

The Aesthetics of Sensuality: A Reparative Reading of Taufiq Rafat's Poetry

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ABSTRACT

*The advent of the age of theory gave birth to paranoid reading which is based on the conception that literary works are written for propaganda's sake because they address some political issue. On the contrary, reparative reading turns the attention towards reading for pleasure to make poetry serve the function of art for art's sake. This paper scrutinizes Taufiq Rafat's poetry from *Arrival of the Monsoon: Collected Poems (1947-78)* and *Half Moon: Poems (1979-83)* through Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theoretical lens of reparative reading. Rafat's poetry has, so far, been subjected to paranoid reading to repress the free expression of eroticism to conform to the prevalent ghazal tradition. But the present paper is an attempt to transcend the 'innocent reading' practices to uncover Rafat's uninhibited articulation of sensuality. Rafat mentions two dimensions of sensuality, i. e., it is the source of creative faculty to convey spontaneous emotions and is inherently instinctual and needs to be addressed to unveil truths about the human psyche. Rafat celebrates sexual passion with enthusiastic zeal instead of concealing it as some shameful repressed desire. Besides, the paper also pursues unfolding sexual metaphors embedded in regional sensibility.*

Keywords: Reparative Reading, Sensuality and Creativity, Erotic Impulses, Celebration of Sexuality, Sexual Metaphor

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INTRODUCTION

The function of art is to present emotion, not reason, for the sake of emotion (Wilde, 2019). The emotional expression – which contains the truth about life (Schultz, 2011) –

engages a life full of senses, a search for sensation, the pursuit of self-realization through pleasure, and a desire for beauty in life. The best part of poetry enjoys freedom in the expression of these sensual elements as Oscar Wilde feels that it is better to feel sweet than to know the hidden political agendas of text (Wilde, 2006). The emotional expressions are in need to be recovered and defended. Art, for art's sake, serves this purpose by fashioning the emotional experience into an imaginative and pleasurable piece of writing (Wilde, 1889). The aesthetic experience refers to the perception and emotional appreciation of a piece of art, which invokes a sensual response. This aesthetic purpose of art compels the reader to read the text again and again. The success of an artist is to maintain this artistic ecstasy (Walter, 2009). Hence, poetry is the expression of the poet's poetic self imbued with sensuality (Raveendran, 2000).

Poetry is a universal art of self-liberated spirit. It deals with the inner ideas and feelings of the poet about every human experience, especially, love as an instinct. Hence, It is independent of external sources of sensibility for its material realization (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017). Two types of readings surface themselves in this regard as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick opines. Paranoid reading practice makes the interpretive work find some socially acceptable political agenda in the text while reparative reading is about reading for pleasure and finding surprises in the text, which is socially prohibited for its negative consequences. Love poetry, in paranoid reading, appears to be discussing the theme of unreciprocated love because the fair sex is stereotyped as lacking sensual emotions and instinctual love is socially disapproved. To Freud, socially unacceptable desires are turned into some socially acceptable and constructive activities in the sublimation¹ process. As a heartbroken girl can engage herself in home decor in order to divert her attention from the intensity of strong emotion. Similarly, the paranoid reading practice aims at taming the instinctual passion for love among the masses by interpreting it as negative emotion to be avoided. (Barry, 2020)

However, reparative reading observes that the role of desire in literary production and criticism is as substantial as that of historical, cultural, and institutional contexts (Saunders, 2006). John Donne writes poetry after gaining guidance from his feelings and thoughts, though they go against the mainstream thought pattern of society (Najjar, 2020). James Joyce considers sensual emotions as naturally healthy instincts; for the image of an ideal girl on the beach inspires Joyce's artist in *A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man* (McGregor, 1999). Nizar Qabbani sees the passion for love as important for poetic growth, as it enables the poet to sense aesthetic sensitivity, i.e., the knowledge of desire and joy. (Najjar, 2020)

