

**EFFECTS OF TERRORISM AND THE POET'S PLEA: TEXTUAL
ANALYSIS OF POEM "O' GOD! WHAT WILL HAPPEN?" BY ISRAR
ATAL.**

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ABSTRACT:

Text reflects the social proceedings and the causes and effects of those social trials. This qualitative inquiry attempts to explore and evaluate the textual construction of the effects of terrorism and the poet's plea in his elegy "O' God! What will happen?" Fairclough three dimensional model (2003) is used for textual and social analysis. Textual analysis is applied on the selected data to understand and analyze the harmful effects of terrorism on the people's psyche and socio-political life of pukhtuns residing in KPK. This poem also demonstrates the poet's urge to God to help them for bringing peace. This work unveils the poet's sorrowful sentiments caused by the terrorist activities in the region. Further the paper sheds light on how to create awareness and to educate the people of Khyber Pukhtukhwa in particular and of Pakistan in general.

Keywords: textual analysis, three dimensional models.

Introduction:

The tragedy in the United States of America occurred on September 11, 2001 which made indelible mark on the socio-political situation in certain parts of the world. As it was not confined only to the USA but also extended its roots to the Indo-Pak subcontinent. The US-Afghan war started at such a juncture when Afghanistan was ruled by the Taliban. Al Qaida led by Osama Bin Laden (who lived in Afghanistan by that time) claimed the responsibility of 9/11 attacks who took refuge in Afghanistan. Osama's refuge in Afghanistan paved the way for the Americans to attack it. According to Marquardt and Heffelfinger (2002), US- Afghan war initiated the active invasion of militants in Pakistan. It also provided the opportunity for other rival powers from across the borders that slithered like snakes to Pakistan. Thus terrorism took hold of Pakistan, as it stood with the international community against

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it, and particularly Khyber Pukhtunkhwa was severely affected as many of the international terrorists joined hands with the local extremists. Moreover, it was and is very difficult to stop infiltration from across the border because the people from both the sides share the same culture and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa shares a long border with Afghanistan too. Since then Pakistan has been fighting war against terrorism till the present day, a war which has badly dented the socio-political, economical and psychological scenario of the country.

This war against terrorism not only affected the socio-political scenario of Pakistan, but also its literature, particularly Pashto poetry. In Pashto literature, poetry enjoys a special place, as it has been a great source of inspiration for the pashtuns of all ages. There was a time when Pakistan television Peshawar had been a great source of propagating Pashto dramas but the recent technology like internet and mobile internet has lessened the viewers of television. It has resulted into negligence and avoidance of television by the viewers. They do not have to sit in front of television and wait for the light to come and then watch the play. They simply turn on internet on their cell phones and get themselves updated about daily happenings. The viewers do not focus on watching Pashto dramas on television; they listen to the songs on cell phones. Listening to the songs takes less time to complete the item and move to the next so the viewers listen to Pashto poetry and enjoy every beat of it. Poetry is admired by Pashtuns of all ages and is influenced by the inspirational lines written by the poets.

This study focuses on the effects of terrorism and the poet's plea as textually constructed in the poem of Israr Atal. Like any other genre of Pashto literature, poetry talks of the psychological, socio-political and economic factors of Pakistan particularly Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The people of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa have been suffering from terrorism for the last fifteen years. The individuals as well as community have been attacked by suicide bombers, the Taliban, and finally suffered by the fight between militants and armed forces. Poets are the most sensitive and sensible class of every society. Pashtun poets have vividly portrayed the picture of the society affected by terrorism and the operations against terrorism. The poets have either directly suffered themselves from terrorism or they have suffered passively, as their relatives, friends or neighbors have suffered. The focus of this study is the elegy of Israr Atal who has witnessed the affected and influenced people by terrorist activities. It also aims at exploring the influences of terrorism on his poetry during the first decade of 21st century. The pervasive focus of this study is to analyze the effects of terrorism and the poet's plea as textually constructed in his elegy.

Literature Review:

Terrorism has badly affected the minds and social life of the citizens of Pakistan in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular. However, poets are no exception of its influences. As the poets are keen observers of the society, they do depict their feelings poetically about terrorism in their works. In Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KPK), (Pakistan) many poets as vigilant observers have condemned terrorism in their poetry which have deeply moved the readers. Influences of terrorism can clearly be seen in poems.

Firstly, they have depicted the events caused by Osama Bin Laden, Taliban, and United States of America. Secondly, they have analyzed the inhuman attitude, cruelty and violence of the terrorists. They have portrayed the pictures of the towns, villages, and houses which have been affected by terrorism. They have talked about the devastated houses and scattered corpses having their limbs amputated like the dried twigs of the fallen trees.

