



## Faith and Identity in Stephen Crane’s “In Heaven” and Taufiq Rafat’s “This Blade of Grass”: Linguistic Relativity Leading to Worlds Within Words

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### ABSTRACT

This study revolves around the idea that literature which comes from different social and cultural backgrounds often flags the differences between faith and identity and thereby extends the debates surrounding them. It attempts to analyse two works by two different poets: “In Heaven” by Stephen Crane and “This Blade of Grass” by Taufiq Rafat. Both bring a diversity of ideas into their works while writing about faith since they are from two different social and cultural backgrounds. This study approaches both texts from the perspective of linguistic relativity, which helps us understand the conceptualisation of textual meaning in relation to semantic relativity (Casasanto 174). The argument here focuses on the close reading of the texts while foregrounding their lexical and contextual meanings. Descriptive, interpretive research techniques are used for textual analysis to look at both works contrastively in order to extract their linguistic relativity vis-a-vis their subject matter and to extract elements of faith and identity embedded within them. At the same time, this study finds that despite dealing with similar subject matter, setting, character, and language, the two poems reflect two distinct identities because of the linguistically relative meaning of words. The difference in identities was evident because of the differences in faith where Crane’s blade of grass is portrayed through biblical references while Rafat’s blade of grass is situated in the context of Sufism and *fana*.

**Keywords:** Faith, identity, *darvesh*, linguistic relativity, world within words

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## Introduction

Faith and identity have long been prerequisites to sustain and evolve social values and cultural norms (Rodriguez and Fortier 8). Faith has been a guiding force for humans by providing them with a centre to which they can hold on, and this centre maps their sense of reality and identity. Simultaneously, identity equips humans with a sense of belonging and self-actualisation that provides them with a chance to fight the existential angst that almost every human goes through (Raia 90). These identities and faiths have been expressed through literature, demonstrating people's insecurities and the meanings they perceive to be true through different literary mediums.

Literature has multiple genres and cultural backgrounds that develop different dynamics of faith, leading to diverse identities. Two major paradigms of faith represented in literary works—"In Heaven" by Stephen Crane and "This Blade of Grass" by Taufiq Rafat—come from two different religions: Christianity and Islam. Western literature is largely influenced by Christianity, which falls into the parameters defined either by Puritanism or Catholicism (Koester 120), while Eastern literature, specifically Pakistani literature, is often assumed to be influenced by Islam and Quranic teachings (Ricci 345). These faith-centric paradigms reflect different approaches to human worth and identities. It is essential to study literature that offers insights into faith and identity as it helps us understand the individual perceptions of self, specifically if two pieces of literature are taken from two different localities in two different nations (Hanauer 86). Rafat and Crane are examples of this distinctiveness, for they come from different social and cultural backgrounds, and their works help us understand the debates surrounding faith and identity.

It is important to note here that Rafat deals with a rustic Pakistani identity (Shamsie 77), while Crane reflects Western nonconformism and the biblical perspective of individual worth (Howells 1). Rafat is a Pakistani poet known for his imagist poetry and for reflecting the rural Pakistani landscape through poems such as "Ducks" "Poems Written for His Brother," and "Kitchens." His poems serve as satire targeting the flawed and stereotypical perceptions of socio-religious beliefs. "Wedding in the Flood" is a case in point where he criticised the discrimination against women in a marriage setting. Similarly, he presented funerals as a façade of empathy in "The Vultures" (Shamsie 55). On the other hand, Crane is an American writer who, according to George Monteiro, "[is], without

doubt, the United States' most famous literary naturalist" (91). His earlier works reflected obscurity and criticism of the modern socio-political settings, as is evinced through the character of a doctor in his novella "The Monster." He was a firm critic of widespread modern consumerism and parodied it in his story "The Stove" through a satirical representation of all the characters' attitudes towards commodities and their consumption (B. Brown 469). The contrast in the culturally rooted representation of both texts suits the purpose of this study, which is to identify whether dealing with similar subjects in the same genre and language leads to different conceptualisations of faith. The selected works represent the same subject matter, that is, faith and identity, in a similar setting, genre, and language. Hence, it becomes an interesting case to scrutinise both works for their representation of faith and identity.

