

## **Exploring Elements of Style in the Poem 'Drought': Unraveling the Layers of Meaning**

**Mamata Siwa Pariyar<sup>ID</sup>, Sadikshya Bhujel<sup>ID</sup>, Sahil Kushwaha<sup>ID</sup>, Aarshi Gyawali<sup>ID</sup>, Sumitra Lama**

BA 1<sup>st</sup> Year, Baneshwor Multiple Campus, Kathmandu Nepal

**Dhruba Kumar Neupane\***

Department of Language

Baneshwor Multiple Campus, Kathmandu Nepal

[dhrubaneupane152@gmail.com](mailto:dhrubaneupane152@gmail.com)

### **Corresponding Author\***

Received: February 10, 2024; Revised & Accepted: March 22, 2024

Copyright: Pariyar, Bhujel, Kushwaha, Gyawali, Lama & Neupane (2024)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

### **Abstract**

The poem "Drought" encapsulates the devastating impact of a prolonged dry spell on both the natural world and human society. Through vivid imagery, figurative language, and poignant diction, the poem portrays the bleak realities and emotional turmoil brought about by the absence of rain. The analysis explores the poem's elements of style, including its use of diction, figurative language, imagery, and syntax, to convey themes of despair, suffering, and resilience. Furthermore, from an epistemological perspective, the poem invites reflection on how knowledge is acquired and understood about the effects of drought, highlighting the complexities of human experience and the limitations of our understanding in the face of natural phenomena. Overall, "Drought" serves as a poignant exploration of the profound impact of environmental disasters and the enduring resilience of the human spirit.

**Keywords:** Diction, Drought, Figurative Language, Imagery, Syntax

## **Background**

A poem is a form of literary expression that utilizes language, rhythm, and often meter or rhyme to convey ideas, emotions, or experiences (Miller, 2024). It is a creative expression that can take various forms, including sonnets, ballads, haikus, free verse, and many others. Poems often use figurative language, such as metaphor and symbolism, to evoke emotions and create vivid imagery in the reader's mind.

Poetry allows individuals to express complex emotions and experiences in a condensed and powerful form. It provides a medium for exploring feelings and thoughts that may be difficult to articulate in prose (Johnson-Laird, N., & Oatley, 2022). Poems can communicate profound truths and insights about the human experience. They serve as a means of connecting individuals across different cultures, languages, and periods by conveying universal themes and emotions. Writing poetry encourages creativity and self-expression (Johnson-Laird, N., & Oatley, 2022). It allows individuals to experiment with language, form, and structure, fostering personal growth and development. Poetry often invites readers to reflect on life, nature, love, loss, and other profound topics. It encourages contemplation and introspection, providing readers with moments of insight and understanding. Poetry celebrates the beauty of language and the rhythm of words (Cordova & Young, 2024). It can evoke sensory experiences and create a sense of wonder and appreciation for the world around us. Throughout history, poetry has played a crucial role in shaping societies and cultures. It has been used to critique social injustices, celebrate cultural heritage, and preserve traditions and values.

Overall, poetry enriches our lives by offering a unique form of expression that engages our emotions, intellect, and imagination. It invites us to explore the depths of human experience and connect with others on a profound level (Wilcher, 1972).

## **Problem Statement**

Despite being a natural phenomenon, droughts have profound and often devastating impacts on both the environment and human society. Understanding the nuances of these impacts is crucial for developing effective mitigation and adaptation strategies. However, the exploration of the elements of style in poetry that depict droughts, such as the poem "Drought" by Sitaram Adhikari, remains relatively limited. Therefore, there is a need to delve deeper into the layers of meaning embedded within such poetic works to better comprehend the emotional, social, and environmental dimensions of droughts.

## **Objectives**

The specific objectives of the present literary analysis of the poem "Drought" are as follows:

To analyze the elements of style employed in the poem "Drought" by Sitaram Adhikari.

To unravel the layers of meaning within the poem, focusing on themes of despair, suffering, and resilience.

To explore the epistemological perspectives presented in the poem and examine how knowledge is acquired and understood about the effects of drought.