Analogously, Tariq Rehman (1991) condemns categorizing of literature owing to its universal essence that surpasses man-made boundaries. He opines that literature of the third world bears the monogram of political reading of ethnocentric and nationalistic concerns. This label excludes its aesthetic and artistic appeal. Similarly, Taufiq Rafat's poetry has, so far, been neglected for its aesthetic appeal as scholars interpret it through political lenses making it a paranoid reading to divert the attention of the general public. Rehman brings to light the rich diversities of Pakistani literature from the purest perspective in evolving the tradition of Pakistani love poetry in English. Love poetry has

¹ A defense mechanism of unconscious mind to replace undesirable impulses with higher physical traits

its evolution in ghazal tradition, where the beloved is shown as irresponsible following a cultural set of instructions that a good woman is pure of these baser instinctual desires. As a result of this, the lover falls a victim to unreciprocated love and engages himself in self-pitying. Shahid Suhrawardy's and Ahmed Ali's ghazals are notable in this regard. As we see in Suhrawardy when he says: "... And you gathering your heavy hair, / Shaking intoxication from your brow, / Trample my longing into dust -- / And not turning once / Walk your triumphal way ...” (Rehman, 1991, p. 151). Similarly, Ali laments his alienation when he sees his leaving beloved: “Across the vast, unending sky / A pigeon plies its way / Towards the setting sun / I stand and watch it fly / Alone.” (Rehman, 1991, p. 153). Thus, this love poetry has an over facial tone of sublimity avoiding the direct and real expression of love as an inborn emotion. On the contrary, Rafat is the idolater of realism in unveiling the real aesthetics of sensuality as a natural human instinct owing to his imagistic bent of mind. The imagistic style renders the use of common speech to share real experiences directly through realistic images (Milne, 2009). This paper is an attempt to analyze Rafat's sensual poetry from the reparative perspective to find its inherent artistic and aesthetic value to repair the loss done by the paranoid reading of his literary works.

Literature Review

Two types of love traditions are visible in the history of love poetry, i. e., the choice of beloved over social propriety and the choice of social propriety over beloved. The former tradition, which serves the purpose of this paper, runs against the flow of the latter through the frank expression of sensual impulses as an effect of biological essentialism. A bird's eye view of erotic poetry from different ages and countries becomes the subject matter of this section with a special focus on rebellious poets who celebrate sexuality.

The history of sexuality has been traced in the glorification of temptation, praise, invitation, and enjoyment of sensual love through the plot of a woman who desires her lover in 'Song of Songs' of Judaism's Hebrew Bible as a sexual manual (Moore, 2010). The Jewish and Christian interpretations of the poem are the most erotic of all Biblical texts. The stage is set for an erotic embrace of the Christ and His beautiful bride. The further encounter is established through an immensely erotic description of kissing, expanding breasts, and conception during sexual union. The description of sexual activity portrays the details of undressing, legs opening, thrusting hand – a symbol for phallus –, and contaminating body parts. The image of a charioteer riding the chariot of a mare suggests wild sexual positions. And the image of 'under the apple tree' connotes sexual arousal as the tree has been used as a metaphor for the female body since the two apples hanging down above the trunk and the under end of the tree, where the nerves concentrate, bespeak female ecstatic arousal. All these interpretations evoke the consecration of conjugal love and sexual activity.

Contrarily, Ovid's *Amores* correlates warfare with sexual activity (Cahoon, 1988). Ovid compares the bed with a battlefield where the soldier subdues his beloved enemy and wins over her consent using violent force. He lays the siege and breaks into her territory to her delight. Ovid's philosophy of ignoring the adulterous wives is an attempt to advise the normative readership to ignore such works for censoring. (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017)

Correspondingly, John Donne's poetry is full of sensual provocations, fleshly sexuality, and open eroticism (Gogic, 1967). He celebrates free sex as a natural human right. He shares a wide variety of changing moods of lovers in a realistic way contrary to artificial Elizabethan standards of expression of love (Najjar, 2020). In his elegy 'On His Mistress Going to Bed, he uninhibitedly delineates the seductive description of the details of his beloved in the act of undressing.

While Nizar Qabbani's poetry deals freely with sexual politics through a bold expression of sensual desires. The beauty of the female body mirrors her soul and justifies the male gaze towards her earning him the title of the 'breast poet' as he celebrates women's sexuality: "Your breasts were not made for Bras but for mouths ... Crazy she who let her youth pass by without being kissed or sucked" (Najjar, 2020). Sexual intercourse illumines his intellectual world of poetry. He preaches free love and labels arranged marriage as 'legal death' for a woman. He was condemned by Arabian authorities for his heretical sayings.

