

PARALLELISM AND MEANING: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL REPETITION IN FARZANA AQIB'S *CHASE* (2021)

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Abstract

*This study examines the role of lexical parallelism in meaning-making through a stylistic analysis of Farzana Aqib's poem, Chase from her collection The Stardust Drape (2021). The key idea examined is how the repetition of specific determiners **every** and **any** functions beyond structural cohesion to express psychological persistence, spiritual pursuit, and social challenges. Drawing on Leech and Short's (2007) theory of parallelism and the methodology of close reading, the study argues that such repeated patterns emphasize both individual struggle and universal hope. Findings suggest that lexical parallelism in Aqib's work deepens thematic resonance and reflects a culturally situated poetic voice. The novelty of this study lies in applying lexical stylistic tools to contemporary Pakistani English poetry, offering a pathway for further stylistic and cultural explorations.*

Keywords: Farzana Aqib, stylistics, lexical parallelism, repetition, Pakistani English poetry, Leech and Short, socio-psychological themes

Background of the Study

Parallelism, as a fundamental rhetorical and stylistic device, facilitates syntactic cohesion, semantic resonance, and rhythmic harmony in poetic discourse. According to Leech and Short (2007), "parallelism is a pervasive feature of stylistic artistry, allowing authors to create emphasis, rhythm, and cohesion by aligning linguistic elements in structured patterns" (p. 63). The strategic repetition of structurally similar elements serves both an aesthetic and functional purpose in poetry, underscoring central themes while reinforcing the emotional and cognitive experience of the reader.

Farzana Aqib's poetry is gaining recognition for its cultural depth and linguistic experimentation, particularly in integrating Islamic historical motifs and contemporary issues. Her 2021 collection *The Stardust Drape* reveals a poetic voice that speaks to both spiritual longing and societal turbulence. Stylistic analysis, especially lexical parallelism, provides a critical framework for understanding how form and meaning converge in her poetry.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing interest in Farzana Aqib's poetic contributions, there is a significant gap in stylistic analyses of her work, particularly in terms of lexical repetition and its semantic functions. This study investigates how repeated lexical structures contribute to thematic development in her poem, *Chase*.

Literature Review

Researchers in stylistics have long explored how language and literary techniques influence meaning in texts. Traditional frameworks emphasized close textual analysis, while modern approaches have integrated computational tools and cognitive theories to deepen stylistic interpretation. Leech and Short (2021) revisited classical stylistic models, incorporating digital tools to examine how narrative style shapes reader perception. Similarly, Semino (2023) used corpus stylistics to investigate metaphor and narrative perspective in contemporary fiction, showing how repeated patterns in language can reveal deeper emotional and ideological layers.

A central feature studied within stylistics is lexical parallelism—the deliberate repetition of words, phrases, or morphemes. This linguistic technique enhances rhythm, cohesion, and emphasis, contributing to the aesthetic and communicative force of a text (Leech & Short, 2007; Widdowson, 1992). Lexical parallelism is deeply rooted in Jakobson's (1960) *Poetic Function*, which emphasizes the foregrounding of linguistic patterns to amplify textual memorability. Halliday and Hasan (1976) further noted that lexical repetition strengthens coherence by linking textual segments. Semino (2023) and Khan and Ali (2023) demonstrate that repeated lexemes can activate cognitive schemas in readers, allowing for the recognition of thematic, emotional, or ideological patterns.

Building on this, Ahmed (2025) analyzed the use of lexical chains in *The Stardust Drape* to trace diasporic identity, showing how repetition constructs belonging and memory within a postcolonial framework. Similarly, in *The Chase*, parallel expressions and repeated lexical items reinforce the speaker's sense of pursuit and longing, creating a rhythmic structure that mirrors the poem's emotional urgency. However, few studies have applied lexical parallelism to contemporary South Asian poetry, especially in a comparative or stylistic context. Moreover, Shah, Iqbal, and Khan (2025) analyze Aqib's use of phonological repetition to enrich emotional depth and thematic cohesion. Grounded in Leech and Short's stylistic theory, their qualitative analysis reveals how parallelism reinforces themes of identity and displacement. They employ a qualitative stylistic analysis to examine her poem *Chase* from *A Stardust Drape* by Farzana Aqib. Their textual analysis identifies the instances of phonological parallelism (like alliteration and assonance). They analyze how these patterns contribute to the emotional tone and thematic unity of the poems. They reveal that Aqib uses phonological repetition to generate rhythm and emotional resonance. The authors conclude that these stylistic features are not ornamental but integral to the poem's structure and meaning-making, enhancing both cohesion and reader engagement. Farzana Aqib's poem, *Chase*, published in *The Stardust Drape* (2021), stands out for its deliberate use of repeated determiners such as *every* and *any*. These words recur in varied contexts *every corner*, *any glimpse*, etc. and are central to the poem's structure and emotional depth.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the stylistic theory advanced by Leech and Short (2007), who emphasize that parallelism functions as a key stylistic device for creating emphasis, coherence, and semantic layering. Lexical parallelism, as a subcategory of stylistic repetition, guides interpretation by drawing attention to repeated forms and framing them within larger thematic structures. Jakobson's (1960) notion of the *Poetic Function* serves as a foundational concept, highlighting how repetition foregrounds language to enhance its poetic and communicative value. This theoretical lens allows for a deeper understanding of how repeated linguistic forms in *The Stardust Drape* and *The Chase* serve to construct identity, emotional depth, and narrative cohesion.

