voice in Pakistani English literature (Minute Mirror, 2024a). Her contributions have been praised for promoting English literary expression within Pakistan, with government officials such as Federal Information Minister Fawad Chaudhary acknowledging her role in reviving interest in English poetry and literature (Minute Mirror, 2024b). Internationally, she has been honored with prestigious awards such as the Alexander Pushkin Award by the Russian House in Colombo and recognition from the United Arab Emirates for her literary achievements (Farzana Aqib, n.d.). Although academic studies analyzing her work remain limited, her body of over 60 English poetry books provides fertile ground for future scholarly inquiry, particularly in stylistic, cultural, and phonological dimensions.

Sound has the power to evoke emotions, create atmosphere, and convey meaning in literature. Analyzing the power of sound in Farzana Aqib's Chase can provide insights into how she employs sound devices and parallelism to create a unique sonic effect that enhances the meaning and aesthetic of the poem. This concept is vital in understanding the significance of sound in literature.

Moreover, the role of phonology in literary stylistics has been extensively discussed. Leech and Short (2007) emphasize that the phonological dimension of a literary text contributes significantly to its overall meaning and emotional resonance. They describe how sound patterns serve as a bridge between aesthetic form and thematic depth. Widdowson (1992) also argues that stylistic features like alliteration and assonance often reinforce the thematic concerns of a poem.

Furthermore, Abdul Karim Khan (2020) pioneered a method in Pakistani stylistics where recurrent sound clusters in poetry were reorganized to form meaningful anagrams, which were then interpreted contextually. This method laid the foundation for the current study's analytical framework.

**Research gap**

Although Farzana Aqib's poetry is gaining recognition, detailed stylistic analysis—especially from a phonological angle remains limited. Existing studies on sound and anagrammatic techniques (e.g., Leech & Short, 2007; Khan, 2020) have not yet been applied to her work. This study fills that gap by examining how sound patterns in *Chase* convey deeper social and psychological meanings.

**Methodology**

This study applies a qualitative, interpretive, stylistic approach to analyze Farzana Aqib's *Chase*. The focus lies on identifying phonological patterns and decoding anagrammatic structures to trace symbolic meanings. The methodology draws inspiration from stylistic theorists Leech and Short (2007) and the anagrammatic model proposed by Abdul Karim Khan (2020).

    a. Text Selection

The poem, Chase, was purposively selected from Farzana Aqib's poetry collection (2021). The Chase was selected due to its rich auditory texture and strong thematic relevance to socio-psychological concerns in contemporary Pakistani society.

    b. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the stylistic theory of Leech and Short (2007), focusing on foregrounding and parallelism to analyze poetic language. Foregrounding emphasizes linguistic

deviation for aesthetic effect, often through phonological devices like alliteration and assonance, while parallelism enhances cohesion and meaning through structural repetition. Building on this, the research incorporates anagrammatic stylistics as proposed by Khan (2020), decoding repeated phonemes into meaningful anagrams—moon, lost, and dust—which reflect deeper socio-psychological themes. Together, these approaches reveal how sound patterns in Farzana Aqib's *Chase* contribute to symbolic and thematic richness.

   c.   Phonological Analysis

Each line of the poem was examined to identify prominent sound devices, including alliteration (repetition of initial consonants), assonance (repetition of vowel sounds), and consonance (repetition of consonant sounds in general). The phonemes were transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to ensure phonetic accuracy and consistency in pattern recognition.

   d.    Sound Repetition Mapping

Frequently occurring phonemes were recorded and categorized to detect clusters that could be meaningfully rearranged. This step focused solely on non-arbitrary repetitions, deliberately excluding coincidental or thematically irrelevant sounds.

   e.   Anagram Generation

Phonemes that appeared frequently and formed cohesive sound clusters were rearranged into semantically potent anagrams, such as:

/m/, /uː/, /n/ → Moon

/l/, /ɒ/, /s/, /t/ → Lost

/d/, /ʌ/, /s/, /t/ → Dust

These anagrams were then analyzed for symbolic relevance in relation to the poem's thematic undercurrents.

   f.   Semantic Interpretation

Each anagram was interpreted in the context of the poem's broader message. Moon was associated with guidance and hope, Lost signified confusion and existential despair, while Dust evoked chaos, destruction, and societal decay.

   g.   Socio-Psychological Thematization

The symbolic implications of these anagrams were then linked to contemporary issues in Pakistani society. These include a lack of mentorship, youth misdirection, cultural stagnation, and the pursuit of hollow or unattainable goals.
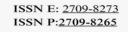
   h.   Data Presentation

The final results were synthesized into a summary table that listed the identified phonemes, their phonological classifications, the derived anagrams, and their corresponding semantic interpretations to ensure clarity and transparency.

**Data analysis and Discussion**

   1.   Analysis of Farzana Aqib's Poem *Chase*

This stylistic analysis investigates the poem Chase by Farzana Aqib (2021), applying a phonological and anagrammatic approach inspired by Dr. Abdul Karim Khan (2020). Using patterns of alliteration, assonance, and consonance, the poem reveals deeper symbolic meanings through the recombination of sounds into semantically significant anagrams. As Leech and Short (2007) assert, "the phonological texture of a text plays a vital role in its stylistic impact, with sound patterns often serving as a bridge between meaning and aesthetic experience" (p. 108). Moreover, they argue that parallelism—the repetition of form, structure, or sound—can serve as

a reinforcement mechanism for thematic emphasis and aesthetic unity (Leech & Short, 2007, pp. 77–80). This analytical lens helps uncover how the poem's sound-based anagrams—moon, lost, and dust—shape the thematic concerns of the poem and reflect wider socio-psychological issues in Pakistan.

