



## Spiritual and Symbolic Diction as the Breath of Acep Zamzam Noor's Poetry

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and analyze spiritual and symbolic diction in six poems by Acep Zamzam Noor: *Aku Ini Doa*, *Cipasung*, *Sungai*, *Perasaan Sungai*, *Sendiri*, and *Angin dan Batu*. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a structural and semiotic analysis approach, this research shows that Acep consistently employs diction that refers to spiritual, religious, and inner concepts. Words such as prayer, prayer mat, sky, and tears are not only used as aesthetic elements but also serve as symbols of contemplative experiences and the interconnectedness between humans, God, and the universe. Applying Riffaterre's theory, it was found that the literal meanings of these words undergo displacement and distortion, thereby forming new, deeper meanings. The results of this study reinforce the understanding that Acep's poetry is a silent dhikr flowing from profound spiritual awareness, making spiritual and symbolic diction the very breath of his poetic works.

**Keywords:** Acep Zamzam Noor, spiritual diction, symbolism, poetry analysis, semiotic theory

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis diksi spiritual dan simbolik dalam enam puisi karya Acep Zamzam Noor: *Aku Ini Doa*, *Cipasung*, *Sungai*, *Perasaan Sungai*, *Sendiri*, dan *Angin dan Batu*. Melalui metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan kajian analisis struktural dan semiotik, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Acep secara konsisten menggunakan diksi yang merujuk pada konsep spiritual, religius, dan batiniah. Diksi seperti doa, sajadah, langit, dan air mata tidak hanya digunakan sebagai elemen estetika, tetapi juga sebagai simbol pengalaman kontemplatif dan keterhubungan manusia dengan Tuhan dan semesta. Dengan teori Riffaterre, ditemukan bahwa makna literal dari diksi tersebut mengalami displacement dan distortion, yang kemudian membentuk makna baru yang lebih dalam. Hasil penelitian ini memperkuat pemahaman bahwa puisi Acep merupakan zikir sunyi yang mengalir dari kesadaran spiritual yang mendalam, menjadikan diksi spiritual dan simbolik sebagai napas utama puisi-puisinya.

**Kata Kunci:** Acep Zamzam Noor, diksi spiritual, simbolisme, analisis puisi, teori semiotik



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## 1. Introduction

Poetry is one of the literary forms that occupies a unique position in linguistic tradition. Unlike ordinary forms of communication, poetry arranges words into an aesthetic structure that is dense with meaning, rich in emotion, and often conveys ideas that cannot be directly expressed. According to Waluyo (2002), poetry is the expression of a poet's thoughts and feelings, packaged through imaginative, heartfelt, and suggestive word choices. Meanwhile, Pradopo (2009) emphasizes that poetry not only conveys messages literally but also implies profound inner meanings through symbols, emblems, and layered word associations.

One of the most important aspects of poetry is diction the poet's choice of words to create atmosphere, convey inner experiences, and present aesthetic power. Diction in poetry is often symbolic, connotative, and capable of producing broader meanings than ordinary language. In this context, Michael Riffaterre's (1978) theory of poetic semiotics provides an important contribution by asserting that meaning in poetry cannot be understood directly but rather through a process of interpreting displacement (shift in meaning), distortion (deviation from ordinary language use), and the formation of symbols that mediate between the text and its meaning.

One contemporary Indonesian poet who consistently demonstrates the power of symbolic and spiritual diction is Acep Zamzam Noor. Born in Tasikmalaya in 1960, Acep is known as part of the 1980s generation of poets, whose works often revolve around themes of spirituality, inner contemplation, and the human relationship with the universe. His poetry is not merely personal reflection but also a space for searching for meaning through everyday symbols absorbed into a spiritual realm. In his verses, mud becomes a prayer mat, rivers become tears, and the home becomes an inner space open to accommodating existential restlessness.

This study arises from observations on the distinctive diction in Acep Zamzam Noor's poetry, particularly diction that is spiritual and symbolic. The authors selected five poems most prominent in containing such characteristics, namely *Aku Ini Doa*, *Cipasung*, *Sungai*, *Perasaan Sungai*, and *Sendiri*. These poems are analyzed with a focus on diction representing spiritual, religious, and inner aspects, and on how these words form symbols that convey deeper meanings.

