

Shakil's *Breath of Solitude*: A Critical Study in Contemporary Literature

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ABSTRACT

In the world of contemporary English poetry, Shakil Ahmed has created a new poetic language centered around personal loneliness, war-torn humanity, love, memory, existential crisis and spiritual quest. In the poem *Breath of Solitude*, on the one hand, the poet has highlighted the deep depression and emotional tension of the individual; on the other hand, he has embodied the crisis of world humanity, war, nuclear destruction and the eternal power of love. This study examines Shakil Ahmed's poetry in the contemporary literary context and analyses the language, symbolism, dreamlike imagery, philosophical sense and romantic spirit of his poetry. His poetry has also been compared with that of T. S. Eliot, Pablo Neruda, William Wordsworth, Rabindranath Tagore, Chales Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, Victor Hugo, André Breton, Aimé Césaire and Jibanananda Das. The study shows that Shakil's poetry is an expression of post-modern existentialism on the one hand and a call for human renaissance on the other. At the center of his poetry is 'solitude', which is not only a personal but also a crisis of civilization..

Keywords: Contemporary Poetry, Dreamlike images, Existentialism, Humanism, Love, Modern Literature, Romanticism, Shakil Ahmed, Solitude, Surrealism, Symbolism, War Poetry.

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Introduction

Contemporary literature is mainly a document of human internal breakdown, social upheaval, political unrest and emotional loneliness. 21st century poetry combines personal feelings with global crisis in a new way. Among the poets of this genre, Shakil Ahmed is an important name, whose poems have deep romanticism on the one hand, and strong reflections on the instability of civilization and human pain on the other. In the book *Breath of Solitude*, the poet expresses the existential emptiness of man, the failure of love, the trauma of memory, the horrors of war and the desire for liberation of the soul. In the poem "The Weight of Sorrow" he wrote: "My life is lost due to the lack of exalted and glorified love." This line is not simply a lamentation of personal lovelessness; it also symbolizes the lovelessness of modern civilization. The language of the

poet is highly rhetorical and rich in imagery. In his poems "cosmic void", "melancholic night", "twilight", "echoes", "solitude", "dream", "love", "shadow" these words are repeatedly used, which creates a unique aesthetic of his poetic world. Nature in Shakil Ahmed's poetry is a symbol of peace like Wordsworth, but also a reflection of broken civilization like Eliot. His poem "Panorama of Beauty" depicts human suffering against the magnificent beauty of nature. Again in the poems "Voices of Despair" and "The Scars of Conflict" the cries of war-torn humanity are heard. In this paper, *Breath of Solitude* will be analyzed in the light of contemporary literary theory, existentialism, romanticism and humanism.

Solitude is an almost essential part of literature across cultures. The work of Shakil, *Breath of Solitude*, is an important part of contemporary literature encompassing

the complexities of social, psychological, and existential aspects of solitude. A critical analysis of this work shows the ways in which modern literature deals with the fears of alienation, the loss of identity, and the struggle of an individual to find meaning in contemporary society. This study is placed in the fields of comparative literature, literary psychoanalysis, and socio-criticism. It provides an analysis of the ways in which Shakil uses stylistics and other tools to express the phenomenon of lived solitude in his art. This study aims to provide a voice to the solitude of contemporary readers suffering from the modern phenomenon of social fragmentation and digital solitude. This study mainly focuses on the literary, aesthetic and philosophical aspects of *Breath of Solitude*. Here, instead of a complete biographical analysis of the poet, emphasis has been given to the mood, language and contemporary literary importance of his poetry. On an academic level this study focuses on contemporary literature, supports the work of an author declaring his individuality and helps support the works of literature dedicated to the exploration of the human soul and deepening the discourse between the creation of art and reflection of thought.

The study follows a methodical progression: first, contextualizing the work within contemporary literature; next, a thematic analysis of solitude; then, an examination of Shakil's stylistic techniques; followed by a comparative study with the contemporary poetic landscape, contrasting the work with the voices of poets such as T. S. Eliot, Pablo Neruda, William Wordsworth, Rabindranath Tagore, Chales Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, Victor Hugo, André Breton, Aimé Césaire and Jibanananda Das and finally, a critical synthesis evaluating the work's literary and humanistic significance.

Objective

The purpose of this study is

- i. To evaluate the aesthetics of the poet's language, symbols and imagery.
- ii. To analyse the forms of loneliness, love and consciousness in Shakil Ahmed's poetry.
- iii. To identify the reflection of war, humanity and pacifism in his poetry.
- iv. To compare his poetry with selected poets of world literature.
- v. To assess the Literary Significance of *Breath of Solitude* in Contemporary poetic world.