Similarly, Kamala Das expresses woman's freedom of speech regarding sexual ecstasy as a way of expressing self-identity in patriarchal India. She unashamedly expresses the feminine longing, desire, and need for sexual love in an unrestricted poetics of sensuality as she asserts in *The Looking Glass*: "...ask me why his hand sways like a hooded snake Before it clasps my pubis. / Ask me why like A great tree, felled, he slumps against my breasts, / And sleeps." (Khanna, 2017)

Likewise, to threaten the American fear of sensuality, Walt Whitman prefers the sensual bodily pleasures to the bible and ranks copulation higher than death in "Song of Myself" (Ludington, 2019). The poem is about body and soul bearing connotations of pleasure, pain, desire, impulses, feelings, and sensuality. The lover turns over the poet's body, undresses him, and licks him from head to toe with special reference to certain body parts, i. e., bosom and hips. Similarly, Pablo Neruda dares to liken a woman's body to the geography of the world concealing hidden treasures of natural resources in his anthology 'Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair' (Karmakar, 2015). The sexual gaze as a part and parcel of his erotic poetry finds its way out as many poems narrate the description of female body parts (Tayyab, 2020). He endows women with regenerative powers as he uses a woman's body as a metaphor for the earth: "My rough peasant's body digs in you/ and makes the son leap from the depth of the earth" (Hirsch, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

Paul Ricoeur traces the advent of the age of theory in the works of three masters of suspicion Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, who demystify the edifice of religion as the solace giver to the poor. Their intellectual philosophies give birth to a reading practice called 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Ricoeur, 2008). This is a way of interpreting the meaning of a text through a suspicious lens. It is a type of alert and defensive reading of the hateful and envious intentions projected in the text in a disguised form, which reduces the text to a contextual critique only. Such intellectual interpretation of poetry robs it of the scope and capacity of sensual energy it offers to the reader. These conceptions are dealt with in queer theory – treatment of sensual aspects and sexual identity regarding homosexual and heterosexual theorization (Moore, 2010). The queer theory claims that poetry should be interpreted in an alternative style that connects the meaning of the text to an all-

determining power free from the bondage of the present domination of the interpretive practice of literary texts. (Bryson & Movsesian, 2017)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a queer theorist, doubts the effectiveness of ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ being one of many ways of interpretation (Sedgwick & Frank, 2003). Drawing upon affect theory², she calls it ‘paranoid reading’. It serves as a kind of strong theory to provoke negative affects – anxiety, fear, anguish, hatred, shame, humiliation, and inferiority complex, etc. The negative affects give life to the destructive aspects of the reader’s personality. Moreover, they blind the reader to its positive affects such as suspense, excitement, entertainment, and surprise, etc., which make the reader knowledgeable, productive, and creative. The invocation of the constructive aspects of the reader’s personality is the consequence of the hermeneutics of faith, also termed as ‘restorative reading’ by Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 2008). This is an alternative way of interpreting the meaning of a text in the form of a message as it is addressed to the interpreter directly by the writer (Josselson, 2004). Such reading practice, known as bibliotherapy (Miller, 2018), is prescribed as a cure for mental and emotional health. Sedgwick equates this reading practice with ‘reparative reading’, which enables the reader to repair the murderous hidden elements of the text to draw comfort from it as it brings about the real motive of the text, i. e., pleasure.

In reparative reading, the reader is supposed to encounter surprises during reading. Surprises, whether good or bad, give energy to the reader. Ricoeur’s restorative reading along with Sedgwick’s reparative reading transforms the interpretive practice into an act of imaginative reading of the text (Röder, 2014). It is a kind of repair being done to the loss created by paranoid reading. It leads one to a place of healing and satisfaction with the help of literary works that provide emotional sustenance (Raquel, 2019).