To elucidate the broader significance of the poem in fostering empathy, awareness, and reflection on the human experience of environmental disasters.

## **Methods**

**Literary Analysis:** Conduct a detailed examination of the poem "Drought" to identify and analyze its elements of style, including diction, figurative language, imagery, and syntax. This analysis will involve close reading and interpretation of the text to uncover the underlying meanings and thematic motifs.

**Comparative Study:** Compare the thematic elements and stylistic techniques employed in "Drought" with other literary works or poems that depict droughts or environmental disasters. This comparative approach will provide additional insights into the unique qualities and contributions of Adhikari's poem to the broader literary landscape.

**Epistemological Inquiry:** Engage in philosophical inquiry to explore the epistemological dimensions presented in the poem. This will involve examining how knowledge is constructed, communicated, and understood about the effects of drought, as well as reflecting on the limitations of human understanding in the face of natural phenomena.

**Interdisciplinary Perspective:** Adopt an interdisciplinary approach by drawing insights from fields such as environmental science, psychology, and cultural studies to enrich the analysis of the poem. This interdisciplinary lens will help contextualize the poem within broader discourses on environmental consciousness, human resilience, and socio-cultural responses to disasters.

**Qualitative Analysis:** Utilize qualitative research methods to capture the subjective experiences and interpretations of readers in response to the poem. This may involve conducting interviews, surveys, or focus group discussions to gather diverse perspectives on the emotional and intellectual impact of the poem.

By employing these methods, this study aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the poem "Drought" and its significance in illuminating the multifaceted dimensions of droughts and their effects on individuals and communities.

## **Drought**

The time has been dry, and no rain,  
The whole earth has care, want and pain.  
The air is hot and cruel dictator  
Where should I go and seek peaceful shelter?

The fertile seed-beds of Shrawan have been damaged  
All the hamlets looked as ruined as bald head  
Sad are the whole tillable land or field,  
A famine rose up and the pleasures killed.

Like the heat of the fire is the burning sun  
Growing is the violent heat of conflagration,  
The haze occurred in the gloomy appearance,

The time also has terrorist's defiance.

All the flowers are panic-stricken now,  
Partridges cry in fear and care on bough,  
It's pity! The black eagle cry for rain,  
There's a painful story of barbet hen.

Deposer is the violent drought, no doubts,  
That has emptied the grain-store of the house,  
The zeal and jubilation has faded away  
Misfortune laughed at people's teary way.  
(Neupane, 2019)

## **Analysis**

### **Elements of Style**

#### **Diction**

The poem "Drought" portrays the harsh realities and struggles brought about by a prolonged period of dryness and lack of rainfall. The language used in the poem reflects a somber and distressing atmosphere, evoking feelings of despair and helplessness. Let's break down the diction (word choice) used in the poem:

"dry" - Describes the condition of the time, emphasizing the absence of rain.

"care, want, and pain" - Conveys the suffering experienced by people and the Earth due to the drought.

"cruel dictator" - Personifies the hot air, portraying it as oppressive and tyrannical.

"peaceful shelter" - Reflects the desire for relief and refuge from the harsh conditions.

"fertile seed-beds" - Highlights the destruction of agricultural resources.

"ruined as bald head" - Uses simile to illustrate the devastation of the landscape.

"famine" - Represents the scarcity of food resulting from the drought.

"conflagration" - Suggests the intense and uncontrollable nature of the heat.

"haze" - Describes the oppressive and obscured atmosphere caused by the drought.

"terrorist's defiance" - Implies that the drought is akin to a hostile force resisting efforts to mitigate its impact.

"panic-stricken" - Depicts the fear and distress experienced by living beings in response to the drought.

"cry for rain" - Personifies natural elements like flowers and birds, emphasizing their desperation for water.

"violent drought" - Characterizes the drought as forceful and destructive.

"emptied the grain-store" - Symbolizes the depletion of resources and livelihoods.

"Misfortune laughed" - Personifies misfortune, suggesting a sense of mockery or indifference towards human suffering.

Overall, the diction in the poem effectively conveys the bleakness and hardship brought about by the drought, painting a vivid picture of its impact on both the natural world and human society.

