

A Semantic Analysis of Daud Kamal’s “An Ode to Death”

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the present study is to analyze the Poem of Daud Kamal “An Ode to Death” in the light of semantics. The Present paper has microscopically studied the poem and tried to highlight all possible meanings in context of semantics to comprehend the poem up to the mark. The research covers seven types of meaning by Leech (1967) e.g Denotative, Connotative, Collocative, Affective, Stylistic, Thematic and Reflective. Through these meanings we come across poet’s attitude to ultimate reality of death, uncertainty of life and eternal life after death.

Keywords: An Ode to Death, Daud Kamal, semantics, death and life.

INTRODUCTION

Semantic Analysis is the best way to understand any poetic work. Therefore, the present research has as well been analyzed the poem semantically. Semantics does not only discuss meaning, but it also discusses the nature of poem and poet’s attitude to it. Semantic analysis here presents the different meanings separately and highlights the points inside poem “An Ode to Death” written by Pakistani writer Kamal. The poem is a blend of cultural, historical and religious imagery. Being the Pakistani and Muslim writer Kamal’s linguistics approach, religious bent of mind, outlook on personal life and attitude to death are different from the other regional poets to an eminent degree. This

research discusses each point of the poem that reveals writer’s attitude to life, death, grave and the day of judgment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present research has suggested seven types of meaning introduced by Leec (1967). That seven sorts of meanings named as Denotative, Connotative, Collocative, Affective, Stylistic, Thematic and Reflective. Leech’s seven types of meaning is the best tool to analyze any writer’s mental and linguistics approach to his work. To study meaning of the poem separately in the light of Leech seven types of meaning help readers out to reach the maximum level of writers message.

	Conceptual or logical meaning
	Dictionary meaning
1. Denotative Meaning	Universal Meaning
	Contextual Meaning
2. Connotative Meaning	This meaning tells the things behind the curtain. This shows another side of mirror. This meaning reveals the purpose of writing, and conveys writer’s message.
3. Collocative Meaning	A collocation is a familiar grouping of words, especially words that habitually appear together and thereby convey meaning by association. Collocational range refers to the set of items that typically accompany a word.
4. Affective Meaning	Affective meaning is more directly a reflection of the speaker’s personal attitude or feelings towards the listener or the target of the utterance.
	Attitudinal meaning
5. Stylistic Meaning	Social meaning refers to the use of language to establish and regulate social relations and to maintain social roles.
	Social relations

		Choices of words: Stiff/relaxed, Formal/informal
6.	Thematic Meaning	The meaning arising out of the way in which the writer or speaker organizes his message is called <i>thematic meaning</i> .
7.	Reflexive Meaning	Reflective meaning is the meaning which arises in cases of multiple conceptual meanings, when one sense of a word forms part of our response to another sense. It is the product of people's recognition and imagination.

ANALYSIS OF AN ODE TO DEATH

The poem "An ode to death" is about the poet's attitude to ultimate reality of death, uncertainty of life and eternal life after death. This paper semantically analyzes the poem with all seven meanings. Semantics involves several types of meaning; most importantly are Denotative, Connotative, Collocative, Affective, Stylistic, Thematic and Reflective. The poem discusses reality of life and death and men's attitude to it. The poem is basically an ode that draws writer's inner feeling attitude to death. Usages of the literary term and simplicity of language make the poem sublime.

Denotative Meaning

First hand meaning of the poem tells the life in this world is temporary and everyone has to go from here. Every soul shall have a taste of death, but the way of lives of people show that they won't ever die. They have been sent here forever. Everyone will soon be buried and the time will come when all part of body will mix into dust.

Connotative Meaning

Contextual meaning of the poem opens many doors of religious as well as worldly knowledge. Microscopic study of the poem makes us aware of the encyclopedic knowledge of the writer's worldly objects. Poets' comparison of clocks ticking with monotonous life is marvelous.

He says:

Death is more than certain

But the clocks go on ticking as before

God has created everything with some purpose. Even diamond is extracted from carbon. In poets view nothing should be avoided or looked down upon. Everything has its value. Everyman has some talent. No one should be neglected. We shouldn't laugh at poor, jobless and homeless people. Poet says, though we are living luxurious life, yet we are after more riches and blindly running after worldly success. We are giving more preference this world to the world

after here. We have forgotten that one day we have to go from here leaving all belongings behind us. Only our actions that we have performed will go with us.

Poet says:

And in every particle of carbon dust

There lives a diamond dream

How many galaxies yet to be explored-

How many seeds in the pomegranate of time?