Crane's poem "In Heaven" talks about the scene of the day of judgment, where the accountability of all the living blades of grass is taking place. God asks all the blades of grass to narrate what they have done in their lives. While all the blades boast about their good deeds, one little blade remains silent. Upon God's asking about what it has done, the blade replies that it does not remember any good deeds, which pleases God; hence, it is declared the "best little blade of grass" (Crane, "In Heaven" line 18). This poem is often perceived as an anthem of the Christian faith, as is explained later in this paper, as it advocates humility and modesty for eternal peace. Similarly, Rafat's poem "This Blade of Grass" also talks about a blade of grass, but it removes and distances the little blade of grass from the larger group it represents and sets it in a context different from that of Crane's. The narrator points at the blade of grass sprouting out of the ground and in doing so acknowledges its existence. The blade then says it might be small, but its edges are keen and can cut those trying to pull it out. The narrator then says that the blade of grass is like a *darvesh*, a saint, who sways and dances with the wind. Rafat's poem does not look at the blade of grass as a member of a larger group, nor does it situate the poem in the Hereafter; he focuses on one blade of grass and contextualises the poem vis-a-vis this world. This aspect is significant keeping in mind the fact that the poem involves faith and identity as major themes. What is evident here is a dichotomy, where one poem leads to the Christian belief that centres around God, the other deals with Sufism—for Rafat sees a *darvesh* as the one who remains in contact with the Creator through his faith. Here the word *darvesh* is the key to understanding Rafat's poem as it alludes to a different worldview as compared to Crane's poem.

To understand Rafat's poem, it is important to understand the word

*darvesh* to comprehend the poem and the philosophy behind it. The term *darvesh* comes from Eastern literature, primarily Urdu literature in this case; and it stems from the concept of Sufism (Lings 58). A *darvesh* is someone who lives their life as per the Quranic teachings and embraces a life of simplicity and modesty. A *darvesh* follows Sufi ethics to fulfil the purpose of life. Sufism is a way of life that finds its roots in Quranic teachings and, according to the Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, it is based on the three-tiered-learning process known as *fana*, that is, denial of self and realisation of God. The three stages of *fana* are called *fana-fi-sheik*, *fana-fi-rassul*, and *fana-fi-lillah*. In the first stage, *fana-fi-sheik*, the believer is guided by a teacher or a mentor about different ways of life in the light of Islam. The second stage, *fana-fi-rassul*, guides the believer through a supreme human ideal, that is, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The second stage eventually leads the believer to the third, where God becomes the centre of the world for them, and a direct connection between God and the believer is established (Hill 78). Once the believer achieves the third stage of *fana fi-lillah*, he passes all the tests of studentship (Douglas-Klotz). The believer, thus, becomes a *darvesh*—someone who is not bothered by the worldly and mundane threads of life. According to Imran Ali Sandano et al., *darvesh* refers to the “selected” one who has been chosen by God as His representative due to the believer’s humbleness and selflessness (25). The figure of the *darvesh* in literature is often associated with wisdom, foreseer, and someone who sees themselves as unworthy of any praise or recognition (Siddiqui 2).

Since the summaries of the texts along with the understanding of major concepts such as *darvesh* and *fana*, have been laid out, it can be argued that both poems offer an abundance of meaning. In order to extract these meanings, this study takes on board the theory of linguistic relativity to evaluate the diversity of subject matter and relativity of the lexical choices in the two texts. The theory of linguistic relativity, proposed by Benjamin Lee Whorf, has two versions (213). The strong version states that language determines and shapes the way individuals think and conceptualise the world, while the weaker version suggests that language reflects thoughts (R. Brown 128). According to Daniel Casasanto, the thought process in linguistically relative settings is based on three preliminary premises: (1) language is native to the spatio-temporal context relating to the setting of time and place in which an individual uses his/her cognitive abilities to think; (2) thinking is a process, and this process significantly depends on the context; and (3) language employs pervasive effects and plays an influential role in what an individual thinks and how an individual thinks (175). This theory helps us understand and interpret

the semantic range of a text that, depending on the social setting, reveals different meanings to the reader. With the help of this theoretical framework, our study juxtaposes the two selected poems in a way where the choice of words by the poets serves as linguistic portals to different and varying faith worlds.