Previous research has examined Acep Zamzam Noor's works, especially from his poetry collection *Jalan Menuju Rumahmu* (2004). One such study by Dhiya & Arianti (2024), titled "Analisis Majas Metafora, Personifikasi dan Simile dalam Kumpulan Puisi *Jalan Menuju Rumahmu*," identified 166 instances of metaphor, personification, and simile, which enhance the aesthetic and emotive value of Acep's poetic language. Although that study touched upon figurative and thematic aspects, few have explicitly explored the combination of spiritual and symbolic diction through the lens of the physical structure and semiotics of poetry. Yet it is precisely this spiritual diction that forms the foundation of Acep's poetic style.

Therefore, this research aims to identify and analyze spiritual and symbolic diction in six selected poems by Acep Zamzam Noor (*Aku Ini Doa*, *Cipasung*, *Sungai*, *Perasaan Sungai*, *Amsal Subuh*, and *Sendiri*) as representations of the distinctive characteristics of his poetic style.

## 2. Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a structural and semiotic analysis approach. The data examined are literary texts in this case, poems analyzed in depth based on their meanings, symbols, and linguistic structures. According to Moleong (2017), the qualitative approach is used to understand the hidden meanings behind texts holistically and interpretatively.

The method applied here is structural and semiotic analysis of poetry. The structural approach observes the physical elements of poetry, particularly diction, as noted by Waluyo (2002) and Pradopo (2009), who assert that diction in poetry is a key element in conveying the poet's atmosphere, emotions, and ideas. Through diction, the poet builds a poetic world that not only delivers messages directly but also implies inner experiences.

In addition, Michael Riffaterre's (1978) semiotic approach to poetry is also used, viewing poetry as a symbolic structure that cannot be understood literally. Meaning in poetry emerges through the processes of displacement (shift in meaning), distortion (deviation from everyday language use), and the creation of new meanings hidden behind the text's structure. This approach is applied to uncover the symbolic depth of spiritual diction in Acep Zamzam Noor's poetry.

The primary data in this study are six poems by Acep Zamzam Noor from the collection *Jalan Menuju Rumahmu* (2004): *Aku Ini Doa*, *Cipasung*, *Sungai*, *Perasaan Sungai*, *Angin dan Batu*, and *Sendiri*. Data collection was conducted by reading, examining, and noting parts of the poems containing diction with spiritual and symbolic nuances. The collected data were then analyzed by:

1. Identifying diction containing spiritual, religious, and symbolic elements in each poem;
2. Interpreting the symbolic meanings of these words based on the poem's context and the applied theory;
3. Classifying patterns in the use of spiritual and symbolic diction as hallmarks of Acep Zamzam Noor's poetic style.

The results of the analysis are presented in the form of interpretative narratives and thematic tables to facilitate reading and conclusion-drawing.

### 3. Results and Discussion

From the five poems analyzed, it was found that Acep Zamzam Noor consistently uses spiritual and symbolic diction to express inner experiences, existential solitude, and relationships with both God and the universe. Such diction is not only formally religious but is often transformed into symbols or metaphors implying spiritual depth. The following is a detailed explanation of the analysis:

#### 3.1 Analysis of Poem 1: “Aku Ini Doa” by Acep Zamzam Noor

##### A. Poem Excerpt

##### “Aku Ini Doa”

Langit mengalirkan airmatanya menjadi Sungai  
Tak terbendung. Seratus talkin  
Telah disampaikan kepek elang dan desir angin  
Menatahnya menjadi sebuah epitaf  
Yang indah. Betapa khidmat bumi menerima kematian  
Mengolah belulang ladang-ladang  
Tempat menanam dan memetik buah kesabaran  
(1984)

The sky sheds its tears into a river  
Unstoppable. A hundred talqin  
Have been conveyed by the eagle’s wings and the rustle of the wind  
Arranging them into a beautiful epitaph  
How solemnly the earth receives death  
Processing the bones of the fields  
Where the fruits of patience are planted and harvested  
(1984)

##### B. Poem Analysis

Table 1. Analysis of Spiritual and Symbolic Diction in “Aku Ini Doa”

