

---

## A THEMATIC AND STYLISTIC STUDY OF ARABIC ZUHD POEMS OF 'ALI B. HUSAYN

**F.O. Jamiu**

*Department of Religious Studies*

*Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State*

*email : fatja\_miu @ yahoo. Com*

---

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explain the thematic and stylistic elements of Arabic Zuhd poems of 'Ali b. Husayn. In order to enhance the accomplishment of our goal, the paper starts with introduction, gives biographical accounts of the poet, traces the origin of Zuhd and discusses it as a theme of Arabic poetry. The paper is based mainly on data and information collected from various scholars. Other materials were also obtained from private libraries to form the data base. In order to fully comprehend the ideas of Ali b. Husayn on his various topics, the content and literary analysis of some extracts from corpus of his poetic works at our disposal were carried out. The study revealed that the poems were composed either as responses to societal situation or answer to question put across to him. Some other poems have been composed to express his intellectual frame of mind. Some ideas expressed in most of his poetic work are original to him. The structure of his poems shows that he attempted to maintain the pattern of classical Arabic poetry. Apart from being immense benefits to categories of students who may wish to have a concise but encompassing knowledge of Arabic language, the study also provides useful information to researchers about the level of literacy and creativity of Husayn on which further studies can be focused. The poems therein could serve as a source of inspiration to contemporary students and scholars who may be motivated by the challenges posed by Husayn to employ poetic form as a medium of disseminating ideas, thoughts and information. The translation of his poems into English would afford those who are not Arabists the opportunity of appreciating the views of Husayn. Afterwards, certain recommendations are made which include that this kind of poem should be read for a self-reflection or assessment so that one would amend from time to time. It is crystal clear that with the memorisation of this poem, people would constantly recognise that life of this world is ephemeral and transient in nature. The teachings of the poem should be rendered in other languages so that people benefit from it maximally. The message of this poem could be utilized for curbing nefarious activities in the institutions of higher learning.

### INTRODUCTION

Poetry, according to Al-Iluri<sup>1</sup>, has been the pre-occupation of the poets from the time immemorial because it was the first means by which nations preserved records of events ever before the spread of writing in Greece, Rome, Persia, India and Arabia. Sentimental feelings on socio-political, religious, economic and intellectual matters were deeply expressed in poems. In consonance with the above statement, a poet says:

الشعر يحفظ ما أودى الزمان به والشعر أفخر ما يبنى عن الكرم  
لولا مقال زهير فى قصائده ما كنت تعرف جودا كان فى هرم

Poetry preserves what has happened in a period, it is the  
worthiest means of giving information about generosity.

Were it not for Zuhayr's assertions in his poems, you would not have known the generosity that was found in Haram.<sup>2</sup>

Arab poets, however, had played and still play distinctive roles within the society which, according to Nicholson<sup>3</sup>, include defending the honour of their people by warding off insult from their good names, perpetuating their glorious deeds and establishing their fame forever. They also serve as public relation men, journalists of the news media and counsellors to be consulted before their tribe embark on any important venture.

### **A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF ALI B. HUSAYN**

Ali b. Husayn, popularly known as Zaynul-Abidin (the beauty of worshippers), was born in the year 39 A.H./658 A.D. to Husayn, the second son of Ali b. Abi Talib-the fourth Caliph while his mother was a daughter of Yazdaghrud in Iran. When Yazid son of Mu'awiyah ascended the throne of caliphate, Husayn b. Ali refused to pay him an oath of allegiance. So in turn, the former threatened him with death but the latter fled to Makkah where he stayed for many months. The news of his death threat reached the people of Kufah and was invited purposely to lead in the city because of the hostility of Yazid.

Husayn b. Ali left Makkah with some his supporters for Kufah. Seventy kilometres to Kufah, he and his supporters met a rebellious party who had laid ambush for them in a place known as Karbala. They engaged in a fierce battle which lasted for many days before the victory went to their opponents in the month of Muharam (the first lunar month) 61A.H. Husayn b. Ali was massacred as a martyr along with many people including his three sons.

Ali b. Husayn was the only surviving son of Husayn b. Ali as all other three brothers had been massacred as martyr in the event of Karbala. He would have been killed had it been that he could hold arms as others but because of severe illness and inability to carry arms, he could not participate in the fight. Although, he was in the company of his father on the journey that terminated fatally in Karbala. He was captured among the prisoners who were sent to Damascus.