## **The Distinctive Cultures Drawn by Rafat and Crane**

### **Rafat's Works**

According to Cynthia Neal Kimball and colleagues, literature, being a human expression, serves as a meaning-making medium for societies where faith shapes identities and turns them into distinct realities (221). Literature has long been focused on the idea of faith and the identity of different societies and their ways of expressing their identities and faiths. Similarly, Rafat presented the distinctiveness of socio-cultural and linguistic norms of his people (Shamsie 77) while Crane attempted to project the poetics of their individual cultural and religious identities of the West through his writings (Monteiro 91). However, Rafat's work has not yet been explored for its religious perspective and the element of faith. Rafat has largely been studied for his writing style and the cultural appropriation of language and native jargon and proverbs, while his poetry largely revolves around his portrayal of Pakistani identity and faith.

Various studies have been conducted to analyse the two poets for their writing style, linguistic reach, and handling of individual identities. Most of these studies have been focused on Crane's "The Monster" and "Intrigue" and Rafat's "Wedding in the Flood," "Kitchens," "Ducks" and "The Vultures". These have been included and discussed below for a thorough review of Rafat's work. However, there is less literature that talks about the elements of faith and identity that surround their poetry; in addition, there is no literature that compares the two poems. Rafat's poem "This Blade of Grass" shares the same background and subject matter as that of Crane's "In Heaven" and both poems are centred around a blade of grass and have a dialogic form. They revolve around the concept of faith and identity. This study takes an interest in seeing if there is any deviation between the two texts when they deal with faith and identity despite the fact that the texts are more or less similar in many ways. That is why this study looks at the linguistic relativity that the two different cultural texts bring in to play and analyse its effects on the representation of faith and identity. The relativity of linguistic choices is reflected through the use of linguistic items and diction, which has been explored in the existing literature to a great extent, but only from the perspective of stylistics and discursive value.

Rahat Amin has explored Rafat's work for its rich diction that presents the cultural and rustic landscapes it celebrates (80). He fancies birds like Wordsworth and Keats do because his poems revolve around "ducks," "gulls," "sparrow," and "parrots," and refers to "seldom bird" (Amin 75) which variously reflect liberty, serenity and harmony. He associates ecstasy with the arrival of the monsoon, and his writings reflect the enthusiasm of Romantics, where he attempts to enliven belongingness in his people. His portrayal of enthusiasm, ecstasy, serenity, and harmony are the vehicles through which his creative use of thematic progression manifests itself. Furthermore, Amin's perspective was explored later on with special attention paid to individual works rather than studying the entire anthology. One such example is Sajid Ahmad and his colleagues, who studied Rafat's "Wedding in the Flood" to trace the ideological paradigms that it offers through linguistic ingenuity and syntactic parallelism retrieved from the language (64). Phonological parallelism and the lexico-semantic elements of his poem communicate the idea of ideology and normative cultural setting. The authorial voice (the unique style of the writer) takes over the narrator's voice and point of view in the text and brings semantic deviations to his poem. To maintain the cultural ecstasy and semantic deviations, Rafat practices a careful repetition of specific words and sounds. Ahmad and colleagues identified such phrases in Rafat's "Wedding in the Flood" such as "I Like the look of Hennaed hands," "Familiar face," "The river is rising," and "Heaved on the heaving tide" (70).

Rafat's work remains a subject of inquiry for many critical linguistic studies, such as that of Bushra Munawar and Hina Rafique, who examined Rafat's poem "The Stone Chat" from a structuralist perspective where the dynamics of binary opposition evolve into the debate between antithetical forces and opposing ideas (122). Their study reflects how the juxtaposition of these two elements forms a syntagmatic relation between the ideas of the poem (122). Crane opens the poem with rich imagery of meadows and juxtaposes it with a piece of paper in the next line, and then another binaristic imagery follows where the barrenness of the desert is contrasted with Jhelum's eroded hills. He attempts to contrast the lifelessness of the desert with the positivity of the meadows behind the hills (Raza 141). He sets the dark against the positive, destructive against constructive ideas, and youth and past glory contrasted with old age and decay. This binaristic framework of the poem, according to Munawar and Rafique, reflects the sense of loss of the poet (125).