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
“Aku ini doa”	“I am this prayer”	Doa / Prayer	The poet’s existence merges into the spiritual dimension.	Main diction: depicts the lyrical subject who has merged into spiritual longing (Pradopo).
“Langit mengalirkan airmatanya”	“The sky sheds its tears”	Langit, airmata / Sky, tears	The sky weeps = nature shares in sorrow → symbol of cosmic compassion.	Spiritual diction symbolized through a natural phenomenon → displacement (Riffaterre).
“Seratus talkin telah disampaikan kepek elang dan desir angin”	“A hundred <i>talqin</i> have been conveyed by the eagle’s wings and the rustle of the wind”	Talkin / <i>Talqin</i>	The funeral ritual as part of the universe’s awareness.	<i>Talqin</i> = Islamic ritual → religious diction transferred into the realm of nature (eagle/wind).
“Menatahnya menjadi epitaf yang indah”	“Arranging them into a beautiful epitaph”	Epitaf / Epitaph	Words as eternal reminders, symbolizing spiritual memory.	Diction reflects beauty within grief; symbolic function in remembrance (Pradopo).
“Betapa khidmat bumi menerima kematian”	“How solemnly the earth receives death”	Khidmat, kematian / Solemn, death	The earth = a gentle, spiritually conscious entity, not passive matter.	Distortion of “earth” → not inanimate but spiritually aware entity (Riffaterre).

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
“Mengolah belulang ladang-ladang”	“Processing the bones of the fields”	Belulang, ladang / Bones, fields	Death → a process of continuity, the soil as a form of acceptance and hope.	“Bones” → not merely skeletal remains but a symbol of inner transformation.

The poem “Aku Ini Doa” illustrates how Acep Zamzam Noor characteristically employs religious diction (prayer, talqin, epitaph) and natural symbolism (sky, wind, earth) to convey a spiritual reflection on death. According to Waluyo and Pradopo, such word choices are suggestive and rich in emotional associations. Meanwhile, from Riffaterre’s perspective, these words undergo a shift in meaning and become symbols of spiritual processes and existential contemplation.

### 3.2 Analysis of Poem 2: “Cipasung” by Acep Zamzam Noor

#### A. Poem Excerpt

##### “Cipasung”

Di lengkung alis matamu sawah-sawah menguning  
 Seperti rambutku padi-padi semakin merundukkan diri  
 Dengan ketam kupanen terus kesabaran hatimu  
 Cangkulku iman dan sajadahku lumpur yang kental  
 Langit yang menguji ibadahku meneteskan cahaya redup  
 Dan surauku terbakar kesunyian yang dinyalakan rindu  
 Aku semakin mendekat pada kepunahan yang disimpan bumi  
 Pada lahan-lahan kepedihan masih kutanam bijian hari  
 Segala tumbuhan dan pohonan membuahakan pahala segar  
 Bagi pagar-pagar bambu yang dibangun keimananku  
 Mendekatlah padaku dan dengarkan kasidah ikan-ikan  
 Kini hatiku kolam yang menyimpan kemurnianmu  
 Hari esok adalah perjalananku sebagai petani  
 Membuka ladang-ladang amal dalam belantara yang pekat  
 Pahamiilah jalan ketiadaan yang semakin ada ini  
 Dunia telah lama kutimbang dan berulang kuhancurkan  
 Tanpa ketam masih ingin kupanen kesabaranmu yang lain  
 Atas sajadah lumpur aku tersungkur dan terkubur  
 (1989)

##### “Cipasung”

In the arch of your eyebrow, the rice fields turn golden  
 Like my hair, the rice plants bow ever lower  
 With my sickle, I keep harvesting the patience of your heart  
 My hoe is faith, and my prayer mat is thick mud  
 The sky that tests my worship drips dim light  
 And my surau burns with the silence kindled by longing  
 I draw ever closer to the extinction kept by the earth  
 On the fields of sorrow, I still plant the seeds of days  
 All plants and trees yield fresh rewards  
 For the bamboo fences built by my faith  
 Come closer to me and listen to the qasida of the fish  
 Now my heart is a pond holding your purity  
 Tomorrow is my journey as a farmer  
 Opening fields of charity in the thick wilderness  
 Understand this path of nothingness that increasingly exists  
 The world I have long weighed and repeatedly destroyed  
 Without a sickle, I still wish to harvest your other patience  
 Upon the prayer mat of mud, I collapse and am buried  
 (1989)