After a brief imprisonment, he was set free by Yazid in order to win the hearts of the people. On another occasion, he was captured by the order of the Umayyad Caliph, Abdul-Malik. He was chained and sent to Damascus and was later pardoned to regain his freedom to Madinah.

He retreated from public life and closed his door to strangers and utilized the remaining part of his life in constant devotion to God. Series of his lectures were disseminated by his disciples such as Abu Hamzah Thumali, Abu Khalid Kabuli and a host of others. Many research works on different aspects of religious sciences were carried out. Among them is *Sahifatu Sajjadiyah* which consists of fifty-seven prayers of divine sciences popularly known as the Psalm of the household of the Prophet. In fact, *Sahifatu Kamilah* which is also known as Zubur plays remarkable role among ascetic scholars.

He died at the age of 56 years as a result of poison from Walid b. Abdul-Malik through the instigation of the Umayyad caliph, Hisham, in the year 95 A.H./712 A.D. Base on his biographical account, Ali b.Husayn took to ascetic life in the later part of his life.<sup>4</sup>

### **ORIGIN OF ZUHD**

The meaning of Zuhd can best be rendered in the words of Ali b. Abi Talib, the fourth caliph (May Allah honour him), who is reported to have said, according to Abduhu:

*The world is a place of transit, not a place to abide.  
Its people fall into two categories: those who sell  
away their souls into slavery and those who ransom  
their souls and liberate them<sup>5</sup>*

The world is neither without a purpose nor is human being created by any error. The attachment to the world implies bondage to material affairs which leads to spiritual stagnation and eventually deprives man the spirit of his freedom of movement and makes him immobile and dead.

*Zuhd* is a spiritual exercise and discipline for man by getting contented with barest necessities of this world by curtailing of hopes and aspirations in amassing wealth which will be accounted for in the Day of Resurrection. It is categorised, as Tijani<sup>6</sup> opines, under pragmatic Sufi themes.

Its origin can be traced to a group of youth called *Ashabul-Kahf* (dwellers of cave) who have preferred the belief of Allah to disbelief, moved away and stayed in the depth of a cave for the period of three hundred and nine years (Q18:25) Prophet Muhammad used to conceal in the cave of *Hira* for spiritual exercise which brought the revelation of the Qur'an to him through the Arch-Angel, Jibril in the year 612 A.D. In the later part of his life, he used to go to the mosque of Madinah for *Itikaf* which means seclusion in the mosque for the last ten days of Ramadan.

It is also owed to a group of people called *Ahl as-Suffah* which means the people of the bench. They were wretched and pious members of Prophet Muhammad's community who lived in the mosque of Madinah. Even Abdur-Rahman b. Sakhar popularly called Abu Hurayrah was ranked among them. Abu Dharr al-Ghifari (d.652 A.D.) and Hudhayfah (d.657 A.D.) were among the companions of the Prophet who chose hard ascetic life at a time when most of their contemporaries had chosen the softer life of the world.

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

The word "*zuhd*" is a verbal noun derived from the trilateral root verb, either "*zahada*" or "*zahida*"<sup>7</sup> literally means renunciation of the world. It is translated to mean abstinence; a religious life, exercising oneself in the service of God, especially being abstinent in respect of eating and subduing passions<sup>8</sup>. Technically, it means appreciation of Allah's blessings and bounties by curtailing of hopes, and abstaining from all form of iniquities which Allah has made unlawful<sup>9</sup>.

Zuhd, according to Tijani<sup>10</sup>, is a way of meditating on death, preaching renunciation of the world because of the ephemeral of this life on earth. The hereafter is the real abode as this world is atmospheric and temporary.

There are two conspicuous places where we come across the definition of *zuhd* in the *Nahjul-Balaghah*. Both of them confirm the above definition of *zuhd*. Caliph Ali b. Abi Talib (May Allah honour him), according to Abduhu<sup>11</sup>, says:

أيها الناس الزهادة قصر الأمل والشكر عند النعم والتورع عند المحارم  
*O people! Zuhd means curtailing of hopes  
thanking God for His blessings and bounties  
and abstaining from that which He has forbidden.*

In *Hikmah*, he says:

الزهد كله بين كلمتين من القرآن : قال الله سبحانه : لكيلا تأسوا علي ما فاتكم  
ولا تفرحوا بما أتاكم ومن لم يأس علي الماضي ولم يفرح بالآتي فقد أخذ الزهد  
بطرفيه

