

## FOREGROUNDING OF HOPELESSNESS IN SOCIAL REUNION IN THE POETRY OF HAMID KHAN

**Dr Abdul Karim Khan,**

Assistant Professor, Department of English & Applied Linguistics,  
University of Science & Technology, Bannu, KP, Pakistan.

[akarim.khan@yahoo.com](mailto:akarim.khan@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*The concept of hopelessness in social reunion is foregrounded in most of the poems of Khan. This paper focuses on this theme foregrounded in Khan's poetry. For this purpose, both the collections of Khan, "Velvet of Loss" and "Pale Leaf (Three Voices)" are used for the data understudy. Only those poems are selected that bear the foregrounded theme of hopelessness in social reunion. The poems that carry the said message are: The Sun Rises, Fears, Separation, Waiting, Velvet of Loss. Thus, Khan's concept of separation is both traditional and individual. He has indirectly dawned upon us that we should stick to our values and be helpful to others and stay selfless, but at the same time, we should also avoid being close to somebody for selfish gains. It is necessary for a good society to flourish.*

**Key Words:** Social reunion, hopelessness, Hamid Khan. foregrounding, context of Pakistan

### Introduction

Pakistani Literature in English has become a separate subject of interest for young scholars. This was made attractive by the epoch-making venture of Tariq Rahman in the form of writing the *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* in 1990. It covers all the known literary works by the writers of Pakistani origin both inside and outside of Pakistan. It gives special attention to poetry, though it contains lists of dramas and novels as well. Moreover, it provides a guideline to young scholars for searching an area of exploration of their choice. Wilma Blue (first para) comments on Tariq Rehman's book, *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* that it is like an encyclopedia. One can learn a lot from it. In the same line of review, Mary Tobin (first para) states the Tariq Rehman's *History* gives you useful facts about the nature of Pakistani literature in English.

Omar Tarin, Ilyas Khan, and Majied (2015) trace Pakistani Literature in English to the 1920s. It was the time when the sense of nationalism was getting strong foothold. They discuss the notable writers of the sort, such as Chattopadhyay, M.A. Rashid, Raja Rao, Sarojini Naidu, and Mumtaz. Besides, there were a travelogue by Sake Deen Mahomet, and translations from Bengali into English of Rabindranath Tagore by himself. In this connection, Hamid Khan, too, needs proper attention, as he, like many other local writers, tries to attract our attention towards the problems of the modern man, especially those of Pakistanis.

Hamid Khan is a local poet writing in English. He did his PhD in English. Khan writes poetry in English centering both local and worldwide issues and human failings such as war, oppression, women rights, corruption, and hypocrisy, to mention a few. He does so through the tools of foregrounding, i.e., deviation and parallelism. His poetry is very terse and stenographic and, more often, grips the reader's attention through unusual usage of linguistic choices. Moreover, his poetry carries deviation on various levels, such as syntactic, semantic and graphological. As far as parallelism is concerned, he maintains it through phonemes as well as repetition of certain words that connote socio-cultural implications especially in the context of

Pakistan and generally elsewhere in the world. It is needful to explore the hidden messages, in such type of poetry as Khan's, through the tools of foregrounding.

### Method

Toolan (1990) states that stylistic analysis that it can be used even for the teaching of language and of literature. He further avers that it helps in exploring the diverse reading of similar texts and

*It can be used to assist in seeing features that might not otherwise have been noticed. It can shed light on the crafted texture of the literary text, as well as offering a productive form of assistance in completing interpretations, making them more complex and richer. Stylistics can thus be used both as a descriptive tool and as a catalyst for interpretation.*  
(42)

In this connection, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) opine that despite the fact that both poetic and conventional languages integrate conceptually on the basis of certain principles, they are different at the same time. For instance, the divergence in the grammar of a poet is based on the poet's perception of the world around them.

Likewise, Leech (1969) states that without going back to linguistic notions and concepts much of the terms of literary criticism cannot possibly be explained such as metaphor and irony, etc. Stylistic analysis can be carried out through various levels, such as at the level of: graphology, phonology, morphology, and lexico-syntax. About lexico-syntax level of analysis Tallerman (1998) quoted in Imran Hussain & Sana Mansoor (2017) states that "Lexico-Syntactic choices are obtained through devices such as piling of usual collocates, unusual collocates, archaic words, particular parts of speech, metaphor, simile, oxymoron etc." (p. 1) It depends upon the choice of the researcher whether they choose one, two or more levels to look through a piece of literature. In this connection, Leech and Short (1981) states that there are four ways to analyze texts: syntax, phonology, semantics and graphology. Alabi (2008) explains that graphological features include the foregrounded punctuation marks, italics, spacing, and size of print, etc.