## B. Poem Analysis

Table 2. Analysis of Spiritual and Symbolic Diction in “Cipasung”

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
Cangkulku iman dan sajadahku lumpur yang kental	My hoe is faith, and my prayer mat is thick mud	Iman, sajadah / Faith, prayer mat	Farming = worship; mud becomes a sacred place of prostration.	Displacement: mud as a symbol of spirituality (Riffaterre); according to Pradopo, diction carries emotional meaning.
Langit yang menguji ibadahku meneteskan cahaya redup	The sky that tests my worship drips dim light	Langit, cahaya / Sky, light	Sky = spiritual tester, light = blessing trial.	Religious diction used to link humans with nature (Pradopo).
Dan surauku terbakar kesunyian yang dinyalakan rindu	And my surau burns with the silence kindled by longing	Surau, rindu / Surau, longing	Surau = place of worship → empty yet full of spiritual yearning.	Distortion: place of worship = inner empty space.
Pada lahan-lahan kepedihan masih kutanam bijian hari	On the fields of sorrow, I still plant the seeds of days	Lahan, bijian / Fields, seeds	Hard life = place to plant spiritual hope.	Life as an act of inner, agricultural worship (Pradopo).
Segala tumbuhan dan pohonan membuahakan pahala segar	All plants and trees yield fresh rewards	Pahala / Reward	Plants = rewards → worldly acts yielding spiritual results.	Religious diction conveyed through agrarian metaphor.
Kini hatiku kolam yang menyimpan kemurnianmu	Now my heart is a pond holding your purity	Kemurnian / Purity	Pond = heart → place to store faith.	Spiritual diction merges with nature imagery (Riffaterre).
Hari esok adalah perjalananku sebagai petani / Membuka ladang-ladang amal...	Tomorrow is my journey as a farmer / Opening fields of charity...	Amal / Charity	Farming = work as worship.	Concept of work as worship → form of practical spirituality.
Tanpa ketam masih ingin kupanen kesabaranmu yang lain	Without a sickle, I still wish to harvest your other patience	Panen, kesabaran / Harvest, patience	Patience = spiritual harvest.	Symbol of ongoing spiritual growth.
Atas sajadah lumpur aku tersungkur dan terkubur	Upon the prayer mat of mud, I collapse and am buried	Sajadah, tersungkur / Prayer mat, collapse	Prostration → total surrender to God.	Symbol of total submission on the ground (lowly, yet sacred).

The poem *Cipasung* reflects Acep Zamzam Noor’s distinctive style in presenting a religious atmosphere and spiritual awareness through diction rooted in pesantren culture and rural life (students of Islamic boarding schools, Islamic schools, religious texts, fields, wells), as well as local symbols that refer to the roots of identity and contemplative space. According to Waluyo and Pradopo, the word choices in this poem are suggestive, evoking a calm and solemn emotional atmosphere that strengthens the reader’s inner experience. Meanwhile, from Riffaterre’s perspective, these words undergo a displacement of meaning and merge as symbols of spiritual quest, attachment to one’s birthplace, and religious meaning constructed through everyday experience.

### 3.3 Analysis of Poem 3: “Sungai” by Acep Zamzam Noor

#### A. Poem Excerpt

##### “Sungai”

Sungai mengalir dari sumber kebenaran  
 Yang sejati. Jiwaku tenggelam dalam ketaktherhinggaan  
 Cintamu yang abadi. Menghitung pesona  
 Menjaring sasmita  
 Kata-kata mengalir dari Sungai aortamu  
 Yang murni. Aku hanyut menghela beban salib  
 Pengelana yang sunyi  
 Menggali tanah nurani. Memeras batu hati  
 1982