Leech and Short (2007) highlight parallelism as a key stylistic feature, asserting that repeated linguistic forms enhance rhythm, cohesion, and emphasis in literature. Widdowson (1992) similarly argues that stylistic repetition reinforces thematic unity. While studies have explored phonological and syntactic parallelism, few have applied lexical parallelism to contemporary South Asian poetry. This study builds on the foundational work of stylisticians by applying their theory to Aqib's *The Stardust Drape*.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative stylistic approach using textual analysis. Lexical items were identified, their frequencies tabulated, and contextual functions analyzed. Focus was placed on the repetition of *every* and *any*, observing their syntactic positioning and semantic contributions. This study examines the instances of **lexical parallelism** in Farzana Aqib's poem *Chase* (2021). Anchored in the framework of Leech and Short (2007), the analysis focuses on the repeated determiners *every* and *any* to identify recurring structures, with attention to how these repetitions generate cohesion and convey psychological depth. The study also interprets the stylistic significance of these lexical choices within the socio-cultural context of Pakistani poetry in English.

Lexical Parallelism in Farzana Aqib's *Chase*: A Stylistic Analysis

Farzana Aqib's poem *Chase*, part of her 2021 collection *The Stardust Drape*, employs a striking use of lexical parallelism—particularly the repetition of determiners *every* and *any* to articulate the speaker's psychological journey through chaos, loss, and an elusive search for meaning. Leech and Short (2007) note that parallelism provides “emphasis, rhythm, and cohesion by aligning linguistic elements in structured patterns” (p. 63), and in *Chase*, these patterns are more than stylistic devices—they form a critical conduit for the expression of socio-psychological complexity. By analyzing how these repeated structures function within the poem, this study uncovers the deeper metaphoric and affective dimensions encoded in Aqib's lexical choices.

In the selected poem, lexical parallelism is realized through the deliberate repetition of the determiners *every* and *any* which contribute significantly to thematic development and structural unity. These words function as adjectives and determiners, modifying successive nouns and thus intensifying the thematic contrast between struggle and aspiration. As Wales

(2011) notes, the repetition of function words—especially determiners—can play a crucial role in foregrounding the poet’s ideological stance.

The repetition of *every* across five syntactic constructions—*every corner*, *every nook*, *every cranny*, *every turning*, and *every door*—embodies a cumulative force of inclusiveness and perseverance. Syntactically, this anaphoric repetition emphasizes the exhaustive nature of the speaker’s pursuit. Semantically, it reflects the comprehensive and unrelenting journey toward a goal, where each element signifies a stage in life’s trials. As Crystal (2008) argues, “parallelism not only mirrors but intensifies semantic cohesion, enabling the reader to conceptualize totality and determination through stylistic form” (p. 148).

Each noun following *every* evokes spatial metaphors that represent psychological or existential hurdles. The words *corner*, *nook*, and *cranny* suggest obscure or hidden challenges, while *turning* symbolizes change, and *door* metaphorically denotes opportunity or culmination. This kind of symbolic parallelism aligns with Jakobson’s theory of poetic function, wherein the equivalence principle “projects the axis of selection into the axis of combination” (Jakobson, 1960). In other words, the repeated structure not only binds the elements but gives them symbolic equivalence in the reader’s perception.

In contrast, the repetition of *any* in *any glimpse*, *any shadow*, *any wisp* introduces a tone of desperation and minimalism, reflecting the speaker’s yearning for even the faintest sign of goodness or hope in a corrupted world. While *every* connotes completeness and inclusion, *any* introduces indefiniteness and uncertainty, marking a shift from assertive pursuit to fragile hope. This subtle lexical variation echoes Widdowson’s (1975) view that stylistic choices are “value-laden selections that construct particular interpretive possibilities.”