Alamgir Hashmi's evaluation of Rafat's work clearly suggests that Rafat consciously uses local idioms and proverbs that establish the indigenous identity of

his culture (271). This idea is further strengthened by Muneeza Shamsie, who says that Rafat's work attempts to establish a local identity emerging from the local faith and culture of Pakistan (87).

### **Crane's Works**

Crane is seen as a presenter of his age and nation through his literary work (Hoffman 281). Monteiro sees Crane as "the United States' most famous literary naturalist" (91). Monteiro also looked at the Christian antinomies scattered in the works of Crane. His work indicts modern Christian societies; for example, in "The Monster," he presaged social damnation for the one who practices Christian charity through the character of the doctor and his interaction with the townspeople. The doctor "exercises some form of Christian charity ... (though Crane makes it clear that the doctor's motivations are neither pure nor entirely disinterested) while the townspeople fail to practise such charity" (Monteiro 104). The contrast between the actions of his characters represents his shaken trust in Christian values. Maurice Bassan studied Crane's essays and observed the same mistrust where Christian values led Crane to existential angst that shook his "singularly pure vision of the truth of 'primitive' Christianity," if not completely destroyed it (2).

Crane's work was also observed for the aestheticization of national glorification, where the aim of national narratives is to cross over with triumph (B. Brown 1). His reflection on boyhood and girlhood, through the narrative revolving around childhood and toys, addresses the dilemma in the modern American consumer culture. Bill Brown analysed Crane's works and his representation of toys and childhood and wrote, "I want to conclude by understanding 'The Stove' as a story where the text's material unconscious finally expresses what a genre had successfully repressed—the conflict between a nationalised childhood and a nation's consumer culture" (469). The author also highlighted the mass culture of consumerism, amusement, and recreation from early cinema days to soccer games in his works. In addition, Brown explored the concept of recreational space by exploring the doctrine of Methodism as an example of how one's idea of leisure and recreation is shaped by religious belief—in this case, Christianity, social norms, and eco-political factors (113). On the other hand, Harland Nelson studied Crane's achievements as a poet and claimed that his poetry was inspired by the losses that he had faced throughout his life (567). Hence, in order to write poetry that relates to every reader's life, he had to mask his miseries with the innovations he used in terms of language and semantic range. As long as he was

able to mask his miseries, he was able to connect with the reader, which reflects his poetic craft of universalising the idiosyncratic. Nelson also analysed the flaw in Crane's earlier poetry, especially love songs, as it did not have a rhyme scheme and lacked rhythmic progression. For example, Nelson sees the first stanza of "Intrigue" as lacking in rhyme: "Thou art my love / And thou art the beard / On another man's face - / Woe is me" (Crane, lines 33-36). Crane, as a poet, criticised religious values and perceived them as a facade. However, he made sure to draw his idea of God with clarity, for he believed in "the biblical idea of God" (Nelson 570). Hence, his symbolic depiction of the biblical idea of God and Christianity, all the while interweaving the elements of modern America, makes him a representative of not only his age but of contemporary American faith and identities as well. Despite that, his poetry has not been explored and critically reviewed. Although Daniel Hoffman reviewed his work and divided it into major themes of "religion, love, war, poverty, wealth and charity" (Boewe 189), it still lacks a thorough exploration considering his literary stature as a naturalist.

In this paper, "This Blade of Grass" by Rafat and "In Heaven" by Crane are analysed side by side, while pivoted on the premise of linguistic relativity and worlds-within-words to unravel two different faith worlds in the texts that are similar in many ways, that is, characters, setting, subject matter, genre and language.

### **Approaching the Two Poems Through Linguistic Relativity**

This study operates in the interpretive paradigm as the selected poems align with it for their interpretation and analysis. Therefore, they were selected through the purposive sampling technique. According to Ilker Etikan and others, purposive sampling is practised in research when the researcher has certain objectives to achieve and research questions to be explored, and for that purpose, whatever provides that specific knowledge would be considered as data (2).

