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CONCEIT IN THE POETRY OF JOHN DONNE AND MIR TAQI MIR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Donne is famous for his use of wit, metaphysical imagery, similes, and metaphors. But what makes him unique among poets is his use of conceits. The use of images is common in all poets, but a conceit is an unusual and fantastic simile that was invented by metaphysical poets, particularly John Donne. A conceit is, in fact, a comparison between two unfamiliar things. It is also known as far-fetched imagery. It is used to employ more incongruity rather than similarity. In poetry, Donne is the monarch of using conceits, but no one knows that Mir Taqi Mir, in his Urdu ghazal, has used this poetic device with superb capability.

John Donne is famous for his metaphysical imagery, wit, and complex poetic devices, yet what accurately separates him is his command of the conceit— a far-fetched, unusual simile linking two divergent things to highlight strangeness over mere resemblance. While Donne is generally observed as the king of this method in Western poetry, a parallel and profound and tradition exists in Eastern conventional poetry that remains mostly obscure. This comparison examines how the distinguished Urdu poet, Mir Taqi Mir, used the conceit with excellent competence, corresponding Donne's intellectualized profundity. By translating commonplace things—such as a mirage or a bubble—into immense philosophical metaphors and signs and drawing the human heart as a miniature of internal and existential agony, Mir links rare sensitive expression with collective universal truths, showing that the sophisticated manipulation of the conceit exceeds both culture and language.

1. Introduction

In Western poetry, John Donne stands out as the recognized master of the "Metaphysical school," renowned for his complex poetic devices, wit, and metaphysical descriptions. Poetry is known as a powerful medium for revealing the intricacies of human intellect, thought, existence, and emotion. Yet, what truly distinguishes Donne is his innovative use of the conceit. It is a far-fetched and unusual metaphor associating two frankly dissimilar elements. It emphasizes incongruity instead of mere resemblance. Although Donne is widely regarded as the monarch of this unique

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poetic device in English poetry, a parallel and sophisticated tradition is seen in Urdu classical literature, mostly unknown in multicultural criticism.

The legendary titan of the Urdu *ghazal*, Mir Taqi Mir, is conventionally distinguished for his poetic grace, supreme sadness, and simplicity (*sada-e-be-takalluf*). Though, underneath Mir's manageable language lies a solid layer of profound metaphysical and philosophical profundity. Like Donne, Mir employs surprising conceits—converting commonplace elements like a mirage (*sarab*) or a bubble (*habab*) into vast existential symbols, and charting the human heart as a miniature of ruined cities and limitless oceans. By employing Donne's systematic geometry of love combined with Mir's touching construction of interior torment, this comparative study reveals a general poetic awareness, showing that the command of the conceit exceeds both culture and language. This research aims to synchronize the English metaphysical practice with the classical Urdu poetry by inspecting how both Mir and Donne manipulate the conceit as a medium of intellectualized passion.

2. Research questions

How do Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne use conceits to present their ideas about their philosophy of love, the universe, and subjective ideas?

How can we compare Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne to see who is more innovative, original and true to their emotions?

3. Literature review

Numerous articles have been written on John Donne`s verse, likewise Mir`s poetry is also examined by numerous researchers. Various features of their poetry have been observed through different viewpoints and lenses. Ettenhuber (2011) has studied that the philosophical conceit is deep-rooted in early modern rhetoric (elocutio and inventio) and catachresis, where fantastic contrasts align detached logical spaces (topoi). Building on Samuel Johnson's evaluation that metaphysical poetry yokes diverse ideas together, Ettenhuber demonstrates how Donne's poetry uses exciting similarities to capture profound anguish and join lovers across vast distances inside the context of English poetic history. Brodsky (1982) has examined that the metaphysical conceit works as an imagery of logical thinking, investigating how John Donne explains intellectual logical and philosophical aspects into tangible poetic forms. Concentrating on the mechanism of Donne's comparisons, Brodsky reveals how John Donne`s poetry depends on a complex relationship between spatial and intellectual imagination, where logical proposals are transmuted into concrete conceptual and visual objects inside the English verse tradition. Guss (1963) alignes the two ideas by representing how John Donne breaks away from ornamental Petrarchan ideas to