*Az-Zuhd is summarized in two statements of the  
holy Qur'an: Allah, the Most Exalted says: .....  
in order that you may not despair over matters that  
pass you by, nor exult over favours bestowed upon you.  
Whoever does not grieve over what he has lost and does  
not rejoice over what comes to him has acquired zuhd  
in both of its aspects<sup>12</sup>.*

Accordingly, *zahid* (i.e. one who practises *zuhd*) is someone whose interest transcends the sphere of material existence and whose object of aspiration is beyond the kind of things that are ephemeral. The only place where we come across the word *zuhd* in the Holy Qur'an is in chapter 12:20 but the plural form of *zahid* is employed. According to Fakhr ad-Din Razi<sup>13</sup>, the word connotes two principal meanings. In the first place, the travellers who rescued Prophet Yusuf, the son of Prophet Ya'qub, from the well were ascetics and as a result, they considered him as *al-luqtah* (something found by luck) and they had the fear that his owner might recover him. In the second place, they had been obsessed with ascetic trait before embarking on the journey which made it possible for them to sell him at a meagre amount of money.

### **ZUHD AS A THEME IN ARABIC POETRY**

Arabic literature has been classified into two main categories-poetry and prose. Poetry has been the preoccupation of Arab poets from time immemorial and it is the mode through which they expressed, as a matter of observation, their sentimental feelings about the social, political, economic and religious environment.

The themes of Arabic poetry include the following:

- |                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| The Descriptive | - Al-Fakhr |
| The Eulogy      | - Al-Madh  |
| The Boasting    | - Al-Fakhr |

The Elegy	- Al-Ritha'
The Amorous Song	- Al-Ghazal
The Satire	- Al-Hija'
The Wisdom	- Al-Hikmah
The Asceticism	- Az-Zuhd

*Az-Zuhd* as a theme in Arabic poetry firstly emerged in the era of the first Abbasid. The Holy Qur'an has prohibited certain aspects of poetry such as: *al-Ghazal* means amorous song, *al-Hija'* means satire and *al-Fakhr* means boasting song. Allah says:

*We have not instructed the (Prophet) in poetry,  
Nor is it meant for him: this is no less than a  
Message and a Qur'an making things clear<sup>14</sup>*

With the encouragement of compositional wise poetry by the prophetic saying which says: "Indeed, there is wisdom in poetry", poets turned from their frivolous manner of poetic composition to ascetic songs. Asceticism from the worldly pleasure cum constant remembrance of death and forbidding madly craving for passion, luxuriant and delicious taste of life are the themes of ascetic poem<sup>15</sup>.

The emergence of this type of poem is necessary in order to conform with the Islamic preaching and in consonance to discourses of Islamic scholars, jurists, speakers, followers of abstention and ascetics who were opponents of licentious among poets, scribes, jesters and a host of others. After thorough observation of the world, some poets discovered that there is nothing in it, so they turned from their various forms of conventional poetry and diverted all their attention towards the composition of ascetic poem to draw the people's attention to the piety of Allah and enjoin them good deeds.

Some engaged in the production of *Zuhd* poem in order to imitate their contemporaries. Another set of poets have contemplated by visualizing the world and debunked its embellishment, beguilement and whimsicality by remembering of their short-comings, showing sign of regret and seeking repentance by resorting to Allah.

The producers of *Zuhd* as a theme in Arabic poetry include the following poets: Abul-Atahiyah, Abu Nuwas, Ibn Khafajah, Ibn Nabatah al-Misri, Abu Abdur-Rahman al-Khalil b. Ahmad and a host of others. For instance, Abul-Atahiyah on death says:

فكلهم يصير إلى تباب	لدوا للموت وبنوا للخراب
أتيت وما تحيف وما تحابى	إلا يا موت لم أر منك بدا
كما هجم المشيب على الشباب	كأنك قد هجمت على مشيبي

1. They disputed about the death and constructed mansions that will soon be destroyed, as for all of them will resort to annihilation.
2. O death! Truly, I did not find any benefit in you as you neither appear justly nor friendly.
3. As if you had pounced on my old age as grey hair did to youth.

## **THEMES OF THE POEMS**

Ali b.Husayn's *Zuhd* poems contain one hundred and forty-five lines of two hemistiches. The first is known as *Sadr* while the second is called *Ajuz*. These lines are grouped beneath the Arabic Alphabet viz: (letter Alif to Ya') according to the last letter. Each *qit'ah* consists of five lines of heterogeneous and multi-colourful ideas. The discourses therein are very attractive, educative, inspiring and easy to grasp.