Research questions

This study seeks to achieve its objectives by addressing the following research questions:

- i. How does Shakil Ahmed express the theme of solitude in his poetry?
- ii. How does his poetry explore the philosophical dimensions of love and humanity?
- iii. To what extent is his poem contemporary in its depiction of war and destruction?
- iv. What are the distinctive characteristics of language and symbolism in his poetry?
- v. What are the similarities and contrasts of his poetry with the poets of contemporary world literature?

Literature Review

Existentialist sentiments, personal loneliness and social crisis have been considered important themes in the discussion of contemporary poetry. T. S. Eliot in his *The Waste Land* highlights the spiritual emptiness of modern civilization. Like Eliot's poetry, Shakil Ahmed's poetry reflects the breakdown of civilization and the isolation of people.

Pablo Neruda saw love as a personal emotion as well as a political and human force. In Shakil's poem "Love Transcends", he envisions love as a cosmic force: "I yearn to make the cosmos pure with the spiritual power of your love." Again, William Wordsworth found spiritual solace in nature. In Shakil's poem "Valley of Wonder" nature also becomes a symbol of rebirth. In the poetry of Jibanananda Das in Bengali literature, there is an abundance of loneliness and silence, similarly in Shakil's poetry, a deep lonely world has been created through the symbols of "silent night", "cosmic void", "twilight" etc. Besides, the humanistic spirit of Rabindranath Tagore is echoed in Shakil's poem "Beyond the Shadows of War", where the poet dreams of a world without war.

Since there is not any as such comprehensive study of this nature has previously been conducted on Shakil's poetry collection, the present work seeks to address this gap in the existing part of the criticism. It is necessary to review the relevant literature available in this field and related critical perspectives to develop the study systematically and establish a strong theoretical and analytical foundation. Accordingly, the following literature has been consulted to contextualize and support the present investigation.

Critics and theorists of poetry and literature have shown more than casual interest in loneliness as a theme. Several important works will inform our reading of Shakil's poetry. In *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1983), Aimé Césaire gives us a version of collective loneliness associated with cultural dislocation and loss of a sense of self. This is picked up by Albert Camus in *L'Étranger* (1942), where the individual's confrontational solitude and the Absurd is

the crux of the story. Léopold Sédar Senghor, in *Chants d'ombre* (1945), writes about solitude in terms of self, memory and the postcolonial. In *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* (1978), Yves Bonnefoy offers a poetics silence, absence and contemplation that strikes a similar tone to the study in question. A few years later, in *La Poétique de l'espace* (1957), Gaston Bachelard writes about the intimacy of solitude, how it can bring solace and how it relates to Shakil's poetry. Roland Barthes, in *Le Plaisir du texte* (1973), considers writing as a product of the emptiness a solipsist seeks to fill with silence. This particularly applies to Shakil's poetry. In *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (1988), Julia Kristeva links solitude with inner exile and otherness of being. Lastly, Mahato (2022), in *Arun Mitra: Un savant indien à la recherche de la littérature française*, explores Arun Mitra's connections to French literature and the French literary framework in relation to his thought and writing. In *Spiritual Odyssey: Reinterpreting Einstein's Equation as a Spiritual Mantra*, Sarkar et al. (2026) reinterpret $E = mc^2$, suggesting that when energy, matter, and light are understood as spirit, body, and knowledge, the equation can be understood as a spiritual one. Using the ideas of Einstein, Carl Jung, Sri Aurobindo, and Rabindranath Tagore, the authors of this work integrate elements of French philosophy, and demonstrate how a scientific idea can be a philosophical and spiritual proposition regarding the human condition. This work draws primarily on the interplay of science, spirituality, and literature and presents a new reflection on the search for meaning in the modern world. Taken together, these works offer the necessary framework for a theoretical model of the diverse expressions of solitude that can be identified in Shakil's poetry.

Research Methodology

Qualitative and interpretative research methods have been followed in this study, through which Shakil Ahmed's poem *Breath of Solitude* has been analyzed in the context of contemporary English literature. The main aim of the research is to understand the multidimensional expression of loneliness, existential crisis, love, war, humanity, symbolism and spiritual consciousness in the poetry of the poet.

Research Design

This research is mainly based on descriptive and analytical methods. Since poetry is a deep expression of feelings, symbols and philosophical thoughts, Qualitative Literary Analysis has been applied here. Close reading method is followed to uncover the inner and outer meaning of the poem.

Primary Source

The main source of this research is Shakil Ahmed's poetry

book *Breath of Solitude*. Selected poems from the book such as *The Weight of Sorrow*, *Love Transcends*, *Voices of Despair*, *Valley of Wonder*, *Beyond the Shadows of War* and *The Beauty of Stillness* are analyzed. Through these poems the poet's language, imagery, symbols, philosophical views and human consciousness have been evaluated.