Atal (one of the most prominent romantic poets in the realm of Pashto literature) advocates love for peace and reproach war on terrorism. He has referred to 9/11 incidence in his poetry, and has enumerated its effects. His poetry has an implied reference to the group of people who has created chaotic situations. The present day chaos and terror have influenced the socio-political situations and have severe effects on the people's minds and social lives. Atal being the resident of Khyber Puktunkhwa has been himself the victim of terrorism. He has witnessed all the blasts and massacres in the city. Thus he is a close observer of his society and tries to communicate his message and feelings to the reader and audiences through his poetry.

Suver (2008) stated that United States has been the centre of resentment in most of the poems. It also shows that terrorism has influences not only on Pashto poetry, but also on American poets and their poetry. It reveals that terrorism has multiplicity of influences on poetry of the region it occurs in. Likewise, Pashto poetry also contains discursive construction of terrorism and its effects on the people suffering from it.

Therefore, many other Pashto poets have also mentioned the problems aroused after 9/11 and reproached war on terror by their sentimental expressions about the Pashtuns' valour and challenging tendency. They have unveiled the tragedy of 9/11 in their own ways. Thus, the researcher explores the effects of terrorism in Atal's poetry and also his plea during recent terrorist acts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan).

Research Methodology

The present study utilized qualitative paradigm. A Pashto poem by Asrar Atal is selected for the textual analysis. Fairclough's three dimensional model (2003) applied on a selected text. It is both a textual and social analysis focusing on the immediate and broader socio-cultural context.

Theoretical framework

It is a qualitative research in which has applied poststructuralist perspective for text analysis. Poststructuralist perspective as most of its notions/proponents, if not all, is very constructive and conclusive in the analysis and interpretation of the text in context. It perceives and puts a text in plurality of meaning which suspects the univocal reading or interpretation of a text. This very notion of post-structuralism, that meanings are not fixed, but multiple, is an interpretative landmark in the poem under study because it helps study this poem from various angles. It opens the window of multiple meanings (interpretations) to a text. This study utilizes Fairclough's three dimensional model (2003) on the selected text. It is both a textual

and social analysis focusing on the immediate and broader socio-cultural context. It has three stages: description, interpretation and explanation. The stage of description deals with the identification and labeling of formal textual features in the selected text. The stage of interpretation is related to the text as a discursive practice in which the processes of text production and consumption are investigated. This is the stage in which Members Resources (MR) as cognitive entity is applied. The stage of explanation deals with the text as a social practice in which the text is analyzed in the broader socio-cultural context. Here MR as social entity are applied in the text analysis.

As critical discourse analysis (CDA) aims at investigating critically the social issues, therefore, it is selected as detective and interpretative of the discursive social issues under study. Martin and Wodak (2003) argues that “gender issues, issues of racism, media discourses, political discourses, organizational discourses or dimensions of identity research have become very prominent” (p. 5) in the study under CDA. CDA as research method in my study is crucial as it addresses and analytically interprets these issues in the discourses of the unique text under study. Although it is interdisciplinary and a cover term for different approaches, Jørgensen, and Phillips (2002, p. 61-66) identify five common features in all these approaches to CDA:

1. The character of social and cultural processes and structures is partly linguistic-discursive.
2. Discourse is both constitutive and constituted.
Language use should be empirically analyzed within its social context.
3. Discourse functions ideologically.
4. Critical research.

Considering these features, CDA is highly useful in the present study as first and foremost it views language in use as discourse; second, it considers language use as social phenomenon and that social phenomenon is partly linguistic; third, it views discourse as a form of social practice which both constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices. The fourth and the most fundamental aspect of CDA is its emphasis on the empirical analysis of discourse within its social context. The work under study presents a network of different discourses that are socially and culturally embedded and their study as constructs of social issues will be contextually meaningful. Fifth, it believes in the ideological function of discourse whose effects as discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups. Thus, CDA aims at investigating the social issues including issues of unequal power distribution in the society. Finally, it is a critical research that attempts for social change by addressing the social issues and by taking the side of the oppressed social groups.

Analysis of the Poem

Poem: O' God! What will happen?

؟دابه شه كيپرې (IsrarAtal)خدایه!

Our home is being devastated both in Lar aw Bar (Northern and southern Pakhtun areas)

O' God! What will happen?

Our Peshawar is being devastated again.

O' God! What will happen?

Somebody has set the city of flowers on fire

Somebody has blasted it by exerting power

Red Flowers of our garden has got mal de ojo

Somebody has started harvest in the spring season

That's why my heart is ruined.

O' God! What will happen?