In this paper, we shall cite five lines on each of the themes irrespective of their groups. The poem was purposely written to instruct its readers about a number of issues that concern with matters relating to religious admonition by doing away with superfluosity.

In this section, the following themes such as death, Day of Resurrection, reliance on God, self- examination, old age, contentment and kindness to parents shall be discussed.

## **DEATH**

Death is one of the certainties of life. Every living thing shall have a taste of it. Allah says: "Every soul shall have a taste of death" Q3:185. It is one of the unseen things which are only known to Allah as contained in chapter 31:34 of the Holy Qur'an which reads thus:

*Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with God  
It is He who sends down rain, and He knows  
what is in the wombs, nor does anyone know  
what it is that he will earn on the morrow; nor  
does anyone know in what land he is to die.  
Verily, with God is full knowledge and He is  
acquainted with all things.<sup>16</sup>*

The well to do and the poor, the ruled and the ruler, the young and the old, male and female, regardless of their race, colour and sex, will all fall dead one day irrespective of its causes. A poet, in consonance with this, says:

من لم يمت بسيف يموت بغيره ## تفرقت الأسباب والموت واحد

Whoever did not die through the cause of a sword,  
will do by other means. The causes are different but  
death is one.

However, they will tumble into the bowels of the earth in either ones or groups. With this certainty, they relent in effort in carrying out some obligations that are expected of them by looking for an avenue to escape from death which is impossible. Allah depicts this situation as He says:

*The death from which you flee will truly overtake you,  
then you will be sent back to the Knower of things secret  
and open; He will tell you (the truth of ) the things that  
you did<sup>17</sup>*

In another spot, He says:

*Wherever you are, death will find you out even if you  
are in towers built up strong and high*<sup>18</sup>

The after effect will be nothing than the reaping of what had been sown by individuals when they were alive. Allah affirms this when He says:

*..... then shall everyone receive his due,  
whatever it earned and none shall be dealt with  
unjustly*<sup>19</sup>

The knowledge of man about this should, therefore, serve as a constant reminder to him about what will be the outcome of his intentions and actions in life.

Our author, concerning the death, has the following to say:

تبارك ذو العلاء والكبرياء ## تفرد با لجلال وبالبقاء  
وسوى الموت بين الخلق طرا ## فكلهم رهائن للفناء  
يحول عن قريب من قصور ## مزخرفة إلى بيت التراب  
فيسلم فيه مهجورا وحيدا ## أحاط به شحوب الإغتراب  
فعقبى كل شيء نحن فيه ## من الجمع الكثيف إلى الشتات

Meaning:

Glory be to the Possessor of Highness, Who is Unique in the Mighty and Existence.

Who has made death a must for the generality of creatures, they are, indeed, unavoidable to termination.

Shortly, he is transferred from decorated castles to the grave.

He will be deserted there alone and surrounded by strange things.

He will be deserted there alone and surrounded by strange things.

## DAY OF RESURRECTION

One of the articles of faith in Islam is the belief in the Day of Resurrection for judgement. Everyone shall thereby be rewarded of his good or evil deeds and such reward shall abide forever until it pleases Allah. Constant remembrance of this will prevent one from using his position excessively. The well to do and the powerful ones should always remember the day they will become helpless in front of Allah. So also is the poor and the weak. Everybody should discharge his duties faithfully to his Lord and fellows in order to gain the favour and pleasure of Allah on the Day of Judgement. With regard to this situation, the Holy Qur'an says:

*Every soul shall have a taste of death, and only  
on the Day of Judgement shall you be paid your  
full recompense. Only he who is saved far from  
the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have  
attained the object (of life); for the life of this  
world is but goods and chattels of deception.*<sup>20</sup>

Shaykh 'Ali b. Husayn dwells on this issue as follows:

وهول الحشر أفزع كل أمر ## إذ ا دعى ابن ادم للحساب  
 وألقى كل صالحة أتاها ## وسيئة حناها فى الكتاب  
 عظيم هوله والناس فيه ## حيارى مثل ميثوث الفراش  
 هنالك كل ما قدمت يبدو ## فعيبك ظاهر والسر فاش  
 ويوم الحشر أفضع منه هولاً ## إذ ا وقف الخلائق بالنقام

Meaning:

The terror of the Day of Resurrection is the most fearful affair as the sons of Adam are summoned for the accountability. He will meet with every good and evil deeds are well recorded in the book. Its fear is great and people are in confusion like the scattering moths. There, all that you have forwarded will clearly show; your defect is manifested and the secret is unveiled. And the Day of Resurrection is more horrible than terror as the creatures are arraigned for retribution.