The reparative reading rebuilds the reader’s lost relation with poetry by bringing back the music of poetry and provides a chance to hear again what the poet says to appeal to the aesthetic sense. It rebuilds the reader’s relationship with the artist which has been lost in the wake of the age of theory. It favors the reconnection of poetry to life, the poet, and the reader.

The methodology of reparative reading is the iconoclasm of the rules and regulations of poetic craft. It pursues the Wordsworthian echo “the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion” (Wordsworth, 2020) in its true sense. It restores the sensual capacity, pleasure, and passion of poetry through charisma for “multiplicity, surprise, rich divergence, consolation, creativity, and love” (Hawthorne, 2018) in poetry.

DISCUSSION

Rafat is the representative of the Pakistani psyche in the cultivation of aesthetics of sensuality disclosed through a rebellious attitude against the mainstream ghazal tradition. Rafat’s uninhibited articulation of sensual experiences as natural instinct finds its way out in many of his poems in his anthologies *Arrival of the Monsoon: Collected Poems (1947-*

² The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud theorizes that affects – experience of feelings and emotions – become the primary drive of a particular human behaviour. Freud subdivides them into negative, positive, and neutral affects. Where positive and neutral affects cause a constructive behaviour while the negative affects cause a destructive behaviour.

78) and *Half Moon: Poems (1979-83)*, which serve the purpose of analysis from the reparative perspective in this paper. The veritable galore of Rafat's love poem teems with varying surprises, both intellectual and emotional, that excite the reader's imagination to reestablish his lost connection with life, art, and the artist. The analysis follows three sections dealing with three sensual aspects of his poems, i. e., sensuality and creativity, sensual impulses, and the celebration of sensuality. Rafat suggests that sensuality is a healthy emotion that is the base of creativity. Owing to this biological need, he discloses the sensual impulses in his poetry for the sake of emotion (Wilde, 2019). Moreover, he avoids their suppression and celebrates them as natural instincts to draw pleasure from reading to serve the purpose of art for art's sake. (Wilde, 1889)

Sensuality and Creativity

Creativity is the child of sensual experience. Sigmund Freud traces the development of creative faculty from children's play to fantasy to daydreaming. The forbidden sexual desires find their outlet in children through their mental condition when they are at play. In adolescents, this 'child play' is replaced by 'fantasy' in which they start 'daydreaming' to fulfill their sexual desires. This stage leads the poetic genius to create their sensual experiences through artistic works (Freud, 1983). Hence, sensuality becomes a source to endow man with energy and consciousness to work on a piece of art to create the human experience. This experience of life leaves positive effects on the personality of humans by relieving them of their frustrations. It satisfies them and they feel fresh to activate their creative faculty. In literature, the sexual experiences make the poets creative, transcendent, and transformative being a source of life's greatest pleasures (Clark, 2019). Rafat deals with this facet of sensuality as a source of creativity in many of his poems which have no counterpart in poets dealing with Pakistani ghazal tradition. This section deals with Rafat's two types of love poems: ones that symbolize Rafat's metaphysics of love poetry that sensuality gives life to creativity and the others that narrate the implantation of this philosophy, i. e., the sight or memory of a sensual experience inspires Rafat to create a poem following Wordsworthian dictum that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. (Wordsworth, 2020)

Rafat fashions 'A Life' with the theme that symbolizes his metaphysics of love poetry – sensuality resulting in creativity. In the poem, creative activity is symbolized by sexual activity. The poem recounts the description of physical intercourse which is suggestive of the intellectual creative process. The poet says that the activity starts with no specific reason but just as a result of instinctual impulses. The expressions "vibrating", "A motion", "Backwards and forwards", and "abrasion" (Rafat, 2008, p. 48) are suggestive of sexual intercourse resulting in physical injuries, which is followed by drawing back and delighting groans toward the end of the activity. The activity results in the conception of a baby. Hence, life is generated. Similarly, a poem is the child of hard labour on the part of the poet. The poet starts writing when he feels the impulse. The writing process is never simple as it burns the poet's blood in the selection and pruning of the subject, style, language, poetic mold, and the knowledge of poetic tradition. This hectic mental activity gives life to an unparalleled child of the poet's intellect, which becomes the immortal monument of art, history, wisdom, knowledge, and beauty to draw pleasure for the ages to come.