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make the conceit a device of intellectual accuracy, reason, and argumentative wit, a compact framework that reveals how both Mir Taqi Mir and Donne raise traditional statistics into reflective psychological and mechanical vehicles of comparison. Williamson (1928) contextualizes it by launching how the Donne tradition counts on an intricate union of heart and mind or feeling and thought that dislocates conservative Elizabethan embellishment to honor intellectual and psychological faithfulness. Du (2021) starts the discussion by arguing that John Donne's metaphysical conceits function not simply as ingenious stylistic decorations, but as dynamic mechanical methods that map the insubstantial ties binding the individual to humanity and the Divine, thus rendering abstract rational and theological realities into perceivable verse. Hughes (1960) widens this comparative literary framework by probing the complex connection of mysticism, body and soul, body in Donne's "The Ecstasies," noticing how precise situations of *ekstasis* and the dramatic interaction between physical embodiment and spiritual perfection challenge static descriptions of mysticism. Potter (1941) offers a vital advisory note on critical vocabulary by arguing against the loose and often derogatory use of the term "conceit," urging scholars to identify the serious organic and intellectual function of these contrasts instead of dismissing them as mere non-natural or fantastic conceits. Bouchard (2023) inspects how John Donne completely overthrows religious typology and orthodox love poetry—mainly in poems like *The Flea*—by changing the traditional copulative conceit into a device of undefined violation that breaks down the limitations between entomological imagery, physical desire and heavenly verdict.

4. Research Gap

Guss (1963) links the two ideas by indicating how John Donne breaks away from attractive Petrarchan tradition to make the conceit a tool of intellectual wit, logic, accuracy and facetiousness, while Williamson (1928), Du (2021), Hughes (1960), Potter (1941), and Bouchard (2023) together touch how these metaphysical aspects map the cosmic interrelationship, body-soul synchronization and physical reality—leaving a critical research gap about how parallel structural procedures of psychological interiority, stretched metaphor and empirical weakness function cross-culturally in classical Urdu poetry, precisely inside the poetry of Mir Taqi Mir.

5. Methodology

The current research follows a comparative and qualitative methodology to investigate the poetry of Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne. The research paper places Eastern classical Urdu literature side by side with Western metaphysical poetry, comparing how two poets from entirely diverse languages, cultures, and historical circumstances arrived at a parallel verse device—the conceit. Selected lines, poems, and poetic ideas from both poets are carefully inspected through textual study. The study concentrates on specific themes, including the use of far-fetched imagery, uncommon contrasts, cosmological and philosophical features of love, empirical images, and

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echoes such as the human heart as a transience, microcosm, and sensitive paradox. In conclusion, the research assesses Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne to examine their level of emotional authenticity, academic novelty, and operational method of writing.

6. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this research paper is guided by Dr. Johnson's well-known explanation of metaphysical poetry—where "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together"—and differs from Dryden's critique of Donne's intellectual and over-intellectualized passionate poetry. This research is grounded in the outline of comparative literary criticism, applying the classic evaluative perspectives of Dr. Samuel Johnson and John Dryden together with Eastern critical traditions to inspect the intellectual conceit. To evaluate Mir Taqi Mir within this same context, the research includes concepts from Urdu literary criticism, such as *mazmoon-afrini* (subtlety of theme) and the tension between reflective metaphysical complication and *sada-e-be-takalluf* (natural simplicity). By mixing these Eastern and Western critical lenses, the research finds a multicultural foundation for examining how Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne merge intellect with rare emotional grief, altering commonplace physical foundations into general philosophical symbols across different historical and linguistic boundaries.