Application of linguistic theories on different genres of literature always yields significant insights for an in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Examples of such studies in the Pakistani context include the works of Huma Batool and her colleagues, who established the links between cultural thought and expressions in terms of language where the cultural appropriation of Urdu influenced English discourse (96). Additionally, Ghalia Gohar et al. investigated similar local cultural threads in poetry as well as paintings (273), while Saba Sikander Malik and associates explored the translation of local text in a foreign language, English, while cultural appropriation focused on being intact with local

references (80). The study states that cultural context “cause[s] interference in interpreting the text across cultures” (82). The scarcity of research in this kind of exploration provides a niche in interdisciplinary research that needs to be catered to. Given this, the theory of linguistic relativity serves as the theoretical framework for this paper. It is based on two versions, where the strong version comes from Benjamin Lee Whorf, who believed that language determines thought; hence, linguistic determinism comes forth (213). According to Steven Pinker, the idea of linguistic determinism was further developed by Whorf, a pupil of Edward Sapir, who believed that language does not determine thoughts, rather it shapes or reflects them (3). This has been perceived as a weaker version and termed as linguistic relativity. According to Casasanto, the theory of linguistic relativity sees the text as a process of conceptualisation, where a text is analysed in the context of its culture to see how thoughts influence or determine the language (175). Hence, the context is taken into consideration, and the analysis of that context is dependent upon the interpretation of the researcher. Additionally, this allows the theoretical framework to focus on a word-to-word relationship, where words form their own worlds, that is, context. In order to understand these words, their worlds (contexts) need to be explored (Gass 347); hence, linguistic relativity merges with the concept of worlds within words and becomes the guiding framework of this study. The textual analysis of both poems from the perspective of linguistic relativism is done as per the interpretive paradigm. Any meaning or interpretation falling into any sacred book or religious scripture belonging to Islam and Christianity is traced and analysed. This study also looks at both works contrastively by analysing the extracted meanings of both texts and interpreting different elements that hint at worlds within words. Our analysis explores worlds within words and traces any notions of identity shaped and mapped through faith. The understanding of faith and identity is stated and then cross-compared to see the differences between the two works. The differences illuminate the context, which enhances the researchers’ understanding of the two cultures.

### **Pervasive Role of Language in Both Texts**

The selected poems focus on a blade of grass as the main character around which the action revolves. The poem by Rafat is titled “This Blade of Grass,” whereas the title of Crane’s poem is “In Heaven.” Crane’s poem has a little blade of grass that shapes the narrative in the poem. Rafat’s poem deals with a blade of grass that is struggling to sprout and declare its existence. As the poem develops, the blade of grass speaks for itself and announces itself as a *darvesh* who brings ecstasy

to the seers. On the other hand, Crane's little blade of grass is situated in the Hereafter and is held accountable for its life. It responds to God with humility and humbleness and ends up pleasing God. Both poems work as a thinking process which unfolds through the context of time and space, leading to distinct elements of faith and identity.

### **Unravelling Concepts of Faith and Identity: Spatio-Temporal Context and Thinking Process**

There are contexts of space and time in both poems which separate them in terms of their representations of faith. The differences in the spatio-temporal context are reflected through different words in the poems. The following excerpts open the two poems by providing contextual information to the reader:

**Table 1**

**Poems' Excerpts**

<b>"This Blade of Grass"</b>	<b>"In Heaven"</b>
This blade of grass, what is it? It is myself, six feet under Breaking the silence. (Rafat, lines 1-3)	In heaven, Some little blades of grass Stood before God. (Crane, "In Heaven" lines 1-3)

Rafat's poem opens with the use of a determinant where the reader is introduced to the blade of grass, which is pointed at directly through the demonstrative pronoun "this". The use of "this" shows the relevance and relation of the subject matter with the blade of grass. The grass is a metaphor for human existence, and the narrator relates to its existential struggle by using the pronoun "myself" in the second line. The objective becomes subjective in the very first stanza with the use of personal pronouns. Crane's "In Heaven" opens with an almost similar idea where the reader is introduced to a similar character like the one in the poem by Rafat. While Rafat refers to it as "this" blade of grass, Crane has used a different adjective for it, which is a "little" blade of grass, where both stand equal in meaning. By looking at it from the perspective of language as reflecting thoughts, when Rafat calls it "this," he points downwards at its smallness, and the adjective used by Crane, "little," also indicates the smallness of the blade of grass. The phrase "six feet under" establishes the setting of "This Blade of Grass" by projecting the distance of the human eye looking at the grass from above, where the grass reminds the narrator that its existence is similar to human existence as it tries to break through the ground to sprout and ensure its survival. Breaking the silence is the struggle of the grass to declare its existence, which the narrator sees

as a human struggle; hence, the next stanza starts with the pronoun “I” (Rafat, line 4). Crane also provides the setting of the poem at the very beginning as he says that the blade of grass “stood before God” in “heaven.” This sets the spatio-temporal context of the text, which means that while Rafat’s blade of grass is set in this world, Crane’s is set in the Hereafter.