Above last two lines show that man can never be satisfied in this world. We are restlessly working leaps and bounds to become billionaire from millionaire. In poets' eyes, whether we live hundred years or thousand but one day we have to say farewell to this world. In the line of "many seeds of pomegranate of time" pomegranate is the world and seeds are its luxuries. If you become the richest man of the world and make the whole world your slave, yet you cannot cross the boundary of this world. Seeds are the wealth, land, bank-balance and positions and pomegranate is world which will itself finish.

At poet's glance people have become mentally blind, because they get no lesson from others' death. Life is too short to fulfill all desires. We have so many dreams in our eyes, we have long-term planning, and we achieve one goal and start to run after another. We have forgotten death that can separate our soul from body in the single jerk of its power. In the eyes of death rich and poor are alike. Death has no mercy for anyone, whether you are owner or worker. Death will come and must take your soul. He says:

The pine tree blasted by last year's Thunderbolt

And the burn out match sticks in my ashtray

Look so terribly alike

With the help of pen Kamal makes picture of grave. He says that nothing will remain safe in grave. Even our hair and bones will destroy with the passage of time. In grave our hands separate from wrists, knees from calves and calves from

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feet. When a person comes inside it, it tears his shroud, tears his body into pieces and eats his flesh. In grave the virtuous' face was turned towards the Qiblah whereas the sinner's face is turned in the opposite direction. It hugs pious man like a mother hugs her lost child with affection, holding him to her chest, whereas it violently squeezes sinners in such a way that their ribs smash and intertwine with each other. Poet says:

Are the hair and bones
really indestructible and how long
does it take for the eyes
to dissolve in the grave?

Moreover, he says that grave is the place where silence governs. In graveyard many people are asleep since long and waiting for the Day of Judgment. Now, there is no tension of worldly life, no need to earn or struggle to become rich and famous. After death all activities of life suddenly stop. All relations from world disconnect. Deceased is laid down in grave empty handed as he came into the world. Kamal says:

There is an archipelago of naked rocks
Only sleep and silence there,
No anchorage for grief

Collocative Meaning

Intelligent paring of words makes the poem outstanding and show poet's mastery on language and encyclopedic Knowledge of the world and world after here. Collocation of the poem is more convincing that arrests our thought and spell us bound. Collocation such as diamond-dream naked rocks match stick, carbon dust, and floating island furnish language and knowledge.

Affective Meaning

Poet's feelings reach peak when his beloved takes last breath and he feels pulse slowing down. Poet remembers the time he spent with his beloved. He feels absence of his beloved arms and becomes disconsolate and heartbroken. Kamal goes deep down and reveals condition of grave after death. He says to his beloved that he has heard hair and bones take time to dissolve, but will he be alive till that to see whether his beloved's bones are safe and sound?

Moreover, poet feels his life is moving away from him. For him death is a tyrant monster that is muffling him up. He is enchained by death.

He feels clutches of death but finds himself helpless before mighty and shadowing hands of death. Poet is confused with either life is deceiver or death, or both of them have schemed to defeat him in the fight of life.

Stylistic Meaning

Poem's central role is to convey the writer's message to awake the society from deep sleep of unawareness of sudden death. Poet wants to beware the people of death's sudden arrival. Though the time of death is fixed, but no one knows his last day of life. Death is cruel creature that does not differentiate between rich and poor. Though if anyone is mayor of the city or street beggar it will treat him same in taking soul out of his body. Everyone has to say farewell to this world leaving his position, bungalow, bank-balance, vehicle, business, trade, near and dears, parents, wife, children and relatives. Beyond need absorption in making money is destructive. Whoever loves the world, it must deceive him. To love this world is foolishness of high degree. We have been sent here for a limited time period. So, for us this world is a stage and we are characters of it. We have to perform our characters as per given talent by our creator.

Thematic Meaning

The poem covers three major themes which are ultimate reality of death, uncertainty of life and eternal life after death. Death is that door through which everyone has to pass. Death is that drink which everyone has to take. Death is that flavor which everyone has to taste. Death is that cruel monster that puts you into the stomach of earth; there you live alone for an uncertain period of time. Death is that deceiver from whose deceive no one could escape.

Reflective Meaning

According to poet's religious bent of mind life is uncertain and grave is a place where soul and body will reunite once again after death. In poet's view there is complete peace and contentment in graveyard. After death there is no tension of worldly life. There is no grief of failure and poverty. There is an unending journey waiting after death, but our attitude to life shows that we are unaware of temporality of life. Being Muslim, Kamal has firm belief in the Day of Judgment. His attitude to life is like the traveler who has stays somewhere temporarily.

CONCLUSION

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On the topic of death poem in its nature is unique. Semantic analysis of the poem presents a microscopic study to comprehend the poem up to the mark. The journey from the world to the grave and from grave to the world after here has critically been discussed. This paper has tried to clarify all difficult words, metaphors, images and imagery. Presents research has covered all seven meanings come under semantics; will help you out to study the poem analytically.

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