Secondary Sources

Various research articles, literature reviews, books and journals have been used to form the theoretical and comparative basis of the study. Especially T. S. Eliot, Pablo Neruda, William Wordsworth, Rabindranath Tagore and Jibanananda Dasa's literary works and critical discussions are taken as part of the comparative analysis.

Method of Analysis

Close Textual Reading has been applied in the research to analyze the language, imagery, metaphor, symbolism, rhythm and emotional structure of the poems. At the same time, the similarity and dissimilarity of the poetic features of prominent poets of world literature with Shakil Ahmed's poetry have been determined through comparative literary analysis.

Also, the significance of the poems is assessed in the context of contemporary world realities such as war, mental isolation, crisis of civilization and spiritual emptiness.

Significance of the Methodology

This research method creates an opportunity to understand Shakil Ahmed's poetry in a multidimensional way. Through a combination of thematic analysis, comparative discussion and literary interpretation, *Breath of Solitude* attempts to establish *Breath of Solitude* as an important addition to contemporary English poetry.

Literary Framework

The analysis of Shakil's collection *Breath of Solitude* could adopt a multidisciplinary approach that draws on several theoretical movements.

First, Charles Mauron's *psychocriticism* (1963) makes it possible to explore the networks of obsessive metaphors running through the work, revealing the deep structures of the author's unconscious. Solitude, as a central motif, is interpreted there as a symbolic projection of inner tensions. Furthermore, Gaston Bachelard's literary phenomenology particularly in *La Poétique de l'espace* (1957) which offers a framework for interpreting spaces of isolation such as the bedroom, silence, interiority as habitable places for the human soul. True solitude, the one that breaks off communication with the other begins with man's solitude." (Bachelard, 1957, p. 43).

Furthermore, Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist approach in *L'Être et le Néant* (1943) sheds light on the solitary condition as the foundation of individual freedom and ontological anguish. According to existentialism, man is essentially alone and must find his own meaning. In Shakil's poem "solitude", "void", "shadow", "silence" these symbols highlight the existential crisis. In the poem "The Pulse of Destiny" he wrote: "My desolate life slowly withers without screams of misery." Here the emptiness and uncertainty of life is evident.

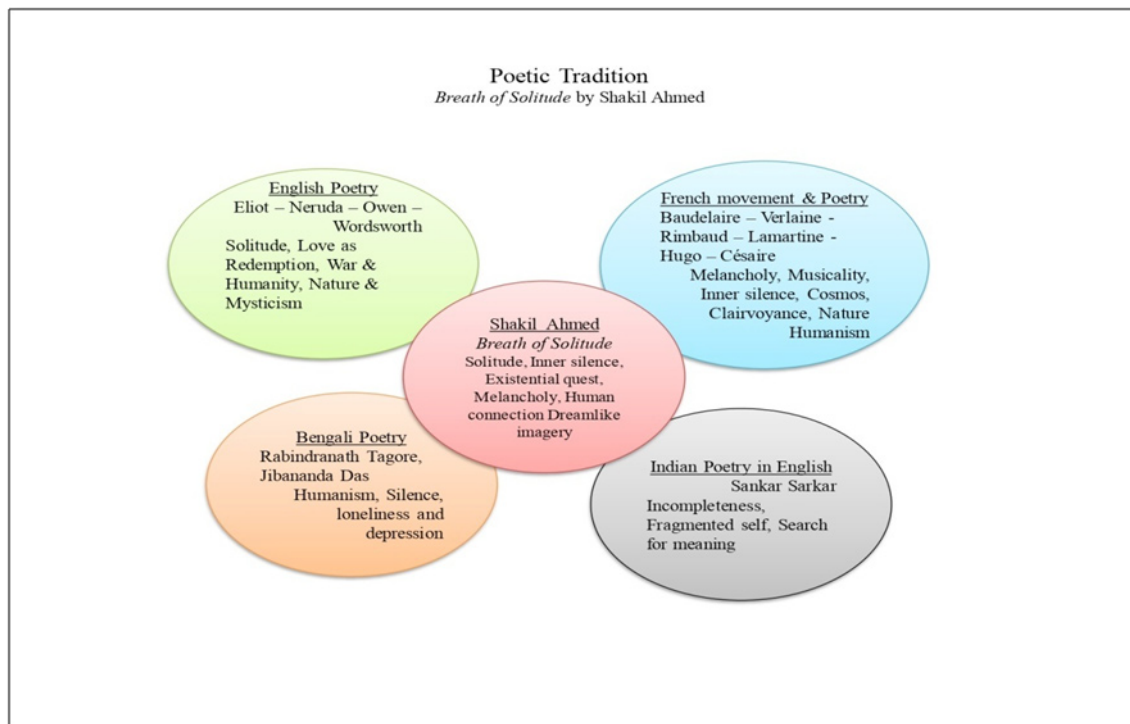
Finally, Gérard Genette's narratology *Figures III* (1972) will make it possible to analyze the formal terms such as narrative voice, focalization, and temporality through which Shakil discursively constructs the experience of solitude. This approach, combined with Claude Duchet's *sociocriticism* (1979), will situate the work within its

contemporary socio-historical context.