The killers of love burn the afternoon of life

They destroy the colours of hill burning the maple and the pine,

And take us to the noise and blinding smoke

And burn Peshawar to get some pennies

The ford of the village is being destroyed,

O' God! What will happen?

QissaKhwani weeps, Khyber and Taatara say:

Some mock on us and some will say elegy

To reveal a glimpse of the history of valour and fame of ancestors

Who will sing the Tapa and pray to God to create Malalai again

Heart of Khyber is being deserted

O' God! What will happen?

There are three stages in Fairclough's three dimensional model (2003) but in the current analysis all these three stages are integrated as a complete stage of analysis. The poet Israr Atal, in his poem 'O God! What will happen?' uses "Our home" as possessive adjective to emphasize that nobody else's but "our home" is ravaged. Literally, it means the building which is damaged. It also refers to killings. The killing of the elders, youth and children of the family means destroying the whole house because family decisions are taken by elders who are helped and supported by the youth. The poet is reluctant to address the terrorists with names rather he has used the passive structure to conceal the subjects of the verbs. He uses "is being devastated" which stresses on the action (destruction) which is still in progress. He emphatically says that homes of Pashtuns, not only in Pakistan but also in Afghanistan e.g. Lar aw Bar are destroyed. The "Lar aw Bar" is a commonly used phrase among the Afghans. According to a website (Pashtun Forums), "For the

Afghans this means that the lands of the lar Pashtuns belong to Afghanistan and are its property (even though their king Rehman Khan threw them to the British) and Pakistan should be broken up to bits to take those lands. However for the Pakistani Pashtuns it means unity in terms of promotion of culture and language and love for each other due to shared history.”

The poet exclaims helplessly to Allah with the words, “O’ God!” to help him out of the turmoil. He feels very disappointed and hopeless with the ruling authorities and law enforcing agencies that he does not invoke them to stop the devastation. He says to God, “What will happen?” It shows the extreme helpless situation. He begs God and asks Him what will be the result of all this devastation and when it will end. Seeking help from God shows that Atal wants the people to stop being strayed, and to pay attention to their Creator. He communicates the message to the readers and the victims of terrorism not to move away from the religious teachings. They should seek God’s pleasure so that they get rid of this catastrophe.

“Our Peshawar ”refers to the capital of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa which, in Pakistan, is generally known as “Paris of Pathans ”that is being devastated again. This reflects patriotism in the poet. The Pashtuns all over Khyber Pukhtunkhwa come to Peshawar for trade, business, medication and educational purposes. They have affiliation with Peshawar regarding various runs of life and meet their needs in it. That’s why he says “Our Peshawar”. This phrase intensifies the feeling of ownership and sense of belonging of Pashtuns about Peshawar.

The poet has used “Somebody” because he does not know the exact group of people who is involved in destroying the city or he does not want to risk his life. It also shows the hegemony of the terrorists who have scared the people to such an extent that despite being aware of their identity, they cannot disclose their identity. According to Gramsci as cited in Thomas (1975, p.352) “Hegemony and dictatorship are mutually dependent phenomena. In both cases, the lack of ‘spontaneous’ consent in civil society obliged the state to resort to force. Gramsci described societies characterized by the predominance of force as ‘economico-cooperative’.”

He has used this phrase again and again to ensure that the killers and the attackers are a great mystery. He calls Peshawar as “the city of flowers ”because of his liking and complains that they have put it “on fire” it refers to destruction of the city with respect to people and the markets (infrastructure) with the glowing sparks of the bombs and gunshots.

He points out “Somebody has blasted” the city with the bombs. He writes “by exerting power” which refers to some agencies who use money to pay the mercenaries. These mercenaries (belonging to the same or other region of the same country) work for the enemies of the state (Pakistan) and get money from them. It means the enemies of the state are not physically or directly involved in the terrorist activities. They give training to the local bodies, pay them, and get their mission accomplished. It falls under the economic hegemony. It refers to the economic dominance of the enemies of the state.

He metaphorically uses the phrase “Red Flowers” which refers to the beautiful people and the young lot of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. He calls the city as “our garden” and its people as “red flowers” and goes on to say that these “red flowers of our garden” “has got mal de ojo”. Some bad eyes have casted evil eye upon these flowers and its effect is seen in the form of their mental and physical sufferings.

The poet has again used “Somebody” to leave the identity of the culprits unknown. He writes that this merciless group of people “has started harvest in the spring season”. It shows that the spring is a blossoming season and not the harvest but these people do not allow the flowers to blossom. They have started cutting the flowers when they are in blossoming stage. This metaphor has rightly been used because this is the stage of progress and advancement but the citizens are threatened of massacre. This is very beautifully mentioned which intensifies the effects of destruction.

