

**STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF ROBERT FROST'S POEM: "FIRE AND ICE"****Arooge Javed<sup>1</sup>****Amber Javed<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1,2</sup> Department of English, University of Lahore, Pakistan.

**ABSTRACT:** *The article is basically a stylistic analysis on the stylistics techniques and methods of Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice". The present study will throw light on phonological level, semantic level and stylistics devices. This poem is about a question of how the world will come to an end, either by the fire or by the ice. Both forces are very destructive in nature and have equal but opposite characteristics.*

**Key words:** *Fire, Ice, Phonological level, semantic level, Stylistic devices.*

**Research Questions:**

How the stylistic analysis will work in "Fire and Ice"?

How to analyze the poem at phonological level and semantic level?

**Objectives:**

To understand the structure and style of the poem

To comprehend the poem on phonological and semantic levels.

**Introduction:**

Stylistics is the branch of linguistics which deals with different styles, writings, books at different levels. It is said that style is everything. Style is not only related to the person apparel but also "dress of thoughts" that defines his character. Style is the replica of man's mind. It tells about his mental aptitude and taste. Widowson (1975, p 3) defines stylistics as "The study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation". Stylistics is dependent on literary criticism and linguistics but has no independent branch of its own.

**Style:**

The word "Style" is derived from Latin word "elocution" means style and in Greek "Lexis" means style. Style has multidimensional meaning outside the field of literature. Leech (1969) states that "style is the way which something is spoken, written or performed". It refers to the style in using word, sentences and speaking style.

**Stylistics:**

Stylistics is a significant branch of linguistics that gained much popularity in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Different scholars defines stylistics in their own way. Leech and short (1981, p13) defines that, "stylistics is the (linguistic) study of style, is rarely undertaken for its own sake, simply as an

exercise in describing what use is made of language". It also focuses on the linguistic and stylistic features of the text and exploring and understanding it at different levels.

### **Introduction of the Poet:**

Robert frost is one of the eminent American poets of 20<sup>th</sup> century. He won four Pulitzer prizes during his life time and gained lot of popularity not only in England but in whole Europe. His poetry dealt with elements of nature personal and social aspect of human beings. His themes are very inspirational, innovative and call of his age. He was mostly inspired by the mellowing beauty of nature and rustic life of New England.

His poems "Fire and ice", "Nothing gold can stay" represents the basic elements of nature. "The span of life", "The trial by existence", and "The road not taken" shows his powerful imagination on the social existence of human beings. "The oven bird", "Birches" and "Acquainted with the night" represents his true affection with the nature.

His poetry is simple, appealing and thought provoking. Frost's poetry is combination of mind and imagination, facts and fancy. It creates a link from personal level to social and then universal level. This poem is product of his creative genius and unique topic.

### **Introduction of Poem:**

Fire and ice is well knitted epigram by Robert frost. This poem by published in December,1920 in Harper's Magazine. It discusses the topic of armageddon. This poem grabs our attention on very serious question about the apocalyptic vision of the earth. Poet speculates that how this world will come to an end either by fire or ice. Theme of the poem is the central idea of the poem. It is about the generalization of the opinions of the people .He used fire and ice as a metaphors. Fire represents desire that ignite anger and Ice is equated with hate. Both metaphor are antitheses of each other. Both are the elements of nature but their characteristics are opposite and poles apart. One is fiery other is frozen, one ignites other cease. World have both kind of people that held a belief about ending in fire and ending in ice. Poet didn't declare final verdict but leaves decision on the reader to think on their own.

### **Methodology:**

This section will provide the stylistic analysis of "fire and ice". Stylistics analysis involves six basic levels i.e. Grammatical level, Phonological level, Lexical level, Semantic level, Morphological level, and Graphological level. But here, we are going to analyze at phonological and semantic level.

Phonology is the branch of linguistics that deals with the organization of the sounds in language. It specifically emphasizes on the phonemes (single unit of sound) in language. Phonological level analyses that how and when the sound can be combined in a poem.

Phonological features are presented in the form of alliteration. Alliteration is repetition of the same sound word in the beginning .In line three and four letter F is an alliteration.

*From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire*

Another phonological feature is Assonance. Assonance is the effect created when two syllables in words that are closed together and have same vowel sound but different consonants or the same consonants but different vowels. In fourth line, the long O sound is repeated and in line five the short I sound is creating the assonance.

*I hold with those who favor fire  
But if it had to perish twice,*

Consonance is a half rhyme in which final consonants are repeated but with different preceding vowels. In line six the N sound creates the consonance. In line seven the letter T creates the consonance.

*I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice*

Rhyme elements consists pattern of rhyme. The stressed pattern, rhyming scheme which is followed in the poetry. The rhyme scheme of fire and ice is **ABA ABC BCB** .Both of the words “fire” and “ice” are rhymed with in the poem. In this poem, frost did not follow any specific convention of poetry. The choice of words effectively communicate the philosophy of whole poem not only on surface but also on deeper level. The word Fire is coined with the word desire and ice is coined with destruction. And these rhyming words has increased the symbolic importance of the poem. This is nine line poem and combination of two and four iambic feet. Iambic is about unstressed syllable is followed by stressed. The **bold faced** words are stressed and *italics* are unstressed. The poem's meter is an irregular and mixture of iambic tetrameter and diameter.

*Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.*

**Stylistics Devices:**

There are many stylistics devices present in a poem. Parallelism is used in poem at the start of the line one and two with “some say...”

*Some say the world will end in fire  
Some say in ice.*

Next stylistic device is symbolism. Fire and ice has the symbolic importance in the poem. Fire is symbol of intense passion and desire and ice is symbol of hatred and destruction. These symbols have their dual level of meanings either taken as surface level or can be taken for deeper level. Desire of human beings in attaining the personal pursuit can make world cold and perishable place where life is not possible.

Allusion is also used here. Allusion is a reference to a historical place, event or person. When Frost is talking about fire, he is alluding about global warming and when talks about ice and when he is talking about ice age.

*Some say the world will end in fire  
Some say in ice*

The words like fire , desire and perish , destruction ,ice, hate and great makes a horrible and pessimistic image in our mind. Both these demolishing and spoiling powers can destroy the world. Frost used such image that appeals to the reader’s senses i.e.

*From what I’ve tasted of desire*

The style of the poem is formal .Poet used simple language with common term can be easily comprehend by every level.

Another significant stylistic device is used here that is understatement. It enhances the meaning and effect of the poem .when poem begins, poet says

*Some say the world will end in fire  
Some say in ice*

Some say is used twice because it present a group or sect that favors that world will came to an end but the key message is focused by fall of human being either by fire or ice. Poem end without any significant conclusion but leaves a thought in readers mind to think about it.

*And would suffice*

Antithesis are the structurally parallel word, clauses or phrases for purpose of contrast. The word Fire is antithesis of ice.

The tone of the poem is very simple and casual but the underlying message is very serious.

**Conclusion:**

Fire and ice” is simple and peerless poem by Robert Frost. The choice of words plays a significant role in building the inner concept of poem. The poem is not only gives a good taste of poetry but also leaves readers a food for thought about the choices of desire and hatred. Poet speculates about the end of the world whether the world will end in fire or in ice. This is similar to another age old question: whether it would be preferable to freeze to death or burn to death. The poet determines that either option would achieve its purpose sufficiently well.

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**Appendix****Fire and Ice**

Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.

(Robert Frost:1923)