As Rafat’s poem develops, the blade of grass speaks for itself and announces itself as a *darvesh* who brings ecstasy to the seers. On the other hand, Crane’s little blade of grass is situated in the Hereafter and is held accountable for its life. It responds to God with humility and humbleness and ends up pleasing God. Both poems work as a thinking process that unfolds through the context of time and space, leading to distinct elements of faith and identity.

**Table 2**

**Poems’ Excerpts**

“This Blade of Grass”	“In Heaven”
I am rough to the touch My edges are keen. Those in a hurry Will pull me out At their peril. (Rafat, lines 4-8)	“What did you do?” Then all save one of the little blades Began eagerly to relate The merits of their lives. This one stayed a small way behind, Ashamed. (Crane, “In Heaven” lines 4-9)

The narrator in Rafat’s poem takes the objective as subjective by using the pronoun “I.” The narrator speaks via the grass claiming that despite its small size, it has rough and sharp edges which are its guards against any attempt to pull it out of the ground. It announces the danger residing in the roughness of its edges, which have the potential to subvert any danger that it might be subjected to. The smallness of the grass might often be perceived as an indicator of its lack of agency, but the blade of grass sees it as a strength, for it always surprises the one underestimating it. It carries the potential to cut. If someone tries to pull it out, they can assumedly do so with minimal force because of the smallness of its size, but they would find the roughness of its edges as a resistant force. This smallness of the grass is a blessing in disguise for it, which metaphorically reflects the smallness of human existence in the world, a point that is further discussed in our analysis of the last stanza that follows shortly.

On the other hand, as Crane sets the stage for Judgment Day in the first three lines, the poet starts to refer to the events of Judgment Day. As the action of the text leads to the unfolding of the thinking process, it is revealed that many

blades of grass are standing there, ready to respond to God's question about what deeds they had done in the world. At the same time, the little blade of grass is shying away from the scene and is trying to hide itself. All of the blades of grass, except for the little one, respond to the question by explaining the good deeds they had done in their lives. Here, the text merges the spatial content with the temporal; the characters are physically placed in the Hereafter, but they have to recall the events of their previous lives. This hints toward the conceptualisation of the faith of the blades of grass who believed in accountability on the Day of Judgment when their good deeds would save them.

**Table 3****Poems' Excerpts**

"This Blade of Grass"	"In Heaven"
In a strong wind, I am a dervish Bringing ecstasy to your doorstep (Rafat, lines 9-10)	Presently, God said, "And what did you do?" The little blade answered, "Oh my Lord, Memory is bitter to me, For, if I did good deeds, I know not of them." Then God, in all His splendor, Arose from His throne. "Oh, best little blade of grass!" He said. (Crane, "In Heaven" lines 10-19)

The pervasive role of language influences is evident in the last parts of both poems, where certain words introduce new worlds to the reader, such as "dervish," "my Lord," "God," "His splendor," and "His throne." The blade of grass in Rafat's poem goes on to state that even if the wind blows, the grass does not get frightened by it; rather, the wind is seen as an opportunity to swirl and sway like a *dervish* who circles around his own existence, pointing above in ecstasy. This circularity of ecstasy brings him happiness. The word *dervish* is a peg to hang the entire poem on, and via linguistic relativity introduces the world of Sufism. However, before unpacking the word *dervish* and the world of Sufism any further, attention must be given to Crane's "In Heaven" first because it is situated in a different culture.