### RELIANCE ON GOD

Reliance on God is one of the divine requests from a believer. The one who relies on God will always find Him sufficient but he who relies on other than Him will have every course to blame himself. There is no assurance anywhere except with Allah. The Holy Qur'an enjoins people to put their trust in God thus:

*And put your trust in Him who lives and dies not;  
 and celebrate His praises; and enough is He to be  
 acquainted with the faults of His servants. Q25:58<sup>21</sup>*

Prophet Muhammad gives more explanation about the reliance on God thus:

*Were you to put your complete trust in God, He  
 would provide for you as He provides for the  
 birds. They issue forth hungry in the morning and  
 return filled in the evening. (Tirmidhi)*

About the reliance on God, Shaykh Husayn explains thus:

تعالج بالتطبب كل داء ## وليس لداء ذنبك من علاج  
 سوى تضرع إلى الرحمان محضاً ## بنية خائف ويقين راج  
 وطول تهجد بطلاب عفو ## بليل مظلم والستر داج  
 وإظهار الندامة كل وقت ## على ما كنت فيه من إعوجاج  
 لعلك أن تكون غدا حظياً ## ببلغة فائز وسرور ناج

Meaning:

Every ailment is treated with medicine and there is no remedy for your fault. Except through sincere humble to the Most Beneficent with intention of His fear and certainty of hope. Keeping vigil by requesting for His forgiveness during the dense of night. Always show (sign of) regret for your deviation (from the right part).



Perhaps, you will be advantageous by attaining (the post of ) a prosper and delightfulness of a successor.

### SELF-EXAMINATION

Restraining oneself from shameful and unlawful acts is a quality that is greatly appreciated by Islam. This quality can be attained through conscience only. If one develops his conscience, he will always have a second thought for his actions. He thinks about what becomes the consequence of his actions. He thinks about how he will feel like if some of his secrets are exposed. Hence, he cautions himself against any act of indiscipline. The Holy Qur'an says:

*For your Lord is (as a Guardian) on a watch-tower<sup>22</sup>  
And He is with you wheresoever you may be and  
God sees well all that you do.<sup>23</sup>*

The above mentioned verses are corroborated by the Prophetic tradition which says:

*Wise person is the one who watches over himself  
and restrains himself from that which is harmful,  
strives for that which will confront him after death  
(Bukhari & Muslim)*

Shaykh Husayn expounds the theme in this manner:

وقد صرنا عظاما باليات	##	وتنسا نا الأحبة بعد عشر
ولم يك فيهم خل مؤات	##	كأنا لم نعاشرهم بود
وأين السابقون ذووالفخار	##	وأين الأعظمون ندى وبأسا
من الخلفاء والشم الكبار	##	وأين القرن بعد القرن منهم
وهل شيء يصون عن البوار؟	##	كأن لم يخلقوا أو لم يكونوا

Meaning:

The beloved ones will forget about us ten days after we might have become decayed bones. As if we had not been affectionately associated with them or as if none of them is a good friend. Where are the might in generosity and the predecessors who are the owner pride? Where is the generation after another of whom were Caliphs and people of highly placed? As if they were not being created or existed, can anything protect them from destruction?

### OLD AGE

Man should endeavour to make use of his old age to correct some of the sinful deeds which he might have committed while young with righteous deeds. He should at this age devote much time to the worship of Allah since he would have become less energetic in seeking the enjoyment of the life and would have even become soft-minded. The Holy Qur'an says in consonance with old age thus:

*Did We not give you long enough life so that you should receive admonition and (moreover) the warner came to you.<sup>24</sup>*

Therefore, to lead a long life should be an opportunity for a Muslim to engage in seeking Allah's blessings and forgiveness more and more.

Shaykh Husayn depicts old age as follows:

كفاك مشيب رأسك من نذير	##	وغالبا لونه لون السواد
تفقد نقص عمرك كل يوم	##	فقد أودى بها طلب المعاش
إلى كم تتبع الشهوات طورا	##	وطورا تكتسى لين الرياش
ودع عنك الذى يغوى ويردى	##	ويورث طول حزن وإرتماض
وخذ بالليل حظ النفس واطرد	##	عن العينين محبوب الغماض

Meaning:

Your grey hair is enough for admonition, its colour is more than the black.

You are diminished daily through your life span, so have ruined it by seeking sustenance.

For how long will you subject to the passion and again put on soft garments.

Forsake yourself from that which leads to astray and destruction through which you inherit deep sorrow and regret.