##### “River”

The river flows from the source of truth  
 The true one. My soul sinks into the infinity  
 Of your eternal love. Counting charms  
 Catching subtle signs  
 Words flow from the river of your aorta  
 So pure. I drift, carrying the burden of the cross  
 A solitary wanderer  
 Digging the soil of conscience. Squeezing the stone of the heart  
 1982

#### B. Poem Analysis

Table 3. Analysis of Spiritual and Symbolic Diction in “Sungai”

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
Sungai mengalir dari sumber kebenaran yang sejati	The river flows from the source of truth, the true one	Sungai, kebenaran / River, truth	The river is identified as the path from the essence of truth. Truth does not come as an idea, but as something living and flowing.	Displacement – river as a symbol of the spiritual path or revelation (Riffaterre); truth → spiritual-transcendent (Pradopo).
Jiwaku tenggelam dalam ketaktherhinggaan cintamu	My soul sinks into the infinity of your love	Jiwa, ketaktherhinggaan, cinta / Soul, infinity, love	Total surrender of the soul to divine love; here love is absolute and eternal.	Diction “soul” and “eternal love” create a contemplative spiritual atmosphere; symbol of transcendence (Pradopo).
Menjaring sasmita	Catching subtle signs	Sasmita / Subtle signs	<i>Sasmita</i> means signs of the universe or hidden inspiration. The poet as a seeker of meaning in spiritual unconsciousness.	Esoteric diction → “sasmita” as a metaphor for uncovering inner meaning (distortion).
Kata-kata mengalir dari sungai aortamu yang murni	Words flow from the river of your pure	Sungai, aorta, murni / River, aorta, pure	Aorta → source of physical life (anatomy), but symbolized as a pure	Distortion and displacement: biological (aorta) →

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
	aorta		river → source of vital and divine spiritual poetry.	spiritual (river of words); poetry as divine pulse (Riffaterre).
Aku hanyut menghela beban salib / Pengelana yang sunyi	I drift, carrying the burden of the cross / A solitary wanderer	Salib, pengelana / Cross, wanderer	Cross = symbol of existential and spiritual suffering; poet as a solitary pilgrim bearing a spiritual burden.	Universal religious symbol (cross) → mystical suffering. Diction “solitary” → Sufi solitude.
Menggali tanah nurani. Memeras batu hati	Digging the soil of conscience. Squeezing the stone of the heart	Nurani, hati / Conscience, heart	Contemplative activity described physically → digging and squeezing = inner effort to reach a pure, sensitive conscience.	Concrete spiritual diction → embodiment of active inner quest for meaning (Pradopo & Riffaterre).

The poem *Sungai* illustrates Acep Zamzam Noor’s consistent poetic style in conveying spiritual experiences through natural and bodily diction intertwined with religious symbols. The river becomes a representation of flowing spirituality not merely a physical object, but a symbol of truth, God’s love, and even the pulse of life (aorta). Using Riffaterre’s theory, we see how literal meanings undergo displacement, as in the phrase “river of the aorta,” and distortion, as in the expression “squeezing the stone of the heart.” This poem also presents the duality of body and soul, the concrete and the transcendent, united in a single poetic composition. Religious diction such as cross, conscience, and soul constructs an intimate spiritual framework, while natural diction such as river and soil bridges the material world with the divine. This work affirms that, for Acep, poetry is a long prayer, a silent dhikr flowing from both the body and the universe.

### 3.4 Analysis of Poem 4: “Perasaan Sungai” by Acep Zamzam Noor

#### A. Poem Excerpt

#### “Perasaan Sungai”

Sepanjang musim  
 Air matakku mengalir padamu  
 Malam demi malam kutempuh dalam kebisuan  
 Tanganku menjengkal sungai dan laut  
 Dan selalu kutemukan isyarat sunyi  
 Hanyut menjadi kata-kata  
 Di pantai yang kucatat hanya suara  
 Gemanya masih dikirimkan luka yang sama  
 Menjemput setiap prahara  
 Dan perahu yang melayarkan rindu  
 Tak akan pernah kembali ke dermaga  
 Ia telah menjadi bagian dari rahasia waktu  
 Sepanjang musim  
 Air matakku terus mengalir  
 Melampaui mimpi dan pengembaraan  
 Telah kubongkar seluruh keraguan  
 Bahkan cinta yang kini tinggal getarnya  
 Akan kusun menjadi persembahan terakhir