### 2. Moon: The Need for Guidance

The recurrence of the phonemes /m/, /u:/, and /n/ in words such as my, whom, nook, on, and to organically generate the anagram moon. This word symbolizes light and guidance in darkness—a theme central to the poem. The symbolic "moon" serves as a metaphor for the guidance that many people in Pakistan lack while chasing personal and national goals. This symbolic alignment is strengthened through phonological parallelism, where recurring sounds serve to reinforce the motif of "illumination" amid confusion (Leech & Short, 2007).

In the socio-educational context, the poet may be referring to youth from underprivileged areas who lack proper mentorship, career counseling, and educational resources. Their misguided pursuits, symbolized by chase, result in failure, confusion, and emotional turmoil. The poem implicitly critiques a system where the absence of structured support leads people to stumble in darkness, much like a night without the moon.

### 3. Lost: The Psychological Consequences of Misdirection

The phonological pattern comprising /l/, /ɒ/, /s/, and /t/ yields the anagram lost. This term underscores the emotional and existential state of those who have gone astray in pursuit of unattainable or irrelevant goals. Unlike lose, which is in the present tense, lost—a past participle—emphasizes irreversible damage, psychological defeat, and socio-emotional exhaustion.

This anagram also invokes ambiguity and surrender. When individuals are unsure of their destination and lack the coping mechanisms to navigate challenges, they abandon their pursuits. The poet thus utilizes lost not merely as a word but as an aesthetic symbol of thematic regression, intensified by phonological reinforcement (Leech & Short, 2007). This abandonment becomes a metaphor for psychological defeat and societal stagnation.

### 4. Dust: Symbol of Chaos and Destruction

The anagram dust, derived from the repetition of /d/, /ʌ/, /s/, and /t/, appears to represent the broader theme of destruction. The word is phonetically suggested through aural textures in lines such as "rustling bustling of…" and "the whole city," which create a sonic atmosphere of chaos. Dust symbolizes not just physical desolation but also the metaphorical collapse of order—economic, emotional, and societal.

Dust, traditionally a noun, is reimagined here as a verb, indicating movement and action. This grammatical and functional transformation parallels the poet's strategic manipulation of sound and meaning, aligning with Leech and Short's (2007) notion of foregrounding, where deviations from expected norms in syntax, sound, or grammar yield stylistic significance.

Table of Phonological Conversions into Anagrams

| Repetition and Rearrangement of Sounds | Anagram | Semantic Interpretation Thermalized insights |
|---|---|---|
| 1. /m/ (consonance), /u:/ (assonance), /n/ (consonance) | Moon | Guidance, hope, enlightenment |
| 2. /l/ (consonance), /ɒ/ (assonance), /s/ (consonance), /t/ | Lost | Confusion, emotional defeat, societal misdirection |
| 3. /d/ (consonance), /ʌ/ (assonance), /s/ (consonance), /t/ | Dust | Chaos, destruction, societal collapse |

These meaningful transformations of sounds highlight the powerful interplay between form and content in Chase. The poem becomes more than a lyrical piece—it is a stylistic lament for a society chasing illusions and suffering real consequences. Through the lens of stylistics, Farzana Aqib's manipulation of sound and structure emerges as both an aesthetic and ideological act.
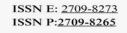
**Discussion**

This stylistic analysis of Farzana Aqib's poem (2021) applies phonological and anagrammatic methods, revealing how sound patterns such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance form symbolic anagrams—moon, lost, and dust—that reflect deeper socio-psychological issues in Pakistan. Drawing on Leech and Short's (2007) theories of foregrounding and parallelism, the study demonstrates how repeated phonemes not only create aesthetic texture but also encode thematic concerns such as lack of guidance, emotional defeat, and societal collapse. The poet's strategic manipulation of sound constructs a layered critique of cultural confusion and youth disillusionment, highlighting the power of stylistic analysis to uncover embedded meanings and social commentary in contemporary Pakistani English poetry.

**Findings**

The analysis produced that sound symbolism in Chase functions not only as a stylistic device but as a thematic vehicle. The poet strategically uses phonological repetition to create symbolic anagrams (moon, lost, dust). The anagrams derived from repeated phonemes reflect critical socio-psychological concerns, including lack of guidance (moon), emotional defeat (lost), and societal chaos (dust). Phonological parallelism enhances cohesion and emphasizes recurrent themes, aligning with Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic framework. Foregrounding and grammatical transformation (e.g., re-imagining dust as a verb) underscore the poet's critique of Pakistan's sociopolitical trajectory. The poem acts as a cultural critique, echoing the confusion and existential stagnation experienced by marginalized youth in Pakistan.

**Conclusion**

This study confirms that a stylistic approach—especially one attentive to sound—can reveal different interpretations and expose underlying cultural anxieties in contemporary Pakistani poetry. Farzana Aqib's poetry, particularly in Chase, offers a profound exploration of the psychological and societal challenges faced by Pakistan's youth, employing sound-driven techniques like alliteration, assonance, consonance, and anagrammatic structures. The phonological patterns in the poem create layered metaphors that symbolize the absence of

spiritual and moral guidance (moon), the existential crisis and disillusionment of marginalized youth (lost), and the societal decay brought on by materialism and corruption (dust). Through these sound patterns, Aqib transforms auditory elements into powerful social commentary, revealing deeper insights into the cultural, religious, and sociopolitical anxieties of contemporary Pakistan. This study underscores how a stylistic approach focused on sound can uncover nuanced interpretations and expose the underlying concerns within modern Pakistani poetry.

### Recommendations

More attention should be given to phonological features in the stylistic analysis of South Asian poetry, as they often encode critical thematic concerns.

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