Seize the opportunity of night for things that benefit you soul, do away with the love of sleep.

## **CONTENTMENT**

A man who is contented with what Allah has given him has got everything in life. He is certainly happier than the affluent ones whose ambitions are to get more and more. He will have course to thank his Creator and abide by His divine law. His worries will also be minimized and will not have course to inflict unnecessary hardships on his fellow beings. He will stand a good chance to realise that human needs are numerous and that none can satisfy these needs no matter how rich and wise is such one. He will also have free mind to worship his Creator and he will lead a peaceful and blissful life. Prophet Muhammad says:

*Contentment is a kind of wealth that never depreciates (Muslim).*

Concerning the contentment, Shaykh Husayn explains in this way:

وما زهد التقي بحلق رأس	##	وليس بلبس أثواب غلاظ
ولكن بالهدى قولاً وفعلاً	##	وإدمان التخشع فى اللهاظ
وإعمال الذى ينجى وينمى	##	بوسع والفرار من الشواظ
وشخص كان فى الدنيا حقيراً	##	يبوأ منزل النجب الكرام
وعفو الله أوسع كل شيء	##	تعالى الله خلاق الأنام

Meaning:

The asceticism of piety is neither by shaving head nor by wearing thick clothes.

But by guiding one's utterances and actions, and being constantly humble in observation.

And by participating in activities that rescue and promote one far distance from the Fire.

A person that was dejected in the world will reside in the respectful noble abode.

The forgiveness of God is more spacious than anything, God, the Creator of mankind is highly exalted.

### KINDNESS TO PARENTS

Goodness to parents is one of the moral teachings of Islam. It is placed next to the worship of Allah in the Qur'an. The parents who must have shown compassion to one when one was a baby must be accorded due respect and honour when one is of age. Kind services must be rendered to them with total humility. Allah enjoins kindness and goodness to parents thus:

*Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but He, and that be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility and say: My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.*<sup>25</sup>

Shaykh Husayn enjoins people to do good to their parents thus:

ففى الرحمان فاجعل من تؤاخى	##	وإن صافيت أو خاللت خلا
ودع عنك الملاة والتراخى	##	ولا تعدل بتقوى الله شيئاً
بتطهير النفس من المعاصى	##	فليس ينال عفو الله إلا
وإن تعدل فما لك من مناص	##	وإن تشدد يدا بالأمر تغلج
ونصح للأدانى والأفاصى	##	وبر الوالدين بكل رفق

Meaning:

If you associate with or befriend an intimate, so let your brotherhood be for the sake of the Most Beneficent.

Do not equate anything with the piety of God, forsake weariness and slowness.

No one is entitled to God's forgiveness except through the cleanliness of soul from the sins.

And if you firmly hold to obligatory responsibility, you will prosper but if you diverge, then, there is no protector for you.

And be good to the parents with due respect and pay attention to advice from relatives and those who are at distance.

## **STYLES OF THE POEMS**

Given the size expected of an article, a verse by verse or detailed analysis of Ali b. Husayn's literary ingenuity in composing this poem is unnecessary. As a result, only salient aspects of the style shall be examined.

A major feature of Ali b. Husayn's style in the Zuhd poems is the avoidance of obscure words and complex constructions. He is writing for common people, so he aims at a style which is a harmonious blending of sweet words with simple and lucid syntax. His flair for simplicity of style and sweetness of diction is remarkable.

Having his poem recited at funeral ceremony, Ali b. Husayn sets himself in the tradition of mystic poets. With this in mind, he avoided using vulgar expressions, colloquial diction, strange and unfamiliar words (gharaib), since these elements often obscure the principal ideas and real meaning. Apart from its literary worth, his poetry has great religious value. It sheds light on aspects of the life, friends and bequeathed property.

## **OPENING STRATEGY**

The classical Arabic poetry usually start with an amatory preamble called *Nasib* which laments the traces of the camp of the beloved, describes the horse and yearning for women whom they did not see. Abu Nuwas and other critics like Ibn Rashiq started to query, according to Moreh<sup>26</sup> the rational behind the continuation in the use of this preamble especially during the Abbasid era when things had changed so much and there were no more ruins to cry over. Though, it is maintained that the purpose of the preamble, as Bonebakker<sup>27</sup> opines, is to serve as a means of drawing the attention of the audience before the poet embarks on the main theme of his poem.