7. Discussion

Moving away from the hard mechanism of the English metaphysical conceit and into the subtle craft of the traditional Urdu poetry means looking past surface differences to find a common poetic heartbeat: both traditions are gripped with making intellectual, unseen feelings feel physically real and tangible. While researchers like Guss, Williamson, Du, Hughes, Potter, and Bouchard have systematically charted how John Donne yokes together eagerly dissimilar ideas to analyze the cosmic ties, body-soul union, and physical weakness, a conspicuous silence remains in scholarship. No one has justly examined how these same structural strategies—extended metaphors, deep psychological interiors, and stark existential fragility—operate across cultures in Mir`s poetry. This next chapter steps into that trackless space, revealing how Mir's classical similes and constant metaphors attain an identical emotional profundity and existential significance, showing they do not need the argumentative logic of the Western metaphysical tradition to hit home with identical strength.

The Mechanism of the Conceit: Revealing the Universe, Love, and Philosophy in Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne

When examining how Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne arrange rare and unfamiliar comparisons to map the existential philosophy and cosmos, the collective desire to transform abstract interior realities into concrete bodily structures becomes outstandingly clear. While John

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Donne yokes together heterogeneous ideas in his poetry—such as mathematics, astronomy, cartography, and engineering—to argue for a unified universe, Mir Taqi Mir attains a similar metaphysical profundity through continual, astonishing cosmological and architectural imagery.

For example, in his famous couplet inspecting the whole cosmos as a flimsy, easily devastated glassmaker's factory, Mir constructs a macrocosmic conceit where survival itself is so clearly composed that even the act of breathing threatens to smash reality:

لے سانس بھی آہستہ کہ نازک ہے بہت کام آفاق کی اس کارگہ شیشہ گری کا

This functions with the same physical and intellectual seriousness as Donne's compass or planetary spheres, linking human weakness directly to the mechanism of the universe. Likewise, when revealing the subtle, transient nature of existence itself, Mir moves to the universal flimsiness of human life, comparing it to a fleeting bubble and the world's presentation to an illusion:

ہستی اپنی حباب کی سی ہے یہ نمائش سراب کی سی ہے

Moreover, when examining the interior agony of the heart, Mir invents extended metaphors of internal grief, destruction and despair, imagining the grief-stricken heart as an abide looted a hundred times:

دل کی ویرانی کا کیا مذکور ہے یہ نگر سو مرتبہ لوٹا گیا

By building this constant metaphysical conceit, Mir engages in reflections on transitoriness and mortality that resound deeply with Donne's mournful and philosophical poetry.

This offers a structural correspondent to Donne's psychological and cartographical functions—turning emotional anguish into a solid, tangible, ruined backcloth that demands severe emotional and intellectual engagement.

Mapping further on how the metaphysical conceit functions across both traditions, we can also observe how Donne and Mir use philosophical notions to introduce and expose the inner self onto the external cosmos.

For example, when Mir turns the corporeal world into an enormous, resounding mirror that reproduces the spectator's internal state, he produces a conceit where corporeal borders dissolve completely:

چشم ہو تو آئینہ خانہ ہے دہر منہ نظر آتا ہے دیواروں کے بیچ

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If true vision is achieved, the whole world becomes a panorama of mirrors where the self is echoed universally. This reverberates Donne's inclination to break down microcosm and macrocosm, where the lover's chamber or the human figure comprises the whole universe.

Likewise, when Mir represents the pure, awe-inspiring condition of grief using an attractive weather conceit—where the lover's weeping eyelashes lurk to sweep away an entire city—we see the same structural daring and exaggeration found in Donne's most amazing heavenly, divine and secular poems:

مژگاں تو کھول شہر کو سیلاب لے گیا کن نیندوں اب تو سوتی ہے اے چشم گریہ ناک

Open your eyelashes, a flood has swept the city away / In what deep sleep are you sleeping, O tearful eye?

Fantastic Similes, Extended Metaphors, and the Anguish of Parting in Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne

When revealing the reflective depths of love and the distressing despair of separation (*hijr*), both Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne depend heavily on fantastic similes and extended metaphors that stretch the imagination to its absolute confines. Instead of relying on decorative, conventional, romantic images, both poets forge imaginative and startling equations that turn intellectual emotional agony into tangible, concrete realities. By examining an arrangement of Mir's central poetry together with Donne's most famous conceits, we see how both traditions articulate the construction of heartbreak.