The clause “heart is ruined” shows that the poet is very much upset with the destruction and massive killings. This clause shows his humanistic and patriotic feelings. He laughs and weeps with the people. And then he beseeches God as to what will happen to the people of Peshawar. He appeals to the supreme power and sideline the authorities.

The poet tells about the brutality of the killers and calls them “The killers of love”. This phrase also conceals the specific group of people who cause catastrophe. The killings are metaphorically said to have burnt “the afternoon of life” which is the climax of youth regarding humans and climax of advancement concerning the state. He goes on saying that the killers take away the natural beauty of the hills “They destroy the colours of hill burning the maple and the pine”. They attack the cities and take refuge in the mountains. The hills refer to the hills of Khyber, Bajawar, and Swat etc. Trees like pine and maple add colours to the mountains and add to their natural beauty. The terrorists cut the trees and sell them out to buy their ammunition. They burn the remaining trees and move to the next hiding.

They push the people to catastrophe as he says, “And take us to the noise and blinding smoke”. The people find themselves in the terribly loud blasting sounds where no one can see but only smoke. It is such a thick smoke that nothing is visible in it. The infrastructure of the city is demolished and noise of the blasts affected the people. All this is done on account of money as he says, “And burn Peshawar to get some pennies” they burn the city and the people living in it for the sake of earning some money. The poet emphasizes “pennies” in the text which means the terrorists think money more important than human though money has less value than humanity and the city of Peshawar.

They do not only destroy the cities but also the villages and particularly “the ford” (a place on the bank of a river or stream at which water is available for drinking and cleaning). The poet says, “Ford of the village” is being destroyed. The girls fetch water from the stream or bank of the river which is the sign of life and peace. The girls go to “ford” to fetch water in the group of three to five or more and return their homes while singing in a chorus. This scene reflects peace and happiness because

they fetch water from the ford and sing; the terrorists have taken that happiness and peace from the people by destroying “Ford”.

The poet personifies the three famous places, “QissaKhwani weeps, Khyber and Taatara say” which intensifies the effects on the readers. He says that these places sadly express their sorrowfulness by saying, “Some mock on us”. Further, he says “some will say elegy” which refer to his well-wishers who feel sympathy for them. Here he again uses “some” which refers to unknown people. Some people mock at them and some people talks about their plight in elegy. Here he talks in two perspectives; one from the killers’ perspective who mock at the people in plight because their purpose is achieved, and another is from the friends’ perspective who talk about them in their elegies. So the former salt their bruises and the later console and soothe them.

The poet addresses the readers (the victims of terrorism) and claims, “Your writing will reveal the history of valour and fame of ancestors”. He says to them that their writings show the people about the bravery and fame of their ancestors. It shows that the ancestors of Pashtuns have had a great history regarding bravery and had badly defeated their enemies .He refers to “Malalai of Maiwand” who according to Qazi (2011) fought at The Battle of Maiwand on 27 July 1880.Malalai used her veil as a banner to encourage the Afghan soldiers who were fighting the British. Her words revitalized the Afghan fighters . . . The battle of Maiwand ended in defeat for the British Army and victory for the Afghans, who were led by Ayub Khan.

This shows that not only men but also the women of that time were brave. That’s why he says, “Some will pray to God to create Malalai again”. Now this “some” refers to the people who are helpless and victims, and are disappointed with the performance of their leaders. He tries to provoke the leadership of the state by reminding them the bravery and velour of women of the past. He goes on to say, “Heart of Khyber is being deserted” which means that “Khyber” has been devastated and no dares to reside there. This place gives the look of the deserted village because the houses are destroyed and the young men have been massacred mercilessly.

Conclusion:

IsrarAtal(the poet) is an integral part of the terror-affected region, so he cannot be indifferent to the fatal effects of terrorism. His elegy reveals that he has been inspired and motivated by a decade’s long terrorist activities in the region. Despite the government and the law enforcing agencies who are engaged in curbing terrorism, they do not meet our expectations fully. That’s why the poet finds solace in God’s help and invokes God to be merciful to the affected human beings and to uproot terrorism from his area. The poet knows that God is the supreme power and the best helper. The poem reveals the dejected and disappointed mood of the poet because he has raised a strong and sorrowful voice about the issue under study. As in KPK, Peshawar is the most affected area, so he mentions this city particularly. However, he includes Pakistan and Afghanistan in the terror affected region as well. The poet enumerates the effects caused by terrorism both in the villages and the cities, and this is what the poet intends to bring to light. He makes the society aware

of the effects of terrorism and reminds them of the historically renowned figure like Malalai of Maiwand and other brave ancestors so that the readers get encouraged and stand together against terrorist activities.

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