Again, I. A. Richards (1929) points out four types of textual functions and meanings that are, sense, feelings, tone, and intention. In addition, Jacobson's (1961) six functions are more elaborate in this connection. They are: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, poetic, and meta-linguistic. Among them the poetic function stands out which according to Jacobson (1960: 358) "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination". On the other hand, Halliday's (1967) describes three major functions viz., "ideational, interpersonal and textual" (Leech & Short, 1981, p. 30), though Fairclough (1995, p 4) explains that written texts are "multi semiotic" and exploit various forms of graphic designs apart from sound effects, diagrams and photographs.

In this paper, the poems are analyzed on the basis of foregrounding. The main tools of foregrounding are deviation and parallelism. This categorization is mentioned by Martindale (2007), quoted in Lesley Moss (2014) which is also supported by Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006), and Shen (2007).

## Analysis

The poems that foreground the impossibility of reunion are analysed in detail. All these poems become part of Hamid Khan's collection, *Velvet of Loss*. The title of the collection is taken out of the poem, *Velvet of Loss*, that fall last in the list. These poems include, *Separation*, *Waiting*, *Fears*, *The Sun Rises*, and *Velvet of Loss*.

### *The Sun Rises*

*The Sun Rises* is the fight between the speaker's loneliness and his fortitude to bear it. His loneliness has withered him inwardly like autumn withers a rose. Then he addresses his beloved that her love is destructive as it is *like oxygen/ in acid rains*. It is black rain. But amid all miseries the speaker has the courage to *dig/ the sun* – to draw goodness out of bad. The symbolic use of the sun suggests hope for better days as digging is associated with the earth not the sun. Moreover, the personification of the night adds to the severity of loneliness. The repetition of the /l/ and /i/ sounds that occur in *loneliness* and *in acid rains* foregrounds *ill* which further strengthens the severity of loneliness.

### *Fears*

The first strophe captures the speaker's feeling that the grass sings for him the song of *loneliness/ and dreams*. Then the speaker suggestively addresses his beloved that he left her for the sake of her safe future that is why he grows *bitter* and quotes someone (suggestively his beloved in response to his words) that every man thinks of himself though in his case he takes care of her. The loneliness and dreams of the speaker are foregrounded through the transfer epithet and personification of the grass. The song of the grass (*Every man for/ himself*) ends up the poem thereby giving the idea of selfishness in matter of love which goes in contrast to the speaker's selfless love. The speaker grows bitter at the selfish attitude of lovers as they do not care for their beloved's fragile feelings as is foregrounded through the adjectival phrase *too soft*. The theme of separation and loneliness is also foregrounded through the parallel occurrence of consonances and assonance in the words, *grass sings, let it, are larger, and too soft*.

### *Separation*

Life has become listless for the speaker of the poem because of his separation from his beloved; he is all alone. This separation is like confining the sun *in the deep/ of a forsaken heart*. The poem ends with the tall wall of separation that breaks the relationship into *pieces*. The confining of the sun in the heart foregrounds the idea that all is there in the heart which is the seat of emotions; the sun has illumined the heart, hence the poet's attention is inwardly concentrated that is why the whole world seems to him lonely. The metaphor of the wall foregrounds the impossibility of reconciliation or reunion. The parallel use of the various sounds foregrounds meaningful words. These sounds are: /s/, /n/, /l/, /f/, /i/, /f/, /l /, /ə/, /ai/. By combining and reshaping, all the above sounds can give us the phrase that sounds more or less like "sniff lull" which can further be anagrammatized as *lull the sighing*. This lulling of the sigh is a ray of hope in time of sheer despondence caused by the separation of the near and dear ones.

### *Waiting*

This poem is a combination of loneliness (separation) and hope. The speaker is hopeful about his meeting with his beloved; they will be united and everything will be settled. The

weeping of the violin foregrounds the intensity of grief caused by separation which is further aggravated by the phrase *night deepens*, though there is hope shown through the word *together*. This same word is deviant as it comes alone that further minimize the hope of union. The only consonance of /t/ and the deviant *together* correspond to each other thereby giving the idea of separation and union at the same time.