#### “The Feeling of the River”

Throughout the seasons  
 My tears flow to you  
 Night after night I travel in silence  
 My hands measuring the river and the sea

And I always find silent signs  
 Drifting into words  
 On the shore I note down only the sound  
 Its echo still sent by the same wound  
 Greeting every storm  
 And the boat that sails longing  
 Will never return to the dock  
 It has become part of the secret of time  
 Throughout the seasons  
 My tears keep flowing  
 Beyond dreams and wanderings  
 I have dismantled all doubts  
 Even love that now remains only as its tremor  
 I will arrange into the final offering

## B. Poem Analysis

Table 4. Analysis of Spiritual and Symbolic Diction in “Perasaan Sungai”

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
Sepanjang musim / Air matak mengalir padamu	Throughout the seasons / My tears flow to you	Air mata / Tears	Tears → not mere sadness, but a symbol of inner sacrifice and spiritual continuity. Seasons → spiritual time, not just biological time.	Displacement: seasons = cycles of the soul; tears = medium of spiritual communication (Riffaterre).
Malam demi malam kutempuh dalam kebisuan	Night after night I travel in silence	Malam, kebisuan / Night, silence	Night = space for spiritual reflection; silence = inner <i>dhikr</i> , deep contemplation.	“Night” and “silence” create a Sufi atmosphere (Pradopo).
Tanganku menjengkal sungai dan laut / kutemukan isyarat sunyi	My hands measuring the river and the sea / I find silent signs	Sungai, laut, isyarat sunyi / River, sea, silent signs	River and sea = symbols of spiritual infinity; silent signs = unspoken inner revelation.	Sea as spiritual subconscious (distortion); silent signs = divine inspiration.
Gemanya dikirimkan luka yang sama / Menjemput setiap prahara	Its echo still sent by the same wound / Greeting every storm	Gema, luka, prahara / Echo, wound, storm	Echo = recurring spiritual memory; wound = existential suffering; storm = recurring spiritual trials.	Echo = lasting impact of past events; wound = spiritual grief that heals (Pradopo).
Perahu yang melayarkan rindu / tak kembali ke dermaga	The boat that sails longing / will never return to the dock	Perahu, rindu, dermaga / Boat, longing, dock	Boat = wandering soul, longing = divine love; dock = spiritual origin that cannot be revisited.	Displacement: boat = soul’s existence; longing = spiritual drive; dock = eternal home.
Ia menjadi bagian dari rahasia waktu	It has become part of the secret of time	Rahasia waktu / Secret of time	Time = metaphysical dimension; secret of time = destiny, existential silence, divine unknowability.	Time as non-linear, spiritual, symbolic (distortion).
Melampaui mimpi dan pengembaraan / kubongkar seluruh keraguan	Beyond dreams and wanderings / I have dismantled all doubts	Mimpi, pengembaraan, keraguan / Dream, wandering, doubt	Spiritual journey through subconscious (dreams) and search for truth (wandering); doubt as barrier to faith removed.	Wandering = quest for faith (Pradopo); dream = realm of spiritual intuition.

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
Cinta yang tinggal getarnya / persembahan terakhir	Love that remains only as its tremor / the final offering	Cinta, getar, persembahan / Love, tremor, offering	Love = divine value that remains as an echo; offering = final act of worship; poem = ultimate prayer.	Final offering = symbol of total surrender (Riffaterre & Waluyo).

The poem *Perasaan Sungai* is a profound spiritual expression of an inner journey through sorrow, longing, and the search for meaning. The tears that “flow throughout the seasons” symbolize deep feeling as well as continuous hope that refuses to be broken. This is not merely a poem about loss, but about how loss is interpreted in a transcendent way. Acep employs the river, sea, night, and boat as spiritual symbols. All natural elements in this poem are understood not literally but as inner and existential representations. Riffaterre’s approach affirms that the meaning of this poem lies beneath the displacement of literal word meanings. Diction such as *silent signs*, *final offering*, and *secret of time* shows how this poem describes the process of “letting go,” whether it be worldly love or the ego. It is not merely a poem of sadness, but a pilgrimage toward the depths of life and faith.