Similarly, Rafat sublimates sexual activity as a source of knowledge, wisdom, and creativity in “When We Kiss” as it relates the theme of creativity in association with sensuality, Rafat’s metaphysics of love poems. The poet uses geographical and seasonal fluctuations for sexual activity. The kiss of the beloved raises a tumultuous emotional storm of a whirlwind in the poet. It moves towards the south creating involuntary heat in the middle of the body that demands the instant gratification of the temptation. With the satisfaction of the desire, there comes wisdom to illumine the poetic minds (Rafat, 2008). The poem is suggestive of creativity in esoteric symbolism. The south symbolizes the sun as the south sits at the bottom of the compass and falls in the chakra of the solar plexus. The sun, in turn, becomes the symbol of light, energy, life, wisdom, imagination, and conception as the element of fire is associated with the sun. Fire burns out the impure emotions of lovers and artists and transforms their powers into positive energies. While in Christian symbolism, the south is the place in the compass where male and female energies mingle to produce life. Since creativity is the only guarantee of survival, continuity, and immortality, the physical sensual urges must be addressed in poetry as a part of the natural process. Their suppression is destructive and deadly whereas their expression refreshes the tired hearts for the intellectual illumination.

Rafat also has poems that narrate the implementation of his metaphysics of love poems – narration of a sensual scene that inspires the poet to write a poem. In this regard, Rafat’s “The Heart at Forty” immortalizes the moment of passionate desire and poetic experience. The most creative stage of life is the forties as it is said as naughtily. Correspondingly, Rafat says neither the ideological guard nor the senses – the apparatuses that control our actions in youth – control the free flow of thought in this period. The poet uncloaks the fact that the simple task of youth becomes much more exciting, backbreaking, gasping, and palpitating at this stage of life. Such a jumpy and arduous task makes the poet promise himself never to do it again when it is over once. But the very next day, the sight of an “upturned breast” (Rafat, 1985, p. 73) weakens his will as the sight inspires him and instills him with energy, excitement, joy, and creativity. And he starts searching for suitable words, the correlative of the sighted image, and the poetic mold to fashion a beautiful poem. The poem is an echo of the modernist claim of psychoanalysis that all creativity roots in one’s unconscious impulses for unfulfilled desires.

Similarly, “Squirrels” is Rafat’s living monument in the implementation of his poetics of love poems. In the poem, the poet describes that a delightful scene of chasing squirrels inspires him to write a poem. The poem presents a contrast between the man-made and God-made world. Rafat states that animals are more creative since they do not have a social filter of public opinion. They enjoy themselves whenever and wherever they feel like it. It saves them from the agony of suppression of desires and they enjoy a fun-loving life of creativity following the law of nature. The image of chasing squirrels connotes sexual foreplay. The energy level of squirrels turns Rafat’s genius to equate it with human experience. The excitement fills his mind to create a poem with the free expression of what he has seen to cease the present moment and the emotional reaction it creates. On the contrary, Pakistani poets dealing with the ghazal tradition, as the spokesmen of civilized society, hide their sexual orientations under the garb of formal behavior. But Rafat, as a true artist, shares his personal impressions without any filter

following the tradition of many frank writers such as James Joyce, W. H. Lawrence, and Saadat Hasan Manto, etc.

Coequally, the reflections of Rafat on the sexual lives of his neighbours inspire him to write a poem in “My Neighbours”. One of the neighbors is a well-reputed lawyer who is such a courteous man that none can think if he can use his professional position to seek sensual pleasures from his female clients in the wrong way. The bank cashier is also a poet who excessively beats his wife to inspire sexual orgies in his poetry. The sexuality of a notorious couple is evident from their secret meetings to fulfill their erotic desires. While the insurance agent is a bachelor as he lives upon pornographic books while stretching over the couch. Then there is also a run-away lover in the street. Hence, the love lives of common people become the subject matter of the poem.