### **Figurative Language**

The poem "Drought" utilizes various forms of figurative language to enhance its imagery and convey the emotional impact of the drought. Let's explore the different types of figurative language used in the poem:

#### **Personification**

"The air is hot and cruel dictator" - Personifies the air as a cruel dictator, emphasizing its oppressive nature during the drought.

"All the flowers are panic-stricken now" - Personifies the flowers, attributing human emotions of panic to them.

#### **Simile**

"All the hamlets looked as ruined as bald head" - Uses a simile to compare the appearance of the hamlets to a ruined bald head, highlighting their desolation and devastation.

#### **Metaphor**

"Like the heat of the fire is the burning sun" - Uses metaphor to compare the intensity of the sun's heat to that of fire, emphasizing its scorching effect.

"Growing is the violent heat of conflagration" - Metaphorically likens the increasing heat to a violent conflagration, highlighting its destructive nature.

#### **Hyperbole**

"The air is hot and cruel dictator" - Uses hyperbole to exaggerate the severity of the heat by comparing it to a cruel dictator.

#### **Symbolism**

"The fertile seed-beds of Shrawan have been damaged" - Symbolizes the destruction of agricultural resources, representing broader issues of scarcity and famine.

"The black eagle cry for rain" - Symbolizes the desperation for rain, using the black eagle as a representation of nature's plea for relief.

#### **Imagery**

The poem "Drought" utilizes vivid imagery to paint a stark picture of the harsh conditions and emotional turmoil caused by the lack of rainfall. Let's examine the imagery used in each stanza:

"The time has been dry, and no rain,

The whole earth has care, want and pain."

Imagery of a dry, parched landscape with no relief from rain, evoking a sense of desolation and suffering experienced by the Earth.

"The air is hot and cruel dictator

Where should I go and seek peaceful shelter?"

Imagery of oppressive heat, personified as a cruel dictator, conveys the intensity of the weather and the desperation for respite.

"The fertile seed-beds of Shrawan have been damaged

All the hamlets looked as ruined as bald head"

Descriptive imagery of ruined seed-beds and hamlets, likened to a bald head, emphasizes the devastation and barrenness of the land.

"Sad are the whole tillable land or field,

A famine rose up and the pleasures killed."

Imagery of sorrowful land and fields, coupled with the rise of famine, depicts the widespread despair and loss caused by the drought.

"Like the heat of the fire is the burning sun

Growing is the violent heat of conflagration,"

Comparing the sun's heat to fire and conflagration creates vivid imagery of intense, relentless heat that consumes everything in its path.

"The haze occurred in the gloomy appearance,

The time also has terrorist's defiance."

Imagery of haze and gloom, coupled with the metaphor of terrorism, suggests an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.

"All the flowers are panic-stricken now,

Partridges cry in fear and care on bough,"

Imagery of panic-stricken flowers and crying partridges portrays the distress and vulnerability of nature in the face of the drought.

"It's pity! The black eagle cry for rain,

There's a painful story of barbet hen."

Imagery of a crying black eagle and a painful story of a barbet hen further emphasizes the desperation and suffering caused by the drought.

"Deposer is the violent drought, no doubts,

That has emptied the grain-store of the house,

The zeal and jubilation has faded away

Misfortune laughed at people's teary way"

Imagery of a violent drought as a conqueror, empty grain-stores, and faded zeal and jubilation highlights the devastating impact of the drought on human life and spirit.

Overall, the imagery in the poem "Drought" creates a vivid and poignant depiction of the suffering and despair brought about by the relentless dryness and lack of rain.

### **Syntax**

The poem "Drought" employs various syntactical structures to convey its message effectively.

Let's analyze the syntax used in each stanza:

"The time has been dry, and no rain,

The whole earth has care, want and pain."

The syntax is straightforward, with simple subject-verb-object constructions. The repetition of the phrase "The whole earth" emphasizes the widespread impact of the drought.

"The air is hot and cruel dictator

Where should I go and seek peaceful shelter?"