### 3.5 Analysis of Poem 5: “Amsal Subuh” by Acep Zamzam Noor

#### A. Poem Excerpt

#### “Amsal Subuh”

Hikmati fajar yang datang  
 Sebelum dingin subuh menyelimutimu  
 Karena cemburu. Langit yang bertekstur itu  
 Cukup lapang untuk tanganmu menuliskan syukur  
 Setelah semalam bersujud dan berdoa  
 Pagi segera muncul dan tunggulah di muka jendela  
 Pahami cahayanya yang samar dan puisi  
 Yang dikandung matanya. Ada gerak yang diedarkan  
 Jejaknya luput dalam debu di perut bumi

#### “The Parable of Dawn”

Savor the dawn that comes  
 Before the chill of early morning covers you  
 Out of jealousy. That textured sky  
 Is wide enough for your hands to write gratitude  
 After a night of prostration and prayer  
 Morning soon appears and wait at the window  
 Understand its faint light and the poetry  
 Contained in its eyes. There is a motion it circulates  
 Its traces vanish in the dust of the earth’s belly

#### B. Poem Analysis

Table 5. Analysis of Spiritual and Symbolic Diction in “Amsal Subuh”

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
Hikmati fajar yang datang	Savor the dawn that comes	Hikmati, fajar / Savor, dawn	Dawn = new beginning, purity, spiritual opportunity.	Sign of inner values (Peirce).
Sebelum dingin subuh menyelimutimu	Before the chill of early morning covers you	Subuh / Early morning	Morning chill = silence as trial before light arrives.	Subuh = symbolic time; chill = inner trial before enlightenment.
Cukup lapang untuk tanganmu menuliskan	Wide enough for your hands to	Syukur / Gratitude	Sky = space for divine presence; gratitude =	Gratitude as a sign of spiritual consciousness

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
syukur	write gratitude		inner awareness.	(Peirce).
Setelah semalam bersujud dan berdoa	After a night of prostration and prayer	Bersujud, berdoa / Prostration, prayer	Night = period of spiritual struggle through devotion.	Ritual as bridge between human and Creator.
Pagi segera muncul dan tunggulah di muka jendela	Morning soon appears and wait at the window	Pagi, muka jendela / Morning, window	Morning = hope, new light; window = boundary between inner and outer world.	Symbolic connection between inner experience and transcendent reality.
Pahami cahayanya yang samar dan puisi	Understand its faint light and the poetry	Cahaya / Light	Light = divine guidance; faintness = mystical ambiguity.	Light as symbol of illumination in spiritual literature.
Yang dikandung matanya. Ada gerak yang diedarkan	Contained in its eyes. There is a motion it circulates	Mata, gerak / Eyes, motion	Eyes = inner vision; motion = ritual rhythm.	Symbolism of the eye in Sufism; ritual movement as devotion.
Jejaknya luput dalam debu di perut bumi	Its traces vanish in the dust of the earth's belly	Jejak, debu, perut bumi / Traces, dust, earth's belly	Traces = spiritual legacy; dust = human mortality; earth's belly = origin and return.	Symbol of human mortality and life cycle in spiritual literature.

The poem *Amsal Subuh* is a spiritual reflection on inner awareness when welcoming the morning as a contemplative moment. Dawn, sky, early morning, and light are not merely natural elements but transcendental symbols representing self-purification, gratitude, and humanity's relationship with God. Acep Zamzam Noor crafts diction such as *hikmati* (savor), *prostration*, *prayer*, and *gratitude* as spiritual language that opens the space for inner interpretation.

Using Peirce's semiotic approach, each element in the poem from dawn to the dust of the earth serves as a sign pointing to the inner state of a soul transitioning from darkness to enlightenment. Dawn becomes a metaphor for the birth of meaning, while early morning and the sky symbolize acknowledgment and acceptance of the Divine presence. Thus, *Amsal Subuh* is not only a poem about morning but about the readiness of the soul to be present in spiritual stillness, to welcome hope with full awareness, and to absorb the traces of the Divine that are subtle yet real in every corner of life.