Sensual Impulses

The take of ghazal on the emotion of love bears an artificial approach to the form and content of the poem in Pakistan. The beautiful and mesmerizing beloved is presented as showing ignorance and eschewal of the approaching lover. Sex, being a strict taboo, is not given articulation at all. But Rafat, a realist and free artist, reveals both the male and female psyches as the active agent in the fulfillment of sexual desires. Rafat freely expresses true sexual impulses for the sake of emotion as the emotions are in need to be expressed, defended, and preserved through poetry (Wilde, 2019). Rafat insists that erotic impulses like any other natural emotion and instinct need to be addressed in poetry as a medium of emotional catharsis (O’Brien, 2009) – a healthy activity as it stimulates one’s creative faculty. He keeps nothing from his reader in the description of sensual experience as there is no filter in Rafat when it comes to sharing a poetic truth of life. He conveys simply whatever crosses his mind without the observance of any civilized and formal strainer. The crude words, impressions, and experiences of men and women as fleshly beings are related directly in Rafat. This section discusses the free expression of sensual impulses appealing to both male and female psyche regarding time to love, adulterous love, and jealousy.

“The Time to Love” is an impassioned love poem that deals with the moody impulses of lovers. Rafat says that the sensual impulses have no specific time, place, or season to obey. Rafat uses the metaphor of salt lick to convey the instinctual behavior of inherent human impulses. Salt licks are naturally occurring mineral-rich stony places which attract animals to lick essential and flavorsome minerals important for their growth, refreshment, and regeneration. They are hidden in natural environments and are exposed to harsh weather only. The animals instinctively approach them on smell to idyll their cherished flavor. But humans do not need the rainy season which exposes the salt-lick. The lovers can enjoy their salt-lick whenever they feel the impulse twenty-four seven. The desire is evoked from internal sources and not external like specific times of seasons, months, and days – the way of the world. Rather it follows the way of the heart (Rafat, 1985). To a similar degree, “From a Train Window” states when the desire is aroused, worldly restrictions do not matter. In this poem, the poet unveils the difficulties and cautions of copulation with his wife in the presence of sleeping children in a small room of a small house of a joint family. Even the domineering society does not keep him from yielding to his sexual impulse at night.

Similarly, the instinctual impulses of the male psyche know no boundaries of man-made race, caste, religion, culture, and social standards. Their only god is the worship of beauty for its own sake. “Monkeys at Hardwar” shares the youthful emotions of the poet under colonialism. The poet gives an explicit expression to the desire felt by the native men for white women under the influence of superior colonizers. The colonizer ladies used to come to see their men in the presence of the native men. The ladies used to kiss their men goodbye in their presence also. Rafat opens up the male psyche of the natives who display a civilized and patronizing behavior toward the colonizers. But in heart and heart, they lusted for their white girls. Equally, in “Sansandhara”, the poet gives a crystal clear description of instinctual male impulses, the God of which is the sight of the female body. Natural impulses know not the unnatural boundaries of religion. The Muslim poet recounts an incident of having seen a Hindu woman wearing a white sari while giving a bath to her kids in a pool. The poet along with his friend plunge into the water at the sight of the wet blouse and ‘the nipples strongly marked’ (Rafat, 1985, p. 209) to hide the shame of their arousal. Following the same note, “Meditations and Prayers” gives way to the adulterous impulses of the poet. The poet shares a dramatic experience of quality time spent with his mistress through a scene of entangled lovers where the rising passion, dirty words, animal voices, and a will to destroy everything reach their climax. Rafat intersects the male psyche bare, which is otherwise hidden through composure in public.

On the other hand, “Under Fire” is the expression of the fearful impressions of a jealous husband’s impulses during the situation of war. Under the question of life and death of the family, the poet prefers to think about his sensual upheaval of emotions. The poet throws light on the sexual intercourse he has had with his wife many times where the pleasure of the activity fluctuates by moaning. The poet hiding with his kids and wife amidst shelling, cannot help thinking about his unbearable pang if his wife is captured by the enemies as a sex slave. He envisions his wife moaning for another man, which is absolutely unacceptable for him. Similarly, jealousy becomes the cause of divorce in “Divorce”. The poem is suggestive of adultery as the cause of divorce of a liberal couple. The late-night gatherings at dancing rooms, travels by costly cars while sitting in the laps, and “squeezing fingers in dark corners” (Rafat, 1985, p. 127) are suggestive of adultery that brings an end to their liberal relation. The poems seem to be the open confession of otherwise held impulses.