Shakil's poetry has a deep expression of nature, love and emotions. Like Wordsworth he saw nature as a refuge for the soul. In the poem "Panorama of Beauty" the unearthly beauty of nature stands in contrast to human suffering. The poet's desire for humanity and peace is reflected in many of his poems. In the poem "Fate of Humanity" he takes a stand for humanity against nuclear war: "Humanity must embrace love to avert nuclear war." The abundance of symbols in his poetry is noticeable. "twilight", "moon", "river", "storm", "bird", "cosmic light" these symbols indicate the mental and spiritual state of man.

Result and Discussion

The finding of this study validate that Shakil Ahmed's *Breath of Solitude* stands at the intersection of solitude,



silence, melancholy, humanism, nature - consciousness, and the search for existential meaning, synthesizing elements from English, French, Bengali, and Indian English poetic traditions.

Solitude as a Central Theme

Breath of Solitude is the main theme of the book. This loneliness is not only personal; this is the loneliness of civilization. "The Haunting Night", "Lost in the Twilight", "Beyond the Darkness" in all the poems, the poet wanders in a deep emotional darkness. Just as there is self-doubt and alienation in T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Shakil's poem also evokes self-crisis and existential questions. But where Eliot's poem focuses on the despair of urban civilization, Shakil seeks redemption through love and spirituality.

Love as Redemption

Love in Shakil Ahmed's poetry is not just a romantic feeling; It is the liberation of the soul. In the poem "A Love That Refuses to Fade" he shows love as an eternal force. Like Pablo Neruda's love poems, love in Shakil's poetry is emotional and deeply sensitive. But where Neruda associated love with carnal emotions, Shakil took love to spiritual heights.

War and Humanity

"Desolate Streets", "Voices of Despair", "The Scars of Conflict" in these poems, the horrors of war have emerged very strongly. "Children of Gaza are ill clad and orphan..." This line expresses the brutal reality of world politics. Here the poet emerges as a humanist voice. Shakil's humane protest is comparable to Wilfred Owen's anti-war poetry.

Nature and Mysticism

Nature is mystical and spiritual in Shakil's poetry. In the poem "Valley of Wonder" nature is like a place of heavenly rebirth. William Wordsworth felt a divine presence in nature. Shakil's poetry also has the same romantic spirit, but with the depression of modern man.

Language and Style

Shakil Ahmed's language is rich in rhetoric, lofty and imaginative. He repeatedly uses the words "cosmic", "ethereal", "twilight", "melancholy", "resonance", "silence". This creates a musical rhythm in his poetry. But critically speaking; at times excessive rhetoric and

adjectives make the natural flow of the poem heavy. But it is this dramatic language that makes his poetry unique.

Comparative Study with Other Poets

Comparative discussion of Shakil Ahmed's poetry: A detailed review in the context of contemporary poetry. In the world of contemporary English poetry, Shakil Ahmed has created a deeply introspective, philosophical and humanistic poetic language through his poem *Breath of Solitude*. His poetry has a deep sympathy for war-torn humanity and a soulful attraction to the mysteries of nature, as does personal loneliness and longing for love. From this point of view, if his poetry is compared with the prominent poets of world literature, his uniqueness becomes clearer.

Comparative Table		
English poets	Shared themes	Ahmed's Poem
T. S. Eliot	Solitude	<i>The Haunting Night, Lost in the Twilight, Beyond the Darkness</i>
Pablo Neruda	Love as Redemption	<i>A Love That Refuses to Fade</i>
Wilfred Owen	War and Humanity	<i>Desolate Streets, Voices of Despair, The Scars of Conflict</i>
William Wordsworth	Nature and Mysticism	<i>Valley of Wonder</i>
Bengali English writing poet	Shared themes	Ahmed's Poem
Sankar Sarkar	Incompleteness	<i>The Weight of Sorrow</i>
Bengali poets	Shared themes	Ahmed's Poem
Rabindranath Tagore	Humanist spirit	<i>Beyond the Shadows of War</i>
Jibananda Das	Silence, loneliness and depression	<i>The Beauty of Stillness</i>
French Literary movements/ French poets	Shared themes	Ahmed's Poem
Charles Baudelaire	Melancholy, light/darkness duality	<i>The Weight of Sorrow</i>
Paule Verlaine	Musicality, inner silence	<i>The Beat of Life, The Realm of Emotions</i>
Arthur Rimbaud	Cosmos, clairvoyance, dissolution of the self	<i>Eternal Resonance, The Prism of Time</i>
Alphonse de Lamartine	Consoling nature vs. human suffering	<i>Panorama of Beauty</i>
Victor Hugo	Prophetic vision, humanism, anti-war stance	<i>A Trail of Desolation, Beyond the Shadows of War</i>
Surréalisme	Dreamlike imagery, the unconscious	<i>Serene Quest, Tranquilizing Splash</i>
Aimé Césaire	Inner revolt, dignity	<i>Unyielding Spirit, Pensive Reflections</i>