Crane's little blade of grass could not hide itself as God saw it hiding in the corner and asked what it had been doing during its life on earth. The language

used in response to God's question by the little blade of grass reflects modesty as it says that it does not remember any good deeds that it might have done during its life. God is appeased at its response and appreciates the little blade of grass for its modesty. The words "God," "lord," and "throne" open up another world within words as is discussed in the next section in detail. Both texts allude to two different faiths and identities, that is, Sufism emerging from Islam, and Christianity emerging from the Bible.

### **Worlds Within Words Reflecting Linguistic Relativity**

Although both poems have been written in English, but the influence of their distinctive cultures as well as the linguistic relativity attached to them have unveiled two different ideas here. While the poem by Rafat reveals less about the setting of the poem, Crane makes it vivid enough for the reader to observe the events of Judgment Day. Rafat's poem renders some understanding of the setting as it is set in this world where the blade of grass is imperilled by the ones who might try to pull it out, which is in contrast to Crane's little blade of grass in the Hereafter.

### **Words Leading to the World of Christianity**

The settings of both poems are drawn with the help of certain words, which reflect how language plays a role in the conceptualisation of faith. Hence, the difference in language might reflect differences of faith, where the specific use of language is determined by faith. Crane sets the poem in the Hereafter and uses words like "lord," "God," and "His throne" which mirror the influence of biblical references on the text. According to David Capes, the use of capitalisation in the pronouns referring to God and the Lord also ensures that it is a biblical discourse where faith is governed by the guiding norms of Christianity (21). The verses, "Then God, in all His splendor, / Arose from His throne," show another biblical and religious scripture-like language here; for example, in the Book of James, it is said: "Humble yourselves before God, and he will lift you up" (*New International Version*, James 4:10).

Another instance, from the Bible, also echoes the Christian belief of God and his throne:

The angel said to [Mary], "Do not be afraid, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever" (*New International Version*, Luke 1:30-33)

These two references show the use and conceptualisation of "throne," "Lord," and "God," establishing the faith of grass, which stands metaphorically for human faith. The language used here in Crane's poem reflects a Christian understanding of the faith of the grass, as it takes guidance from biblical references. This Christian manifestation of faith alludes to the establishment of a different identity as compared to Rafat's poem. Bassan has already underscored the deep connection between the biblical idea of God and Crane's belief in it (2). The faith established in Crane's poem is based on the notion of poetic justice that further reinforces a Christian identity (Harink 85) because poetic justice guides the Christian faith. According to Doug Harink, Christian faith believes in the "Lord" rewarding the humble and punishing the bad and haughty (85). The biblical world presents God as the centre, and faith is extracted from biblical scriptures such as the Gospel of Luke, the Gospel of Judas, the Gospel of Mathew, the Gospel of John, and the rest of the Christian scriptures. Although Crane's Christian belief is of the Protestant school of thought (Wertheim 65; Rowan 138), yet this poem does not provide any evidence regarding any specific Christian school of thought. There is hardly any word that opens doors to the Protestant and Catholic debate as Crane's poem avoids subscribing to any of the schools of thought. The poem advocates a unified Christian identity that refutes division and fragmentation on the basis of faith. Since faith is not separately delineated with respect to one church in the text, the Christian identity appears unified in this poem. The response of the little blade of grass in "In Heaven" to God's question reflects modesty as the essence of the ideal Christian life. The little blade of grass does not recount any of the good deeds that it had done during its life in this world, which pleases God so much so that He declares the blade of grass the "best" of all.

### **Rafat's Idea of the *Darvesh* and the World of Sufism**

In contrast to Crane's poem, Rafat does not provide many overt allusions to faith except in the last couplet where the poet finally reveals the word *darvesh*. The use of the word *darvesh* serves as a gateway to the world of Sufism, which reflects Islamic and mystic conceptualisation of faith and, as a result, renders a different identity from that of Crane's. It conveys an understanding of the faith of the grass as a metaphor for human faith. The word *darvesh* stems from Sufism, which is altogether a different form of guiding norm for human faith as compared to Christianity. According to Saladdin Ahmed, Sufism believes in the nothingness and smallness of human existence compared to God's being (233). For example, the blade of grass appears small as compared to the size of a human; similarly, a human

being is small as compared to the entire world. This reflects the “great chain of being” (Nee 429). Sufism believes in this chain and sees God as the ultimate being. Hence, to accept God as the ultimate being, Sufism proposes self-denial as the path towards being one with the truth (Ahmed 235).