### 3.6 Analysis of Poem 6: "Sendiri" by Acep Zamzam Noor

#### A. Poem Excerpt

"Sendiri"

Pada hamparan waktu memancar air mataku  
Kuperas dari kepedihan rindu dan gairah cinta  
Ibadahku tak terungkap lagu, juga kata-kata  
Seribu sajadah yang kusambung-sambung tak juga sampai  
Padamu. Di kekosongan aku mabuk dan meronta-ronta  
Membakar seluruh pakaian dan keyakinan

"Alone"

Upon the expanse of time my tears radiate  
I press from the pain of longing and the passion of love  
My worship is unexpressed in song, nor in words  
A thousand prayer rugs I have stitched together yet still do not reach  
To You. In the emptiness I am intoxicated and writhing  
Burning all garments and convictions

#### B. Poem Analysis

Table 6. Analysis of Spiritual and Symbolic Diction in "Sendiri"

Poem Line (Indonesian)	Poem Line (English)	Spiritual Diction	Symbolic Meaning	Theoretical Explanation
Kuperas dari kepedihan rindu dan gairah cinta	I press from the pain of longing and the passion of love	Kepedihan rindu / Pain of longing	Painful longing = deep spiritual yearning; inner struggle between human and the divine.	Longing as search for divine connection (Pradopo).
Ibadahku tak terungkap lagu, juga kata-kata	My worship is unexpressed in song, nor in words	Ibadah / Worship	Worship as surrender, humility, and devotion beyond verbal or artistic expression.	Vertical relationship between human and God; worship as ineffable spiritual act.
Seribu sajadah yang kusambung-sambung tak juga sampai	A thousand prayer rugs I have stitched together yet still do not reach	Sajadah / Prayer rug	Sajadah = sacred space for worship; symbolizes preparation and spiritual striving.	Prayer rug as sacred symbol (Riffaterre's displacement).
Padamu. Di kekosongan aku mabuk dan meronta-ronta	To You. In the emptiness I am intoxicated and writhing	Padamu / To You	Address to God; symbolizes intimate, direct dialogue.	Personal pronoun as sign of divine intimacy.
Membakar seluruh pakaian dan keyakinan	Burning all garments and convictions	Keyakinan / Conviction (faith)	Fire = purification and transformation; burning = crisis and renewal of faith.	Symbolism of fire in mysticism as cleansing force.

The poem *Sendiri* portrays the soul's inner struggle in seeking its deepest spiritual connection. Solitude here is not mere physical isolation, but a reflection of the existential loneliness in searching for God. Words such as *rindu* (longing), *ibadah* (worship), *sajadah* (prayer rug), and *padamu* (to You) reveal a spirituality that emerges from restlessness and emptiness rather than rigid ritual.

From a semiotic perspective, symbols like the prayer rug and worship function as signs of sacred space and acts, while *padamu* demonstrates the intimate, personal nature of the relationship between poet and God. This poem thus becomes not simply a confession of loneliness, but a profound expression of spiritual pursuit—about a God who feels distant despite being sought with all one's heart, and about worship that ultimately becomes the cry of a soul unable to be fully expressed in words.

### 3. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of six poems by Acep Zamzam Noor, it can be concluded that spiritual and symbolic diction is a dominant and distinctive feature of Acep's poetic style. Words such as prayer, worship, prayer rug, mushalla, sky, river, cross, inner home, and tears are used not merely as elements of beauty, but as symbols of inner experience, the search for meaning, and the relationship with the transcendent. These dictions operate on two levels simultaneously: physically as poetic word choices, and spiritually as symbols of spiritual values. Through the processes of displacement and distortion, as explained by Riffaterre, the literal meanings of religious and natural diction are shifted into a contemplative and symbolic space.

This tendency shows that Acep Zamzam Noor's poetry not only expresses the beauty of language but also offers a deep interpretative space for human existence. He writes lyrically, yet with strong spiritual awareness, making poetry not merely an aesthetic form but a silent dhikr born from inner struggle. Thus, it can be affirmed that spiritual and symbolic diction is not only a stylistic device in Acep Zamzam Noor's poetry but also the main foundation in shaping the poetic breath and life vision of the poet.

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