

Linguistic Features Of Medical Poetry

Shakhnoza Islomova Iskandarovna

PhD Student at the Department of Uzbek Linguistics and Journalism, Bukhara State University; Teacher at Bukhara State Medical Institute, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This study explores the linguistic features of medical poetry as a unique intersection of art and science. The research focuses on how medical terminology, metaphorical language, and emotional expression interact within poetic texts to reflect the human experience of illness, healing, and the medical profession. Special attention is given to the stylistic, lexical, and semantic characteristics that distinguish medical poetry from other literary genres. The study also examines the role of poetic discourse in humanizing medical knowledge and enhancing empathy in doctor–patient communication.

Keywords: Medical poetry, linguistic features, stylistic analysis, medical terminology, metaphor, humanization of medicine, poetic discourse.

Introduction: This article examines the linguistic and stylistic features of medical poetry, a literary form that bridges the gap between medicine and the humanities. Medical poetry uses the language of science and emotion simultaneously, reflecting both professional medical knowledge and human experience. The study analyzes how medical terminology, metaphorical imagery, and stylistic devices are employed to convey complex emotional and physical states associated with illness, healing, and the human body. The findings suggest that medical poetry not only serves as a form of artistic expression but also contributes to medical ethics, empathy, and communication in the healthcare environment.

Poetry has always played an important role in expressing human emotions, pain, and healing. In recent decades, the intersection between literature and medicine has given rise to a new field known as medical humanities, where language serves as a bridge between clinical experience and human feeling. Medical poetry occupies a special place in this field, combining scientific vocabulary with artistic expression. Through linguistic analysis, one can understand how poets use language to represent the experiences of illness, suffering, recovery, and compassion.

Medical poetry is characterized by the use of both

technical and emotive language.

1. Medical Terminology: Poets integrate anatomical and physiological terms (e.g., heart, pulse, blood, brain) to give authenticity to their verses. However, these terms often gain metaphorical meanings beyond their scientific sense.

2. Metaphorical Language: Disease and healing are frequently described through metaphors—illness as battle, the body as a fragile mechanism, or the doctor as a healer and guide.

3. Lexical and Semantic Choices: The lexicon reflects both the cold precision of medical discourse and the warmth of human empathy. Contrasts between “clinical” and “emotional” vocabulary create a powerful poetic tension.

4. Stylistic Devices: Repetition, parallelism, alliteration, and symbolism are used to enhance the rhythm and emotional depth of the text.

Beyond its linguistic features, medical poetry plays a humanizing role in medicine. It helps doctors, patients, and readers better understand the emotional dimensions of illness. For medical professionals, such poetry serves as a reminder of the patient’s individuality; for patients, it offers comfort and a voice for their suffering. Thus, language becomes a healing tool—both psychologically and spiritually.

Medical poetry unites the precision of science with the sensitivity of art. Its linguistic features—specialized terminology, metaphorical richness, and stylistic creativity—reflect the complexity of human experience in medicine. By studying these features, scholars can better understand how language transforms clinical realities into emotional and ethical reflection. Ultimately, medical poetry demonstrates that medicine is not only a science of the body but also a language of the soul.

The history of medicine is closely linked to the origins of humankind. From the very beginning of human existence up to the present day, humanity has continuously struggled to preserve health and has applied various methods of treatment. Evidence of early healing practices and medicinal plant names mentioned in the Avesta supports this idea. In particular, the Avesta contains a legend about the origin of medicine, stating that the art of healing was first taught to people by a figure named Yima, who is often associated with the Prophet Noah. The Avesta also provides some information about human anatomy and physiology. According to this ancient text, the human body consists of eight parts: bones, muscles, fat, brain, veins, blood, liver, and bile, and it mentions the existence of two types of veins.