Besides the male voice, the female psyche is also given a place in the free articulation of sensual impulses in Rafat. “The Medal” shows a natural woman in the filter-free expression of female sexuality. The poet reveals the impulsive narrative of a lady who is not a goddess as people consider her to be the widow of a martyr. But she is an impulsive and fleshly being who is more concerned about her desire for a phallus instead of the prized medal (Rafat, 1985). Indistinguishably, the sensual impulses admitting no refusal on the part of a woman becomes the subject of “The Poet as a Martyr” which relates a situation in which the unwilling poet, dead-tired and sleepy, is compelled by the wife to have sexual intercourse. The wife starts arousing him by sprawling over him while he lays face down in the bed, pushing her away until slaps her. As a reaction, the wife turns a bucket full of water over the poet making him rush towards the bathroom. The poet gets so cold that he enters into her quilt which is followed by a wild sexual activity in which

the inner heat exuding impulsively makes the poet outdo the heat of the quilt. Both poems show an active female in the satisfaction of her sexuality contrary to the stereotypical shy, modest, passive, submissive, and chaste woman.

Celebration of Sensuality

A societal taboo, sex, is treated as forbidden fruit in the ghazal tradition of Pakistan, where the prostate³ poets avoid the direct confrontation of the subject. But, being the voice of a natural poet, Rafat celebrates sensuality as a natural instinct. He advocates the philosophy that showing of sensual needs is not something to be ashamed of. Like other bodily instincts such as hunger, sensuality has its own justification since it is substantial for creativity. The poet immortalizes the sensual emotions by penning them down. They are saved for the coming generations to draw wisdom and aesthetic pleasure for they have the elements of suspense, surprise, and entertainment. Many of his poems have explicit and implicit theorems that circulate the passion and desire for sensuality as well as exploration and employment of metaphors from regional landscapes, flora and fauna, and seasons. This section lays bare the sensual themes in Rafat's love poetry that describe or suggest veritable sexual experiences full of suspense and surprises that compel the reader to read again and again to draw pleasure. (Wilde, 1889)

Rafat's love poems are impregnated with erotic themes, whether explicit or implicit, to celebrate sensuality. "The Marsh-Birds" commemorates the union of lovers in the backdrop of monsoon rains in a metaphorical way. The poem satirizes the social propriety of man-made society. The birds become lovers oblivious of all man-made boundaries of caste, religion, and gender when the scorching summer heat is abated by monsoon falls in marshlands and hill stations. However, the poet uses geographical imagery to connote human desire. The description of clouds over mountain peaks is analogous to the sexual union of human beings. The cloud is like a hand that is "kneading" (Rafat, 1985, p. 119) the pert breasts gently and the reaction of delightful moans is followed. Similarly, Rafat compares the girl with a sugarcane stalk in "Village Girl" (Rafat, 1985). The simile of sugarcane stalk bespeaks the slim, slender, and tall female figure with a sweet and refreshing juice inside to appease the thirst of a heat-torn lover. The regional simile cherishes a sense of refreshment and regeneration. On a similar note, in "The Blade of Grass", the poet sublimates the sensual emotions through a suggestive description of a blade of grass. It is a tiny, rough-surfaced, and keen-edged blade of grass with long-hidden roots inside the soil. It has healing powers like a dervish who positively answers the pleas on invocation. The description is a metaphor for a male sexual organ having regenerative powers, which can heal the wounds of a dismayed soul and cast ecstasy upon stressed hearts to impart them with new life (Rafat, 2008). The poem is a suggestive expression of sensual zeal.