The author of this poem begins with the word *Tabaraka* which means glorification is the name of Allah by recognizing and proclaiming His beneficence on us; for the increase and happiness are through Him. The author adopts the structural pattern of Q67:1-2 which commences with the word *Tabaraka* of which the second verse discusses about death. This could be attributed, as Jamiu<sup>28</sup> opines, to Islamic religious influence which dictates that a Muslim must begin every act in the name of Allah and end the same with it.

## ***Tashbih* (Comparison/Simile)**

*Tashbih* can be defined as one of the three components of *Balaghah* (Rhetoric): *Bayan* (lucidity), *Ma'ani* (precision in the use of words), *Badi'* (linguistic embellishment) or stylistic elegance. *Tashbih* is a verbal noun from the Arabic verb *shabaha* (to compare) and it has four major parts, according to Abu Bakre<sup>29</sup>, namely: ( i.) *Mushabbah* (object being compared), (ii.) *Mushabbahu bih* (object to which comparison is being made), (iii.) *Wajhu sh-Shabah* (objective of comparison), (iv.) *Adatu Tashbih* (linguistic instrument used in achieving comparison). For instance, he says:

كأنا لم نعاشرهم بود ولم يك فيهم خل مؤات  
As if we had not affectionately associated with them, as  
if none of them has not been a good friend.

**BADI' (LINGUISTIC EMBELLISHMENT)**

Badi' simply means linguistic embellishment or stylistic elegance. It is the third component of *Balaghah* (Rhetoric). Ali b. Husayn's extensive use of figurative speech may be said to a result of his familiarity with the Qur'an which is a store house of the badi'. The following are some beautiful figurative expressions in the Zuhd: *Isti'arah* (Metaphor)

يحول عن قريب من قصور مزخرفة إلى بيت التراب

Shortly, he is transferred from decorated castles to the grave

Here, the poet wants to describe the ultimate end of every living being. As the world does not discriminate in its accommodation for righteous and wrong doers, the grave, likewise, is very accommodative to the poor and rich, weak and strong, high and low classes

**PARONOMASIA**

This term literally means making something homogeneous. It consists of presenting two homogeneous or conformable words. According to Lane<sup>30</sup>, the usage of this word is rhetoric means the use of two or more words which are completely or partially conformable. In this analysis, wherever the consonants of the words are completely conformable or homogeneous that will be termed complete paronomasia. But where they are partially conformable, it will be termed partial paronomasia. Another simpler meaning of Tajnis is a play on words or punning. It is observed that Ali b. Husayn employed partial paronomasia in the underlined words in the following:

ألا إن الركون على الغرور إلى دار الفناء من العناء

Truly, reliance on the world is a deceit from the abode of labour to death.

**HUSN AL-TAQSIM (BEAUTIFUL APPORTIONMENT)**

Comparing two elements with two agreeable others. He says:

وألفى كل صالحة أتاها وسيئة حناها فى الكتاب

He will meet with every good and evil deeds well recorded in the book.

**TIBAQ (ANTITHESIS)**

This is another linguistic embellishment frequently found in the Zuhd. It makes it easy for interested poets to copy Ali b. Husayn's literary style. For instance, he says:

وألفى كل صالحة أتاها وسيئة حناها فى الكتاب

He will meet with every good and evil deeds well recorded in the book.

*Salihat* and *Sayi'at* are word and opposite carefully stated.

**PROSODIC ANALYSIS**

The traditional sixteen meters are commonly used in Arabic prosody. Our author employs only one of these meters throughout his poem. The meter is called *Bahr Wafir* which consists of six *tafilah*, i.e.

مفاعلتن مفاعلتن مفاعلتن مفاعلتن مفاعلتن مفاعلتن

This mode of conventional meter is unemployed in the production of poetry. But the last *taf'ilah* in the first and second hemistiches is abridged to *Mafa'al* which conforms to *Fa'uulun*. As a result, the normal meter for this poem will be rendered thus:

مفاعلتن مفاعلتن فعولن                      مفاعلتن مفاعلتن فعولن

It is also observed that `Ali b. Husayn's poem conforms to the unavoidable rule of prosody which is the conversion of vowel on the fifth letter of *Mafa'alatun* into *Sukun-zero* like sign. This method of conversion is called *Asbu* as *Mafa'alatun* turns to *Mafa'altun* in the following line:

وسوى الموت بين الخلق طرا                      فكلهم رهائن للفناء  
010110101011 010 1011                      010110110110111011  
مفاعلتن مفاعلتن فعولن                      مفاعلتن مفاعلتن فعولن

### RECOMMENDATION

The recitation of this kind of poem is highly recommended for a self-reflection or assessment so that one would amend from time to time. It is crystal clear that with the memorisation of this poem, people would constantly recognise that life of this world is ephemeral and transient in nature. The teachings of the poem should be rendered in other languages so that people benefit from it maximally. The message of the poem could be utilized for curbing nefarious activities in the institutions of higher learning.