Shakil Ahmed's "The Weight of Sorrow" and T. S. Eliot's *Existential Crisis*: Shakil Ahmed's poem "The Weight of Sorrow" is essentially a poem of deep emotional loneliness and existential pain. The poet wrote: "My life is lost due to the lack of exalted and glorified love." In this line, the deep meaning of spiritual emptiness and lovelessness of modern man is revealed. For the poet, life has become meaningless, because there is an absence of true love. This sentiment is very similar to T. S. Eliot's poetry. Eliot in his *The Waste Land* or *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* highlighted the emptiness, fragmentation and isolation of people in modern civilization. In Eliot's poem man is an isolated being, alone in the crowd of society.

But there is an important difference between the two poets. Eliot's world is essentially the ruins of urban civilization. The smoky city of London, mechanical life and spiritual emptiness are the main elements in his poetry. On the other hand, in Shakil Ahmed's poetry, the crisis of existence is expressed through personal feelings. He brings to the centre not the mechanics of city life, but the heartache of loneliness and lovelessness. Eliot's language is fragmented and intellectual, but Shakil's language is emotional and melodious. It can be said here that Eliot is the poet of the ruins of modernity, and Shakil finds the light of love in the ruins. In Shakil Ahmed's poem "Love Transcends", love is seen not only as a human relationship, but as a

cosmic and spiritual force. The poet wrote: "I yearn to make the cosmos pure with the spiritual power of your love." This love transcends physical attraction and leads to spiritual liberation. Here love is a kind of "spiritual transcendence".

Pablo Neruda's poetry has a deep similarity with this love consciousness. In his *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*, Neruda expresses love as intense passion, longing, and human madness. His love is sometimes physical, sometimes revolutionary, sometimes deep depression.

But Shakil's world of love is much more spiritual than Neruda's. In Neruda's love body and nature become one; In Shakil's love, the soul and the universe are bound together. Neruda sees love as the maddening passion of life, but Shakil envisions love as a means of liberating humanity and purifying the soul. Love in Shakil's poetry is like divine light, which gives hope in dark life. From this point of view, his love consciousness is close to Sufi and mystic thought.

"Valley of Wonder" and William Wordsworth's love of nature: In the poem "Valley of Wonder" Shakil Ahmed presents nature as a mysterious and miraculous world. He wrote: "Sometimes I wander in the valley of paradise in my fancy / Where flower blooms spreading enthralling fragrances." This nature symbolizes peace, rebirth and spiritual liberation. May the poet find heavenly tranquillity in nature.

William Wordsworth's love of nature is closely related to this sentiment. Wordsworth considered nature to be the teacher of the human soul. In his poetry, nature soothes the human mind, gives moral strength and soothes the soul. But Shakil's nature is far more mysterious and miraculous than Wordsworth's. Wordsworth's nature is real and human; Shakil's nature is dreamy and cosmic. In his poems "purple sun", "cosmic void", "ethereal breeze", "mystic valley" such imagery gives nature a supernatural dimension. Wordsworth sees nature as a teacher of life, while Shakil envisions nature as a spiritual refuge, where people can forget the pain of life and be born again.

Shakil Ahmed's poem "Beyond the Shadows of War" has an anti-war spirit and a strong stand for humanity. The poet dreams of a world without war "Let us build a world of peace and serenity without bombs and shells." In this poem, children's dreams of laughter, a world of peace and a loving society come up. War here is not just a political conflict; it is the destruction of humanity "Often in the night echoes of silence stir my numbed soul."

Rabindranath Tagore has deep similarities with this humanist spirit. Rabindranath strongly protested against war, nationalism and human degradation in his essay

Crisis of Civilization. In his literary world, people are the highest truth. However, Shakil Ahmed's poetry is much more war-centric than Rabindranath's and connected with contemporary political reality. The plight of children in Gaza and Palestine is particularly vivid in his poetry. Rabindranath saw humanity on a philosophical and universal level; Shakil puts it in a war-torn reality.