The syntax in the second stanza is interrogative, reflecting the speaker's sense of desperation and uncertainty. The rhetorical question emphasizes the lack of respite from the oppressive heat.

"The fertile seed-beds of Shrawan have been damaged

All the hamlets looked as ruined as bald head"

The syntax here is descriptive, using parallel structure to emphasize the destruction of both seed-beds and hamlets. The simile "ruined as bald head" adds vivid imagery to the description.

"Sad are the whole tillable land or field,

A famine rose up and the pleasures killed."

The syntax remains straightforward, with subject-verb-object constructions. The repetition of the adjective "sad" and the personification of famine add emotional depth to the stanza.

"Like the heat of the fire is the burning sun

Growing is the violent heat of conflagration,"

The syntax in this stanza is comparative, using similes to liken the sun's heat to fire and conflagration. The parallel structure reinforces the intensity of the heat.

"The haze occurred in the gloomy appearance,

The time also has terrorist's defiance."

The syntax here is declarative, presenting statements about the atmospheric conditions and the defiance of time. The use of personification adds depth to the descriptions.

"All the flowers are panic-stricken now,

Partridges cry in fear and care on bough,"

The syntax is descriptive, portraying the panic of flowers and the fear of partridges. The use of present tense verbs creates a sense of immediacy.

"It's pity! The black eagle cry for rain,

There's a painful story of barbet hen."

The syntax here is exclamatory, expressing pity for the black eagle and highlighting the painful story of the barbet hen. The use of exclamation marks adds emphasis to the emotions conveyed.

"Deposer is the violent drought, no doubts,

That has emptied the grain-store of the house,

The zeal and jubilation has faded away

Misfortune laughed at people's teary way"

The syntax in the final stanza is declarative, presenting statements about the nature of the drought and its consequences. The use of parallel structure reinforces the impact of the drought on both physical and emotional levels.

Overall, the poem "Drought" effectively utilizes various syntactical structures to convey its themes of despair, suffering, and devastation caused by the drought.

### **Tone and Mood**

The tone and mood of the poem "Drought" are somber, despairing, and reflective of the hardship and suffering caused by the prolonged dryness and lack of rain. Let's examine how the language and imagery contribute to the overall tone and mood.

#### **Tone**

The tone of the poem is characterized by sadness and lamentation. Lines such as "Sad are the whole tillable land or field" and "A famine rose up and the pleasures killed" convey a sense of sorrow and mourning for the devastation brought about by the drought.

The tone also carries an undertone of desperation and helplessness, as seen in lines like "Where should I go and seek peaceful shelter?" and "All the flowers are panic-stricken now."

Additionally, the tone reflects a sense of resignation and acceptance of the harsh reality of the situation, as evidenced by lines such as "Deposer is the violent drought, no doubts."

#### **Mood**

The mood of the poem is bleak and desolate, evoking feelings of sadness, despair, and hopelessness. The imagery of ruined landscapes, panic-stricken flowers, and crying partridges creates a sense of gloom and despondency.

The mood is further intensified by the use of vivid imagery and personification, which accentuate the suffering experienced by both nature and humanity.

There is an overarching sense of heaviness and oppression throughout the poem, as conveyed by the oppressive heat of the sun and the metaphorical reference to the air as a "cruel dictator."

Despite moments of empathy and pity, such as the mention of the black eagle crying for rain, the prevailing mood remains one of sorrow and resignation in the face of the relentless drought.

In summary, the tone and mood of the poem "Drought" are characterized by sadness, despair, and a sense of resignation in the face of the devastation caused by the prolonged dry spell.

### **Epistemological Perspective**

The poem "Drought" vividly shows the severe effects of drought on the environment and its inhabitants. From an epistemological perspective, we can analyze how knowledge is acquired, understood, and justified about the themes presented in the poem.

**Empirical Knowledge:** The poem portrays observable facts about the drought – the absence of rain, the hot and dry air, and the damage to crops and landscapes. This aligns with empirical knowledge, which is based on sensory experience and observation of the natural world.

