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A Study of Slang in Tahira Iqbal's Novel "Harappa"

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Abstract:
Tahira Iqbal is a renowned name of contemporary Urdu fiction. Along with fictional charisma, her novels are a rich source of knowledge about the locale where her writings are developed. The specific culture and other norms of the subjected locale of the story is carried in a technical style by Tahira. Her novel "Harappa" is a story located in[1] the archeological site of Harappa situated in Punjab, Pakistan and reveals the culture of South Punjab. Language is a key feature of every culture and slang is a critical part of every language directly associated with the culture. The article consists upon the study of abusive slang in the novel "Harappa" and indicates the disposition of such slang along with the background.

Keywords: *Tahira Iqbal, Urdu Fiction, Harappa, South Punjab, Slang.*

Introduction:

Language is a tool which connects two or more individuals through communication[1] [2]. This communication may hold different styles of the usage of a language including expressions[3], impressions[4], tones[5], moods[6], symbolism[7], codes[8] etc. Slang is also a style of language which is adopted to express some peculiar meaning while communication. Andreson and Trudgill stated slang as:

> "Slang is a short-lived, group-related, ever changing colloquial language variety that is below the level of stylistically neutral language. It is described as creative and innovative, often playful and metaphorical." [9]

Slang works like a code word having a rich and meaningful context with it. So, slang can be well understood only when the listener or the reader is fully aware with the background of the slang. Slang is a sociolinguistic element of a society that may represent a culture as well. Though slang has different levels to be worked on, but its most common usage is noticed for absurdity, the function may be proved by the description of slang by Eric Partridge as:

> "Slang the special vocabulary of low, illiterate or disreputable persons, low, illiterate language."[10]

This shows that slang may be used indecently and in an uncivilized manner. Basing the point, current paper presents a study of abusive slang used in the novel "Harappa" by Tahira Iqbal.

Discussion:

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Here are the textual data samples consisting the abusive slang, taken from the novel "Harappa". After the textual statement, discussion about the slang is given referring to the textual as well as the social context supporting with the lexicon of slang words. The first example is:

> "Is basti main hardand aasamalny aur kajal lgaany waali luchhi badmu'aash samjhi jaatihy… Niki buniyan pehnny wali to is basti main kanjri kehlaatihy."[11]

Looking into the text, here every girl is being blamed as "lucchi", "badmu'aash" and "kanjri" if she cleans her teeth with "dandaasa" (a wooden peel to brush the teeth which leaves red colour in teeth after rubbing), beautify her eyes with "kajal" (a type of eye liner), and wears an undergarment (Niki buniyan) under the shirt. "lucchi" is a slang used for a bad character girl. "badmu'aash" is an associated slang with a person who commits wrong deeds in daily life. "Kanjri" is a specific abusive slang associated with a girl having illegal sexual relationships. In Tahira Iqbal's novel "Harrapa", the girl named "Baali" is often called as the "Knajri" because of her profession as a prostitute. Though she has no other way to live without this profession, she anyway receives the title of the slang "Kanjri" as if it is a birth mark of her.People around her don't bother to name her as "Baali", they directly call her "kanjri", look how they associate things to her:

> "Paula kanjri da…" [12]

In the above-mentioned phrase, the word "Paula" is indicating towards a local shoe style, that becomes more peculiar when associated with "kanjri". Baali seems too used to be called as kanjri that even she herself starts to claim her as a "Kanjri", for instance, in the text is as under:

> "Kiya daingy gaali? Kanjri, lucchi, badmu'aash. Wo to men nyaap khud ko ye naam dydiye." [13]

Mentioned in the above text, the word "gaali" is a domestic equivalent of negative slang. Baali herself assigned all the relative slangs including "Kanjri", "lucchi" and "badmu'aash" to her. Her culpability is not limited to these words only, she has to listen so many more, for instance:

> "Apni majli snbhaal. Ari nangi ho rahihy gandi" [14]

Here the word "majli" shows a skirt type open flared domestic bottom wear which is misplaced, its carrier may be naked and nude. This nudeness becomes more shameful when it is opted by Baali. In the text above, she is scolded and ordered to hold her "majli" properly, her nudeness otherwise is not tolerable by public. The word "gandi" is normally associated with the meaning of "dirt", but in the context above it is used as a slang associated with a loose character girl. Such usage of "gandi" i.e as a slang is common in the novel accompanied with other words alike:

> "dūr dafaa bewazu paleed qabar ghustan ki behu rmatinakar."[15]

In the text, "dūr" means "a far-off distance" that indicates to have apart from a person. "dafaa" is a domestic slang used to get rid from a person asking him/her to go away. Baali is considered as dirty as having no ablutions after having illegal sex and because of this people don't want her to visit the grave yard. Baali often receives such comments from her nearby because of being a "kanjri" adding some more like:

> "Dur pry dūr dūr hamary bachon pr najs say ana daal."[16]

Here along with "dūr", a domestic slang "dur' is added which is used to express a feeling of hatred and abhorrence. People want her to stay away from them and their kids as she is considered a grime lady. Tough Baali was a smart and comparatively pretty girl of the area, stillshe receives many slangs associated with physical features too just because of prostitution:

> "Jaa door dafaa, kaali, thigni, pheeni, gandi, bhutti"[17]

Adding to "dūr" and "dafaa", Baali is cursed as "kaali", "thigni", "pheeni", "gandi", "butti" and so on. "Kaali" is used to show a hatred to a person having dark complex. Although the text is settled in subcontinent where having a dark complex is natural, but far beyond the text we may see the colonialism and the system of cast and creed

where white complexion was a mark of superiority. "thigni" is a domestic slang used for a short heighted person. "pheeni' is a domestic slang used for a person having flat nose. "gandi" is not a cursing slang but when accompanied with such context, it means plaguing as discussed earlier. "bhutti" is referred as a ghost like person. All these domestic slangs add up meanings of each other when comibined with a peculiar textual context. In the whole novel, Baali has to bear numeral slangs of these kinds. Some other figurative slangs are mentioned here:

"Nak katti, thigni, kaali, bhaddi."[18]

The first one "Nak katti" is used for a person without nose. Definitely in real life, every one has a nose on his/her face until unless adverse circumstances like an accidents or nose surgery etc. So "Nak katti" is an arbitrary slang that works symbolically and symbolizes a person without grace and honor. "Thigni" and "Kaali" are discussed earlier. "Bhaddi" is used for a person having inappropriate and ugly outer look. Though Baali had an appropriate, smart and a beautiful outer look as it was a demand of her profession too. In spite of this, she had to listen all such comments because she was considered having least morality in the town. Even the ladies having very low social status started to curse her like:

"Nal pr kaprry dhoti basti ki aurtain usy dhutkarteen:
"gandi, Shohdi, kaali, thigni."[19]

Adding to "gandi", "kaali" and "thigni", one more domestic slang "shohdi" is noticed for Baali by the ladies who were washing clothes on the town's common water point. "shohdi" is used for a person weak in interpersonal as well as intrapersonal skills. It is also used for a mean natured person as well. On the other hand, these women busy in washing clothes are also identified with a slang as:

"Kapry dhoti… musalnain us pr buk bhar bhar paani phankteen."[20]

Here, "musalnain" is a peculiar slang that indicates towards a very lower cast of a Muslim population in subcontinent, usually considered as sweepers. Even women with such a low social status have a right to abuse Baalijust because they have in a legal relationship with there men proved as:

"Latky huye honton waaly kaaly bhutny das baara bachy jankr wo mutabar ho gai then."[21]

A huge number of offspring made them respected and valued their piousness up to the mark that they used to call Baali as:

"gadhi, soorni, kutti."[22]

Associated with the animal attributes, above mentioned slangs are used to grant a person with extreme disrespect. "gadhi" is associated with donkey and symbolizes the lowest social status. "soorni" is associated with pig and symbolizes a person having no sense of purity and impurity. "kutti" is associated with dog and used to humiliate a person. All the three slangs are considered righteous for Baali to show extreme disgrace to her.Replying to public, Baali, too, used the same narrative as she received by the public:

"Baali awaaz lgaati: dur durdūr."[23]

The slang "dur" and the nod "dūr" as dicussed earlier were first received by Baali from the public and now being returned to the public from Baali. If the public has no respect for her, she also shows disrespect to public:

"Kisi londy lapaady ko us ki kotthri ki janib daikhny ki jurat nahithi."[24]

In the text, "londy lapaady" is used to disgust the men who are unable to disgust Baali just because of that Baali, whenever she wants, can unveil their private matters they want to veil up. In fact, if Baali is disgraced due to illegal sexual relationship, she used to charge males having illegal sexual relations with slang too:

"Zara sabr kra bhi faarigh karti hoon is muchhal ko."[25]

Here the slang "muchhal" is associated with intolerable mustache of men. Baali has no feeling for men who visit her other than the feeling of hatred expressing which she called them not with names but with slangs only:

> "Mol bharny wala pehly meri mushklaitahy… jab mast ho jatahy to phir sand jaisa mard bn jatahy."[26]

Here the man full of sexual urge is called as "saand" that is actually an animal (bull) which can just do sex with power and nothing else. Baalifeels no difference between a human and an animal at the time of fulfilling the sexual lust. She often considers such man an outcome of illegal sex:

> "Mera paula chheen ky laa us haraami sy."[27]

Reference to above text, Baali's footwear (paula) is taken by some man in a mischievous way who is considered "haraami" by Baali. "Haraami" is a slang used for a person who bore against an illegal sexual relationship. Baali even declares herself to be involved with sons and fathers at a same time, ridiculing on the society:

> "Oye maan ka paula uttha kr laa niky."[28]

The word "maan" is an Urdu word for "mother". But in the quoted text above, it does not mean for "mother". "Nika" is a character of a teen age boy in the novel, most probably having sexual temptation for Baali, or may be his father is involved in Baali. Nika is asked to pick up the "paula" (footwear) of his "maan" i.eBaali. So here, "maan" is used as a slang for the lady who simultaneously fulfil the sexual needs of a father and son, a big spit on the society. Here the nature of the slange can be well defined in words of Eble:

> "Slang expression is a general vocabulary in daily language but has a different meaning than those written in the dictionary."[29]

When such people consider Baali a pig (s o o r n i), she calls them a pig (soo'r) too and persuades "Chana" (a female character of the novel) to be like Baali so she may destroy the so-called power of such pig like males:

> "Tu… mery jaisi ban kar hi in soo'ron ki katliyan torr saktihy."[30]

Chana is not a prostitute like Baali, but she likes the power and fearless life style of Baali. In contrast to the bloomy personality of Baali, Chana's personality is described under a number of collective slangs like:

> "Yehi pheeni naak, ko taahpiashani, kaali rangat, latakty hont, bilkul yehi… Harrapa ki paki in moortiyon aur is k chehry main zara braabar farq nahin."[31]

Same slangs are used for Baali too, but the difference is that Baali was awarded with such slangs due to her illegal sexual activities and Chana is awarded with these slangs because of her ugly looks. It tends that the ugly inner of Baali and ugly outer of Chana are nearly same to be described under same slangs. There is one more miserable female character of the novel named "Sanobar". Sanobar belongs to a rich but orthodox family where girls are considered inferior than the boys. Her mother wants her to stay physically unmature otherwise she may demand for her groom and so. For this sake, her mother stops feeding her with sufficient nutrients but unfortunately Sanobar's breast started to develop even with insufficient food. Seeing this, her mother screams on her like:

> "bhooki. Musalno ki tra hr ajtinahi kha kha kr, mumay nikaaly gi abhisy."[32]

Sanobar's mother blames her for over eating like musalan(s)[33] and entered in the zone of puberty too early than the expectations of her mother. "mumay" is the slang used for the new aroused breasts. Her mother finds no way to vanish the breasts from Sanober's body, continue to yell upon her:

> "Gith ty muth, behaya, qaddaikho, umr daikho aur mumay nikaalliye hain… behaya, besharam, kuch kha kr mr kiyon nahi jaati."[34]

Again, Sanobar's mother is of the view that she is too young and short heighted to have "mumay" (breasts). She blames Sanobar to mislay her grace being "behaya" and "besharam" because she has breasts now. "haya" and "sharam" both the words represent "respect" in source text culture, "be" is a prefix which combined with these words to show the absence or negligence of these elements in a person. The last of impression of the above

quoted text is that Sanober should die after having some poison to get rid of such odious breasts on her body.

All the above discussed abusive slangs are noticeable and clear in their meaning to the textual contexts. In the novel, we observe some hidden or relatively warped slangs too. For instance:

> "Haaye sookhi phooki khajoor ki gutak, buri lagti hay ri chunni! Kisi mard ka hath phirwa."[35]

In the text "sookhi phooki gutak" stands for a seed of date and is symbolically used for the feeble body having undernourished breasts of Chana. This dialogue is delivered by Baali who is persuading Chana to have some sexual relationship to beautify her breasts. Such symbolic slang cannot be interpreted apart from text but be well understood in the textual context. It may be considered an implicit slang too. The examples of implicit slangs are given under as:

> "In pehrydaaron ka to sab kuchh khomuchhkar main abhi waarrti hun wanheen najahansy nikly hain."[36]

In the text "sab kuchh" tends towards genitals of the males, and "wanheen" means the wombs of their mothers from where they got birth. Both the particulars are mentioned in the text implicitly and can be revealed in the textual context only. The next example is:

> "Manhooso… Wohi kuch tumhaari maa'on ke bhilaga hay jo yahan dekhne aate ho. Maa'on se kaho muft main dikha dain, idhr to paisy lgaingy, wahaan free main."[37]

The first word "Manhooso" is an explicit slang which is used to curse the stated persons. They (men) are told that their mothers, too, have "Wohi kuchh" (the same things) what they chase in a prostitute. Even these men are convinced to explore "wohi kuchh" in their mothers because they can get all this free from their mothers but if they go for a prostitute, they have to pay for it. "wohikuchh" is an implicit slang in the text which may be unrevealed as the sexual features of a female. The next example of implicit slang is stated as:

> "Jis badan pr moot jaty ho isyjeeny k liye paani bhi to chahiye."[38]

In the text the word "moot" in Urdu is an equivalent to the "urine". Here, it is symbolically used for the sperm that is released by a male at the time of an illegal intercourse.

Conclusion & Suggestions:

The study shows the domestic usage of slangs in South Punjab of Pakistan.Most of the slangs are explicit and quite clear in their meanings, however implicit slangs also magnificently transferred the purpose of the text. The abusive slang used in the source text reveals the culture where the text was developed. It reveals that most of the abusive slang is generated and used against the illegal sexual relationships active in the society. It is further suggested that background of such abusive slang (illegal sexual relationships) may be investigated on humanitarian ground to make the society get rid of such culture. There may ethical and cultural studies be developed on the basis of this study of slang.

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[36]Ibid, p:56
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[38]Ibid, p:51