Here Shakil is a poet of contemporary humanity, who uses poetry as a language of protest against the brutal reality of world politics. "The Beauty of Stillness" and Jibanananda Das's *Silence and Solitude*, In Shakil Ahmed's poem "The Beauty of Stillness" silence is revealed as a profound spiritual experience. The poet wrote: "Often in the night echoes of silence stir my numbed soul." This silence is not just soundlessness; It is a spiritual journey. The loneliness of the poet helps him realize the true meaning of life.

The poetry of Jibanananda Das has a deep connection with this feeling. Silence, loneliness and depression are an inevitable reality in Jibanananda's poetry. The weary and lonely soul that can be found in his "Banlata Sen" or "One Day Eight Years Ago" is echoed in Shakil's poetry. But Jibanananda's poetry is very geographical and folk. Bengal's fields, rivers, birds, paddy fields come alive in his poems. On the other hand, Shakil's poetry is more cosmic and abstract. His silence takes the form of "cosmic silence". Jibanananda's loneliness is the smell of the soil of Bengal, and Shakil's loneliness is floating in the void of the universe. Yet both poets' poetry resonates with a tone of deep self-exploration and silent pain.

Shakil Ahmed's *Breath of Solitude* and Sankar Sarkar's *An Unfinished Diary: Voices Beyond Time* both explore solitude, war, love, and human resilience, yet with distinct poetic registers. Shakil's "The Weight of Sorrow" (p. 12) laments existential emptiness "My life is lost due to the lack of exalted and glorified love" while Sarkar's "Unfinished Diary" (p. 31) reflects a philosophical stance of incompleteness: "Its final page forever left unturned" where Shakil's solitude focuses on the civilizational crisis. Sarkar's diary echoes the continuity and incomplete hope-synthesising global traditions into a humanistic chorus. Both loneliness turns into a spiritual and civilizational reflection of both poets to a great extent.

Comparison with French poetic world

Poetry stands as one of the most universal forms of expression for the human soul across all cultures and eras. It transcends geographical, linguistic, and temporal boundaries to reach what French Romantics called *le Sublime* that space where individual's pain meets the universal human condition. It is precisely within this space that the work of Shakil Ahmed unfolds; an English language poet from West Bengal, his collection *Breath of Solitude*,

published in 2026, serves as a profound meditation on melancholy, love, war, dreams, and the spiritual quest.

In regards to breath of solitude, one may easily consider it an authentic endeavor of French literature. An organic nuance in this delivery appears to us, one that resonates with certain literary movements in France and the ideas of her poets from romanticism to surrealism, with underlying symbols and engaged poetry. This addition may seem elucidated and considerate. This collection, with its sources, chaos, and the ideas of its collection, may be of great service in naming the authors and poets of this collection. An extreme and passionately vivid longing for beauty and rebellion to obtain meaning in a world full of chaos at its bare minimum is to be expected. This collection, may be of great service to these poets and authors; Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Lamartine, Hugo, Breton, Eluard, and Césaire. This statement will not seem conjectural.

The French poetic tradition indeed offers a particularly fruitful analytical framework for understanding Ahmed's work. The title of this collection bears a logical connection to the poems contained within it and we could notably observe striking affinities between the poems in this collection and the traditions of French poetic world. However, the question of whether French literature exerted any direct or indirect influence upon the poet during the composition of this work falls outside the scope of the present discussion. This part of the study examines whether any meaningful connection exists between poetic traditions written in two different languages in spite of distant time and space. If such a connection does exist, the part of this study further aims to understand how deep that connection is and whether it holds up logically.

France was considered as the laboratory of the poetic modernity from the 19th to the 20th century. This is where Baudelaire coined the concept of spleen to name this existential melancholy which goes beyond simple sadness; that Verlaine elevated musicality to the rank of supreme poetic principle; that Rimbaud proclaimed the need for disruption of all the senses to achieve clairvoyance; that the surrealists freed the poetic image from the constraints of reason; that Césaire made poetry an act of resistance and re-conquest of identity. Each of these poetic gestures finds a remarkable echo in the poems which build up *Breath of Solitude*.

The nature of these affinities remains unclear. Direct influence does not apply to this case. We cannot assume that Ahmed read these French authors, and there is certainly no indication that he did, nor did he draw inspiration from them, even unconsciously. Rather, we are dealing with what the French comparatist Paul Van Tieghem called "analogies": similarities that are not the result of borrowing, but rather

the result of an alignment of sensibilities and the same answer to the same questions that humanity asks. This distinction matters, since it positions Ahmed respectfully as a interlocutor of the existing global poetic tradition and not as a mere epigone or someone who imitates.