### **Velvet of Loss**

The *Velvet of Loss* opens with mentioning of overwhelming sorrow all around. It is night and the speaker is all alone talking about the absence of his beloved to her. He builds up nostalgic feelings when they were united – *under the new sun*. He hopes for the better; he will be more creative when they are *together*. The very title is deviant as loss cannot be collocated with velvet. The word *velvet* gives the idea of uniformity (in loss) on one side and joy of remembrance of the good days on the other. This uniformity sense is strengthened by the only consonance that occurs in the very word *velvet*. The intensity of the separation is foregrounded through the early (wee) hours that in turn give the idea of a sleepless night. The word, *valley* is specified by the definite article which is deviant as the readers do not know as to what it mentions. This deviation provides the idea of holistic and known approach towards such loss. Similarly, *under the new sun* is deviant. Lastly, the descending of the moon *in my lap* is not normal usage. The dash between *you/ and me* and *together* foregrounds the impossibility of getting together again, hence it remains only an unfulfilled desire.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The desperation that is caused by separation and impossibility of reunion find space in *Velvet of Loss*, *Separation*, *Waiting*, *Fears*, and *The Sun Rises*.

*Velvet of Loss* foregrounds the separation of the poet from his beloved. Khan has chosen words that highlights the importance of the beloved's presence as it will boost-up his creativity. This idea is in itself a deviation from normalcy as we know that the peak of creativity is that when one is longing for the most desired. But here he thinks he would be most creative in case his beloved is with him. This foregrounds that the beloved of the poet is not a human being rather it takes us to mental peace and happiness. In this regard the theme of separation stretches itself to the separation of an ideal from the world of the poet.

Moreover, through the deviant word, *velvet*, Khan tries to project the ideas of persistent loss and joy of remembrance of the good days at the same time. The sense of uniformity of loss is foregrounded through the only consonance that occurs in the very word *velvet*. The intensity of the loss is foregrounded through the wee hours that gives vent to a sleepless night. In addition, through the qualification of the noun, *valley*, with the determiner, *the*, Khan provides the idea of known approach towards such loss. Similarly, through the deviant phrases, *under the new sun* and the descending of the moon *in my lap*, Khan highlights hope for better days that would give fresh impetus to progressive life. This idea of impossibility of reunion is also foregrounded through the dash between *you/ and me* and *together*. In addition, through the transferred epithet, *the violin weeps*, in the poem, *Waiting*, Khan projects the intensity of woe due to separation. Even the highlighted word, *together*, that comes alone in the line minimizes the chance of union. This is further projected through the lonely consonance, /t/ that sounds like *two*, but the **two** are poles apart.

The same theme is maintained in the poem, *Separation*, where Khan's deviational choice of words foregrounds the agony of the desolated heart. Through the semantically deviant statement in which the sun is told to be confined in the heart, we are given the highlighted effect that the sun that gives light for illumination of the whole world has now gone to the deep recesses of the lover's heart and has left the world in pitch dark. It also gives us the idea that his concentration is centered now towards his heart and that he has shunned bothering about the rest of the world. Here, we can also find an implicit criticism on those who stick to personality worship and forget about what is going on in their surroundings. Moreover, through the use of various repetitive phonemes that foregrounds the thematic anagram, *lull the sighing*, thereby clarifies that it is time to stop mourning because it is not possible to bring back what is lost forever.

Similarly, *The Sun Rises* through linguistic choices, Khan has created the sense of loss with respect to separation, but here he deviates from the normal touch of separation and focuses his attention on the solacing of his heart in time of grief. He maintains it through the trick of disliking by referring to the union with the beloved likened to *oxygen in/the acid rain*. The message of accepting the separation is foregrounded through *dig/the sun*, though the severity of loss is also highlighted through the parallel phonemes that make up the word, *ill*.

Khan, in his poem, *Fearstoo* focusses on the theme of impossibility of reunion, but here he separates willingly for the sake of safety of his beloved. Through the personification of the grass that sings Khan foregrounds the selfishness of man as supported by the phrase, *Everymanfor/himself*. The tone of the poem grows bitter when he, through the deviant adjectival phrase, *too soft*, tries to propagate the message that most lovers do not care for the feelings of their beloveds rather they turn selfish in their approach.

Thus, Khan through various tools of foregrounding projects the theme of separation in the poems discussed above. His concept of separation is both traditional and individual. His traditional approach is that no doubt if you lose someone or something of value to you, then definitely you would be in hot waters, but at the same time his individualistic touch is that one should bear the brunt of separation as one someone or something is lost it cannot come back in the same vitality. It can only illumine your heart not the outer self. Moreover, he also goes against those who base sticking to their ideals on selfishness.

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