### CONCLUSION

The poems of Ali b. Husayn that cited in this paper are not but very few from the very many poems he composed on asceticism. From the foregoing, we have looked at a brief biography of the poet as well as themes of Arabic poetry are carefully discussed. We have examined the themes of Arabic Zuhd poetry in which we discovered that he employed different styles. Finally, it is evident from the foregoing that Ali b. Husayn was a force to reckon with in the literary and socio-religious matters. He was bold, a source of pride to the religious circles. He was a man of honour who lived closely to ascetic life. His poetry is profound and true in its expression of the happenings.

### REFERENCES

1. Al-Iluri, A.A. (1967): *Nizam at-Ta'lim al-'Arabi wa Tarikhuhu fil 'Alam al-Islami*, (Beirut: Maktabat al-Hayyat), p.113.
2. Ibid.
3. Nicholson, R.A. (1979): *A Literary History of the Arabs*, (London: Cambridge University Press), p.71.
4. Jamiu, F.O. (1992): "Annotated Translation of *Az-Zuhd Wal-Wasiyyah* of Ali b. Husayn," Long Essay, Department of Arabic and Islamic studies;University of Ibadan, pp.1-3.
5. Abduhu, M. (2000): *Nahjul- Balaghah*, vol.4, (Cairo: Darul-Hadith), p.117.

6. Tijani, D.A.A. (1991): " Sufism in Arabic poems of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass al-Kawlakhi," unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Ibadan.
7. Cowan, J. M. (1971): *Hans Wehr A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, New York; p.383.
8. Hughes, T. P. (1965): *Dictionary of Islam*, (Lahore: Taj Publishers), p.716.
9. Jamiu, op.cit. p.5.
10. Tijani, op.cit. p.40.
11. Abduhu, op.cit. 157.
12. Ibid. p.199.
13. Razi, F. (2000): *At-Tafsir al-Kabir*, vol. 18, (Cairo: Darul- Hadith), p.108.
14. Ali, A.Y. (1975): *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*, (United Kingdom: The Islamic Foundation) Q36:69.
15. Jamiu, op.cit. p.12
16. Ali, op.cit. Q31:34
17. Ibid. Q62:8
18. Ibid. Q4:78
19. Ibid. Q3:161
20. Ibid. Q3:185
21. Ibid. Q25:58
22. Ibid. Q89:14
23. Ibid. Q57:4
24. Ibid. Q35:37
25. Ibid. Q17:23-24
26. Moreh, S. (1979): " The Neoclassical Qasidah: Modern Poets and Critics" in *Arabic Poetry and Development* ed. G.E. Von. Grunebaum, (Germany: Wiesbaden), p.165.

27. Bonebakker, S.A. (1985): " The Uses of the Qasidah: Thematic and Structural Patterns in a poem of Bashshar" in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. xvi; (Leiden: E.J. Brill), p.49
28. Jamiu, F.O. (2004): "A Study of The Contents and Structural Patterns in the Didactic Arabic Poetry of Yoruba 'Ulama' 1885-1995," unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, p. 228.
29. Abubakre, R.D. (1989): *Bayan in Arabic Rhetoric*, (Ibadan: Intec Printers Limited), pp. 8-9.
30. Lane, E.W. (1980): *Arabic- English Lexicon*, (Lahore; Pakistan: Islamic Book Centre), p.470.
31. Al-Kahlani, I. (n.d.): *Sublu as-Salam*, Makkah: Maktabatu ar Risalatil- Hadithah.
32. Al- Qurtubi, M. A. (n.d): *Al- Jami' li Ahkamil- Qur'an*, vol.9,Beirut: Darul-Fikr.
33. Doi, A.R.I. (1984): *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law*, London: Ta-Ha Publishers.
34. Jawhari, T. (n.d.): *Al- Jawahir fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al- Karim*, vol. 4, Beirut: Darul-Irth.
35. Qutub, S. (1992): *Fi Zilalil Qur'an*, vol.4,17<sup>th</sup> ed.; Beirut:Darul-Fajr.
36. Tabari, J.M. (1987): *Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, Vol.7, Cairo: Darul-Tiba'ah.