The aim of this research study is twofold: to analyze the already established, and perhaps even surprising, thematic and stylistic connections between Ahmed's poem and Baudelairean spleen, Lamartine's meditation on nature, Hugo's prophetic voice, Césaire's cry, and some forms of Surrealist dream imagery. From the thematic standpoint, it will be fascinating to see how Ahmed's poem contains all of those elements in unexpected ways. From the stylistic standpoint, we will explore Ahmed's poem to see how specific stylistic traits of French poetry and poetics, such as musicality and free verse, darkness and light, the cosmic and self-dissolution, and the surreal and emotionally charged imagery, manifest themselves in Ahmed's poem in different ways and in different contexts. It will be imperative to first find ways to situate the above questions and issues, even if it is only briefly, to understand the ways we can answer the above questions of poetry as a universal endeavor beyond the bounds of language and culture. "*Breath of Solitude*" will be instrumental in helping us answer that question.

We could analyze the correspondence and the affinities between *Breath of Solitude* and the French poetic world while discussing the following points:

- i. **Melancholy:** we could find the deepest affinity is undoubtedly with Charles Baudelaire and his work *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Baudelaire contrasted the Ideal with Spleen and Ahmed oscillates between despair and aspiration in *The Weight of Sorrow*. He has written *I am drowning in the pool of misery full of ugly shadows of aching past / I stroll briskly towards the unknown end that goes to the abyss of abysmal silence*. This movement that the soul held captive in the abyss, seeking an inaccessible light is directly recalls the verse of Baudelaire's poem *Spleen IV Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle...* that means when the low and heavy sky weighs down like a lid..., where the poet drowns in sadness while reaching toward the Ideal. Ahmed's "ugly shadows" echo Baudelaire's "darkness", while the phrase "divine bliss" at the end of the same poem recaptures the tension between the carnal and the celestial that is central to "Elevation."
- ii. **Musicality of silence:** the line of the poem *Art Poétique* of Paul Verlaine *De la musique avant toute chose* that means Music above all else resonates strongly in Ahmed's poem *The Beat of Life*. *I yearn for that magical rhythm that breathes life into the*

soul / Rhythm that creates melody and enhances the energy of upbeat life. This quest for rhythm as a vital force is essentially the essence of Verlaine. Verlaine wrote in *Romances sans paroles* that the music takes precedence over meaning; for Ahmed, too, "magical rhythm" is a transcendent reality rather than a mere metaphor. Similarly, the line "Speaks in silence, lives alone in the labyrinth of life" in the poem *The Realm of Emotions* reminds us Verlaine's poetic image "dans le vague d'un Dimanche" that hazy interiority and inhabited silence.

iii. **Cosmic clairvoyance:** we could observe the similarities of ideas and themes of Arthur Rimbaud's poems such as *Les Illuminations*, *Une Saison en Enfer* in Ahmed's poem *Eternal Resonance*. *We are but fleeting moments, whispers in the cosmic void / Our lives, a delicate tapestry of moments, woven from the depths of time*. These lines express the gaze which is directed toward the infinite. This dissolution of the self into the cosmos that is the very essence of Rimbaud's verses *J'ai embrassé l'aube d'été* ou *Je fixais des vertiges* of *Les Illuminations*. Ahmed's concepts of a "celestial chorus" and an "essence merging with eternity" evoke Rimbaud's voyance. The poet as a cosmic being foresees beyond the visible. In the poem *The Prism of Time*, the line *Truth shimmers beyond the orbit of ancient moon* possesses a luminous strangeness that is typically similar to Rimbaud.

iv. **Consoling nature:** Ahmed's poem *Panorama of Beauty* is also related to the natural lyricism of Alphonse de Lamartine who expressed it in his collections *Méditations Poétiques* and *Nouvelles Méditations poétiques*. *I see a charming panorama of endless beauty [...] Queen Moon rising slowly with exultation and rhapsody / The world is reborn and gleeful, relishing the delight of nature*. These lines bear a strong resemblance to Lamartine's poem *le Lac* where Lamartine contemplates nature as a mirror of the anguished soul. Ahmed does the same way like the moon, the birds, and the wind serve as interlocutors for the soul. This is the crucial point between their poetry. Lamartine's verse *Ainsi, toujours poussés vers de nouveaux rivages...* which means *Thus, forever driven toward new shores...* In the same manner Ahmed expresses in his lines *When the world is such, only the men are desolate and blank* that denotes natural beauty stands in tragic contrast to human suffering. This dialectic quite similar to Lamartine's thought.

v. **Humanist commitment:** we could observe that the concept of Ahmed's war poems such as *A Trail of Desolation*, *Desolate Streets*, *Fate of Humanity* follows