In his well-known introductory lines, Mir views the whole universe as a frail, flimsy, easily crushed glassmaker's workshop, creating a macrocosmic conceit where parting and existence are so unsteadily well-adjusted that even the act of living hovers to smash reality:

لے سانس بھی آہستہ کہ نازک ہے بہت کام آفاق کی اس کارگہ شیشہ گری کا

(Take even a breath mildly, for very subtle is the work / of this glassmaker's workshop of the skyline.)

This functions with the precise physical and intellectual seriousness as John Donne's environmental domains or compass conceit in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." Just as Donne uses the accuracy of geometrical devices to anchor detached lovers, Mir synchronizes the lover's helpless departure straight to the brittle procedure of the universe.

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When viewing the interior hollowness left by the beloved's absence, Mir turns to extended spatial metaphors of decay, destruction and desolation.

دل کی ویرانی کا کیا مذکور ہے یہ نگر سو مرتبہ لوٹا گیا

(What is there to expose the heart's anguish? / This city has been robbed a hundred times.)

By visualizing the grief-stricken heart as a megalopolis robbed frequently, Mir offers a structural equivalent to Donne's cartographic functions of nonappearance in songs like *The Sun Rising* or *Love's Growth*, where the inner world of the lovers expands to cover whole realms, and its demolition is charted like the dismissal of a great city.

Mir analyzes the incurable nature of deep love through a plain medical simile where all intellectual tricks and worldly precautions entirely flop:

الٹی ہو گئیں سب تدبیریں کچھ نہ دوا نے کام کیا دیکھا اس بیماریِ دل نے آخر کام تمام کیا

(All medications turned reversed, no remedy worked at all / In the end, this disease of the heart ended the job.)

This works with the same psychological insight as Donne's medical conceits in The Relic or A Fever, where love is depicted as a wasting, metaphysical disease that defies ordinary therapy and dissects the dying soul.

Challenging the heavy and intolerable weight of feeling, longing and passion, Mir conceives a remarkable physical simile, framing love as a massive, fixed stone:

عشق اک میرؔ بھاری پتھر ہے کب یہ تجھ ناتواں سے اٹھتا ہے

(Love is a weighty stone, O Mir / How can your fragile body ever lift it?)

This far-fetched comparison of love to a huge boulder devastating a feeble body finds its English foil in Donne's catching, heavy imagery of emotional association and gravitational pull, where the emotional weight of parting distorts physical resolution.

In conclusion, Mir defines the mysterious, moving and poignant, experience of being parted from one's own self in the memory or presence of the beloved:

دکھائی دیئے یوں کہ بے خود کیا ہمیں آپ سے بھی جدا کر چلے

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(He appeared in such a way that they left me spellbound / He departed, unravelling me even from myself.)

This fundamental internal negation—where the lover is divided from his own self—reflects Donne's metaphysical conceits of spiritual merging and soul-transfusion in his famous song *The Ecstasy*, where souls convey their separation by connecting bodies. Whether through Mir's enormous universal and planetary similes or Donne's accurate intellectual geometry, both poets prove that the genuine routes of union, love and separation can only be planned through unusual and astonishing, extended metaphors that uplift sensitive agony into general philosophy.

8. Conclusion

Finally, comparing the conceits of Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne exposes a common command in explaining mental and emotional discomfort into surprising, real imagery. While Donne relies on British metaphysical conceits—such as geometrical compasses and map-making—and Mir manipulates traditional poetic *mazmun-afrini* through architectural, cosmic metaphors, both Mir Taqi Mir and John Donne attain the same critical goal. Their fantastic similes and extended metaphors surpass orthodox sentimentality, showing that European ornate wit and Urdu classical Ghazal join on a cosmic geometry of separation, grief, love, and the suffering heart.

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