When discussing the history of medicine, it is important to note that along with prose-based medical writings, there also existed poetic forms of medicine, which provided not only healing but also aesthetic pleasure, spiritual enrichment, and moral nourishment. Such poetic medical works were believed to offer a kind of magical or spiritual therapy for patients. As the great physician Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna) emphasized, a patient should first be treated with words—only after healing the soul can the body be healed. This clearly demonstrates that the relationship between medicine and poetry has ancient roots, confirmed by our great physicians and poets alike.

It is well known that in ancient times, many scholarly works were written in verse, as composing scientific texts in poetic form was a common tradition of the era. Numerous philosophical reflections, mathematical theorems, and geographical knowledge were expressed in poetic form, alongside medical urjuzas (didactic medical poems). This fact illustrates the harmony and interconnection between poetry and medicine, showing that medical poetry is not a modern phenomenon but a continuation of a long-standing tradition that unites science and art.

In the ancient period, we can observe a beautiful example of medical poetry in the didactic work “Dah Nasihat” (“Ten Advices”) dedicated to health and

medicine, written by Aristotle’s disciple, Alexander the Great, who is known in Eastern sources as Iskandar Zulqarnayn. This poetic urjuza (didactic poem) presents moral and medical advice, reflecting the harmony between ethical instruction and physical well-being.

Birinchi nasihat

Birinchi buldurkim, me’danga taom,

To hazm bo’lmasdan barisi tamom

Ustidan hech narsa yema ziyondir,

Ranj-u g’am yuz berur, ozori jondur.

Ovqating bo’lsa gar yengil-u latif,

Mijozing bo’limgay hech qachon zaif—

In the first counsel, the poet emphasizes moderation in eating habits: one should not consume new food before the previous meal has been fully digested. Overeating, he warns, causes harm and brings discomfort to both body and soul. The poet further advises that meals should be light and delicate, as such food maintains the balance of temperament and prevents physical weakness.

In this poetic medical fragment, the ideas of balanced nutrition and dietary moderation are expressed through unique medical metaphors such as “pain of the soul” and “light and delicate food.” The poet not only imparts medical advice but also evokes aesthetic pleasure and psychological peace in the reader. Indeed, poetry alone cannot directly heal the stomach or normalize the level of sugar in the body; however, through poetic expression, a person’s spirit attains harmony, the body finds rest, brain activity becomes balanced, and the nervous system stabilizes.

It is not without reason that the great Persian poet Sa’di Shirazi once remarked that the beauty of words and poetry has the power to heal the soul before the body. This statement perfectly illustrates the deep interconnection between art, medicine, and human spirituality.

Among all the blessings bestowed upon humankind,

Two are the most precious — peace and health.—

Dunyoda insonga eng aziz ne’mat,

Biri tinchlik bo’lsa, boshqasi sihat!

While physicians bring comfort to the human body through medicines and various medical treatments, poetry nourishes the soul. As a result, this combination helps the human organism recover more rapidly. This synthesis of poetry and medicine represents what can be called poetic therapy, or the therapy of the soul through verse.

Our ancient physicians preferred to express medical knowledge in poetic form. They believed that poetry,

unlike prose, does not allow unnecessary additions or digressions, and that verse has the power to provide moral and spiritual nourishment. Since poetry is easier to memorize and recall than prose, medical urjuzas — didactic poems devoted to healing — were composed from early times.

When speaking about physicians who conveyed their medical teachings through verse, one cannot overlook Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna), the “Sultan of Physicians.” His poetic medical works not only represent significant scientific achievements but also deeply influenced later poets and scholars.

In the preface to his famous didactic poem “Urjuza fi’-Tibb” (“Poem on Medicine”), Avicenna wrote:

“I have adorned this Urjuza with the garments of perfection and beauty. I composed it in a simple and light meter so that learning it might be easier and less burdensome. Whoever looks upon it with the eye of understanding may attain great knowledge from this small work.”

Indeed, Urjuza can rightly be regarded as an introduction to the science of medicine. It encompasses the fundamental principles of medical knowledge, serving both as a scientific manual and as a source of aesthetic pleasure. Thus, it stands as a treasury of wisdom that unites intellectual depth with poetic beauty.

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