The deliberate juxtaposition of *every* and *any* constructs a thematic tension between abundance and scarcity—between the complete engagement of the self in a quest (every step, every place) and the elusive, ephemeral goal (any glimpse, any wisp). This contrast foregrounds the existential struggle at the heart of the poem, positioning the speaker as a seeker in a morally barren landscape. It reflects the poet’s attempt to derive meaning and humanity in an overwhelmingly materialistic and hostile environment, a point supported by Simpson (2004), who argues that “parallelism in poetic discourse often serves as a formal correlate to conflict or contrast in theme” (p. 72).

The parallelism of the determiners *every* and *any* is not merely a rhetorical flourish but a deeply functional stylistic strategy that aligns syntactic repetition with thematic exploration. It enables the poet to express both the exhaustive nature of human struggle and the elusive nature of redemption or hope. By employing parallelism, the poet leverages linguistic form to reflect and intensify emotional content, exemplifying the notion that style is not ancillary but integral to meaning-making in poetry.

Discussion

Farzana Aqib's *Chase* demonstrates stylistic sophistication through the deliberate repetition of determiners *every* and *any*, illustrating what Leech and Short (2007) identify as parallelism's role in creating "emphasis, rhythm, and cohesion" (p. 63). These lexical choices function not only as syntactic devices but also as powerful conduits of psychological and thematic depth.

The repetition of *every* as in *every corner, nook, cranny, turning, and door* represents a spatial and existential mapping of the speaker's journey through struggle. This determiner, functioning as an adjective, embodies totality and semantic exhaustiveness (Quirk et al., 1985), signifying that each stage of adversity holds equal importance. The effect aligns with Toolan's (1998) view that stylistic choices guide interpretive focus, allowing the reader to perceive emotional growth via the structured unfolding of imagery—from confinement to opportunity.

Conversely, *any* in *any glimpse, shadow, and wisp* marks a shift from comprehensive search to fragmented yearning. Unlike the cumulative implication of *every* and *any* expresses a plea for even a trace of moral or spiritual redemption. The abstract nouns it modifies denote impermanence, accentuating the speaker's sense of futility and disorientation (Simpson, 2004). This parallelism reveals the fractured inner state of the speaker while contrasting the visible corruption of society with the invisibility of virtue (Wales, 2014).

Stylistically, the poem's repetitive determiners encode psychological resilience (*every*) and existential desperation (*any*), thus bridging formal features with thematic complexity. Socio-politically, these lexical patterns mirror the disillusionment of modern life and the moral entropy of the urban world depicted *barriers, hurdles, and rustling bustling* spaces serve as metaphors for a decaying ethical landscape.

Lexical parallelism in *Chase* is not merely ornamental; it is structurally and ideologically central. Through its syntactic regularity and semantic variation, A dynamic interplay between internal chaos and external disorder, between hope and despair can be constructed that aligns Farzana Aqib's poem *Chase* closely with recurring themes in her broader body of work, particularly those of existential struggle, societal decay, and spiritual yearning. Her poetry often centres on the tension between personal disillusionment and the collective turmoil of modern society. In *Chase*, this is reflected in the speaker's search for meaning and purity amidst a world fraught with materialism and moral corruption. Similar to her other works, Aqib highlights the elusive nature of truth and redemption, portraying a quest for spiritual and ethical restoration in a fragmented world. The lexical parallelism enhances these themes, emphasizing the inner conflict between hope and despair, and the longing for something greater than the visible and material. This thematic continuity in Aqib's poetry underscores a profound engagement with both personal and societal crises, urging a return to deeper moral and spiritual values

Findings and Conclusion

The study finds that Aqib's use of lexical parallelism serves as more than a rhetorical device; it is integral to the poem's thematic core. The repeated determiners reflect both internal struggle and external barriers. This stylistic feature enhances the poem's emotional and cultural impact. This study pioneers the application of lexical parallelism analysis to a

contemporary Pakistani English poem, introducing a novel lens for examining repetition and meaning in non-Western poetic contexts.

In *Chase*, the analysis of lexical parallelism further unveils deeper socio-cultural, political, and religious meanings. The repetition of determiners like *every* and *any* reflects a collective experience of disillusionment in contemporary urban life, where the constant *hurdles* and *bustling* cityscape symbolize a society mired in moral and ethical decay. Politically, the poem critiques the erosion of core values, suggesting that the speaker's quest for purity mirrors a broader call for societal restoration. Religiously, the speaker's yearning for a *glimpse*, *shadow*, or *wisp* of something pure represents a deep spiritual longing for divine intervention or moral redemption in a world rife with betrayal and inhumanity. Through this lens, *Chase* becomes a potent commentary on the intertwined personal and collective battles facing modern society, urging both individual and societal renewal rooted in ethical and spiritual values.

Contribution for Future Studies

This research opens a path for further stylistic investigations of Farzana Aqib's broader oeuvre and similar South Asian English poetry. It also encourages the application of parallelism theory to explore identity, spirituality, and resistance in poetic language.

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