Victor Hugo's poetic tradition. Hugo denounced war and called for universal peace in *Les Châtiments* and *La Pitié supreme*. In *Beyond the Shadows of War*, Ahmed writes *Let us build a world of peace and serenity without bombs and shells / Where children will rollick with fun running hither and thither without fear*. O my Brethren in *The Suffocating World*. all these these lines are quite resemble to Hugo's poetic thought such as the prophetic tone, the direct address to mankind, the messianic vision of a reconciled world etc.

vi. **Dreamlike images:** Several poems reveal an affinity with French Surrealism and surrealist poet like André Breton and Paul Éluard. In the poem *Serene Quest*, Ahmed writes *Shadows dance like the phantoms of hidden domain in the apocalyptic moments of twilight / A trance like dream unveils echoing whispers of night*. The "trance-like dreams," the "cosmic whispers," and the juxtapositions of irrational images such as "purple sun," "spectral gloom," "ghostly glaciers" remind us of Surrealist automatic writing, in which the unconscious dictates its free-flowing images. Éluard wrote, *La terre est bleue comme une orange* that means The earth is blue like an orange which is an image that is impossible but emotionally true. Ahmed employs a similar approach with *fuzzy and mystical shades of purple sun suffuses the blank and enigmatic world* in *Tranquilizing Splash*.

vii. **Inner cry and revolt:** The dimension of the cry and inner revolt in Ahmed's poetry attracts our mind towards Aimé Césaire's poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. Ahmed's verse *But I rise after every fall with brutal and volatile courage combating with the savage world* in *Pensive Reflections* and *I have to exist blooming like lotus amid the spectral void / I have to survive like the Eagle flying above the reach of serpentine snares* in *Unyielding Spirit* denote Césaire's idea and thought. Césaire proclaimed that *My mouth shall be the mouth of those misfortunes that have no mouth*. This voice rising up despite oppression, this refusal to resign oneself, this "I" asserting itself amidst the violence of the world, is the shared hallmark of the two poets.

Through this comparative discussion it is clear that Shakil Ahmed is a distinct voice in the field of contemporary poetry. He is not bound by mere imitation. Rather, he assimilated all these literary traditions and created a new poetic language by combining his experience, feelings and contemporary reality. His poems combine personal pain, love, existential crisis, anti-war consciousness and calls for humanity. He saw the emotional loneliness of modern man not only as a personal experience; rather, it has been highlighted as a crisis of civilization. *Breath of Solitude* is

not just a book of poetry; it is a document of the spiritual journey of contemporary people. Therefore, this book demands more extensive research in contemporary literary practice.

Conclusion

Shakil Ahmed's *Breath of Solitude* is a remarkable addition to the range of contemporary English poetry, expressing personal loneliness, love, humanity, anti-war consciousness and spiritual exploration in a unique poetic form. The main objective of this study was to analyze the poet's language, symbolism, imagery, human philosophy and literary significance; the results of the research show that Shakil Ahmed has presented the existential crisis of contemporary people with deep artistic awareness in his poetry. The first research question was how the poet expressed loneliness. The analysis shows that 'solitude' in his poetry is not only a symbol of personal pain; rather, it is a metaphor for the alienation, emotional emptiness and crisis of identity of modern civilization. In poems like "The Haunting Night", "Lost in the Twilight" or "The Beauty of Stillness", loneliness is transformed into a deep philosophical experience. Second, philosophical aspects of love and humanity reflect Shakil's love in his poetry – it is not a merely romantic feeling. Shakil's love speaks of human liberation and self-liberation to an extensive outlook. Love in Shakil's poetry is associated with spiritual and universal concepts, which are devoted to the well-being of humanity through transcending personal and earthly boundaries. His poetry also focuses on profound belief in humanity and seeks universal peace. The third research question examines contemporary depictions of war and destruction, suggesting that the poet becomes the voice of war-torn humanity. His poetry serves as a humanitarian protest against war, nuclear destruction and political violence. Especially the plight of children, refugees and oppressed people is strongly reflected in his poetry. Shakil Ahmed has created a unique poetic language in terms of language and symbols. Symbols like "cosmic void", "twilight", "ethereal light", and "silence" create multidimensional meaning in his poems and lead the reader into a mystical world. Finally, when Shakil's poetry is relevant to Eliot's, Wordsworth's, Neruda's and Tagore's concepts, including Jibananda Das's, his poetry then resonates a singular poetic voice. Ahmed does not imitate those French poets but belongs to the same tradition: that of a poetry that transforms personal suffering into a universal experience. For him, writing becomes an act of resistance, courage, and survival. Based on the comparative discussion, his *Breath of Solitude* not only covers the loneliness but also a significant literary document of hope, struggle and revival of civilisation in the contemporary age.

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