**Testimony and Authority:** The poem also relies on testimony and authority, as it conveys the experiences and observations of those affected by the drought. It gives voice to the suffering and struggles faced by individuals and communities during such times. This highlights the role of testimonial knowledge, where information is gained through the accounts of others.

**Aesthetic Knowledge:** The imagery and language used in the poem evoke emotional responses, providing insight into the human experience of drought. This can be seen as a form of aesthetic knowledge, where understanding is derived from the emotional and sensory qualities of the poetic expression.



**Interpretation and Meaning:** The poem invites interpretation and reflection on the broader significance of drought – its impact on ecosystems, livelihoods, and human societies. This involves engaging with philosophical questions about suffering, resilience, and the relationship between humanity and the natural world.

**Epistemic Humility:** The poem also hints at the limitations of human knowledge and control in the face of natural forces like drought. It underscores the need for epistemic humility – an acknowledgement of our finite understanding and the recognition of uncertainty in the face of complex phenomena.

In essence, the poem offers insights into the epistemological dimensions of understanding natural disasters like drought, highlighting how knowledge is acquired, expressed, and interpreted about human experiences and the environment.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the poem "Drought" by Sitaram Adhikari reveals the depth of its thematic exploration and stylistic craftsmanship. Through a meticulous examination of its elements of style, including diction, figurative language, imagery, syntax, tone, and mood, we gain a profound understanding of the emotional, social, and environmental dimensions of droughts.

Adhikari's adept use of diction paints a vivid picture of the suffering and despair brought about by the absence of rain, while his employment of figurative language enhances the poem's imagery and emotional impact. The syntax, tone, and mood contribute to the overall somber and reflective atmosphere, capturing the profound sense of loss and helplessness experienced by both nature and humanity during times of drought.

Furthermore, the epistemological perspective offers valuable insights into how knowledge is acquired and understood about the effects of drought. Through empirical observation, testimonial accounts, aesthetic engagement, and philosophical reflection, the poem illuminates the complexities of human experience and the limitations of our understanding in the face of natural phenomena.

In conclusion, "Drought" serves not only as a poignant work of art but also as a powerful tool for fostering empathy, awareness, and reflection on the human experience of environmental disasters. Its significance lies not only in its literary merit but also in its capacity to inspire dialogue, contemplation, and action towards building resilience and sustainability in the face of climate change.

## **References**

- Adhikari, S. (24-25 October 2013). Drought. *The General Conference*. Chuncheon, Korea: Traditional Poetry Writers Association of the World.
- Alchin, L. (n.d.). *Partridge Christian Dream Symbol*. Retrieved from Partridge Christian Dream Symbol - Bible Quotes and References: <http://www.dream-interpretation.org.uk/christian-dream-symbols/partridge-christian-dream-symbol.htm>
- Arunachal Grace. (n.d.). *Legendary Birds in Hinduism*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/To-a-Sky-Lark>
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1982). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. Retrieved from <https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/bakhtin>
- Cordova, J., & Young, J. (2024). I Am Asked: Lisel Mueller's Beginning in Poetry. *Methodist DeBakey Cardiovasc J.*, 20(2), 128-131. doi:10.14797/mdcvj.1335
- Furman, R. (2007). Poetry and Narrative as Qualitative Data: Explorations into Existential Theory. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, Volume 7, Edition 1 May 2007*, 7(1), 1-9. Retrieved from [www.ipjp.org](http://www.ipjp.org)
- Johnson-Laird, N., P., & Oatley, K. (2022). How poetry evokes emotions. *Acta Psychologica*, 224. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2022.103506>
- Jourard, S. (1968). *Disclosing man to himself*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Krill, D. (1978). *Existential social work*. New York: Free Press.
- Miller, E. (2024). The Black Saturday bushfire disaster: found poetry for arts-based knowledge translation in disaster risk and climate change communication. *Taylor & Francis Online*, 1-16. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2024.2310861>
- Neupane, D. (2019). An analysis of the poem "Drought" by Sitaram Adhikari. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 5(3), 98-99.
- Wilcher, R. (1972). The Use of Natural Details in English Poetry:1645-1668. Retrieved from <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3174/1/Wilcher72PhD1.pdf>