Sufism’s concept of the *darvesh* deals with self-effacement, which is generally termed as *fana*. This concept has three steps method to achieve self-effacement: *fana-fi-sheik*, *fana-fi-rassul*, and *fana-fi-lillah*. The use of the word *darvesh* reflects a different conceptualisation of the worldview in Rafat’s poem as is discussed below. The blade of grass has become the same *darvesh* evolving through the set of three stages and has become one with God. Initially, the narrator speaks for the blade of grass, and compares it to himself by saying “this is myself, six feet under” (Crane, “In Heaven” line 2). This shows the blade of grass as stuck in the first stage of self-effacement; however, by the end, the blade of grass speaks for itself by saying, “I am a darvesh” (Rafat, line 9). This indicates that the grass is no longer in need of any secondary source to connect it to the highest authority and is speaking directly to Him (Hill 78). The Sufi faith leads to a distinct identity, for it is clear that the blade of grass does not simmer in existential angst; rather, it declares its identity as a *darvesh*. This declaration of identity reflects being one with the Truth, that is, God. Being one with God means one finds Him within oneself. This idea has also been reflected in William Stoddart’s Sufi narration, where Hallaj says, “I saw my Lord with the eye of the heart. I said: Who art Thou? He answered: Thou” (83).

The use of words such as “*darvesh*,” (Rafat, line 9) “His throne,” “Lord” and “splendor” (Crane, lines 12-17), in both poems has highlighted the elements of linguistic relativity as discussed above, where it vividly foregrounds the difference in faith. Crane’s little blade of grass achieves self-effacement by adhering to the principle of poetic justice, where good is rewarded and bad is punished. In contrast, Rafat’s blade of grass is determined to achieve self-effacement by successfully passing all three stages of *fana*. Language plays a pervasive role in both texts, hence foregrounding two different conceptualisations of faith. This difference in faith manifests two distinct identities. The use of biblical language alludes to the concept of poetic justice (Harink 85), which establishes an identity of believing in the Hereafter. In addition, modesty is considered to be the true virtuous way of living that fulfils the purpose of Christian life, and honours God for all the blessings. It is the modesty of the little blade of grass that pleases God which is why God declares the little blade of grass as the “best” among all. In contrast, Rafat’s deployment of the concept of *fana* marks a Sufi identity, which is a further

delimited identity of being Muslim (Lings 58). The Sufi identity is considered as the wisdom of the East, where the existence of everything is deemed trivial and almost nothing as compared to the existence of God. In order for anyone to be entitled to importance, God ought to be considered as the centre (Hill 78). The Sufi identity is not native to anyone, it is not an already-given identity; rather, it is acquired and earned by adhering to the guiding norms of the three stages of *fana*.

### **Conclusion**

The linguistically relative choices of diction in the two selected poems foreground considerable differences in terms of the use of language that represents two different worlds of faiths; Christian and Islamic. These different faith worlds are established with reference to varying spatio-temporal contexts and thinking processes. The differences are noteworthy because the two texts were similar in many ways: the same setting, subject matter, characters, and genre of the poem. Despite these similarities, distinct faith worlds are established in both text. Rafat's poem subscribes to Islamic and Quranic teachings, and in light of that, the faith established in the poem comes from Sufism. The character in the poem succeeds in bypassing the first two stages of *fana* and finds itself at the last stage, where it does not need any source to connect with God. The blade of grass earlier depended on the narrator to give voice to its feelings; however, by the last couplet, it achieves freedom and gains its voice to finally declare, "I am a *darvesh*" (Rafat, line 9). On the other hand, Crane's poem demonstrates poetic justice as declared and established by the Lord. He uses biblical language and portrays a unified Christian faith that is not divided into Catholicism and Protestantism. The text establishes a Western unified Christian identity that is guided by humility and the belief in the Hereafter. Thus, Crane adheres to Biblical teachings and the holy scriptures, and Rafat deploys the philosophy of Sufism. These two guiding principles reflect two distinct faiths, one emerging from Christianity and the other from Islam. It is further evident that the identities of the two blades of grass metaphorically represent human identity that is established by the faith their writers subscribe to.

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