On the contrary, "Ceremony of Autumn" is a peaceful sublimation of mutual love explicitly. Autumn is the season of fulfillment. This is a time of the poet's rejuvenation through sexual union with his bride. His wife enters his life before his old age with a kind promise to regain what is lost. Having achieved other goals in life, he makes himself busy in the brief ritual of bed (Rafat, 1985). Similarly, "Another Monsoon" recounts a sexual

³ Prostate poets are the poets who promulgate the ideology of state conforming to the social propriety and do not enter into any contradictory dialogue with the state

encounter of lovers directly during the dog days of summer. They lay down naked in dark rooms on the cool floor. The frustration of summer is sorted out through sexual intercourse to seek deliverance from the heat (Rafat, 1985). Analogously, “Close Shave” shares a frank description of conjugal love where the husband and wife’s entanglement into a gentle embrace while kissing is articulated. Their talk at this hour also moves around sexual affairs (Rafat, 1985). But “After Many Hot days”, verbalizes a wilder sexual passion of a lover who meets his beloved after a long time. The poet compares the lover with a wind that bends back the trees with its wild blow. Identically, the love-torn lover falls on his beloved when the fortunate hour comes finally to gratify his desire (Rafat, 2008). This open expression of love in his poetry celebrates love as a natural emotion to be followed freely.

Whereas “The Wind Howls” is more descriptive in its sensual suggestiveness. The poem unfolds a wind storm in scorching summer and the poet and his wife’s reaction to it in the form of sexual intercourse. The wind becomes the metaphor for the storm of heaving breaths inflamed by the impelling passion of lovers. Though the dog days are the period of inactivity symbolized by bolted doors and windows, the wind finds its way through “the keyholes and crevices” (Rafat, 1985, p. 3). With electricity dead, only a candle illumines the darkroom. The quiver of the candle flame, too, is an insinuating correlative to the fluctuating passion of the enamoured lovers. Similarly, the image of ‘encyclopedias’ is invoked to refer to the bodies of lovers, vindicating the expansiveness of their inflamed instinctive emotions and desires. Taken with the frenzy of their infatuated clasp and rising emotions, the lovers are too absorbed to react even if something falls in the other room. The only haven in this world is this union of their bodies at this hour of exultation. The poet sublimates the sexual union by throwing the image of ‘north’. The north sits in the root chakra in esoteric interpretation and is associated with darkness. This dark symbolizes the unconscious mind. The ideas and desires are generated in the unconscious and are nurtured by human actions. The image of the ‘north’ (Rafat, 1985, p. 4) represents the unconscious mind of the poet, which is guiding his action in bed. The image of pushing ‘shoulders against the wall’ (Rafat, 1985, p. 4) evokes the sense of control over the beloved’s body in the lover’s embrace. The poem celebrates the free expression of provocative passion.

Correspondingly, sensuality galore peaks in Rafat’s “The Ascent”, where he dreams of a ride on horseback. In some visionary world, a beautiful milk-white flying horse glittering in moonlight awaits him. Mesmerized by its grace and many feminine traits such as beautiful eyes, head, flying hair, and strong wings, the poet settles on her bareback. As she unfolds her body, he looks at her beautiful body parts. ‘Sand dune’ (Rafat, 1985, p. 249) is a reference to breasts. The heaven where he fixes his eyes and is received as a guest is a metaphor for the vagina. Undoubtedly, the poet makes the horse stand for the metaphorical figure of a beautiful woman. The horse ride becomes a metaphor for the sexual ride for the poet to celebrate sensuality.

CONCLUSION

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theoretical framework of reparative reading offers a high potential for aesthetic pleasure in the poetry of Taufiq Rafat as it abounds in wisdom, surprises, suspense, knowledge, and entertainment. Unlike the traditional artificial treatment of love poetry in Pakistani ghazal tradition which stages a shy and prude

beloved, Rafat's beloved is more realistic as she is yielding to the bodily desires of the lover. She is a fleshly being who is aware of her sexual needs and does not shy away from their open expression. Rafat's treatment of sensuality is realistic as the product of biological essentialism. His sensual poems show three sensual dimensions: sensuality and creativity, sensual impulses, and celebration of sensuality, which become the subject matter of this paper. Since sensual experience naturally gives birth to life, sexual activity connotes the artistic activity of creation in Rafat. The sexual impulses, impressions, and experiences illumine his mind to write poems beautifully. The sight of a pair of squirrels and upturned breasts as well as his reflection on the sensual lives of his neighbours inspire him to create poems. Indebted to the creative facet of sensuality, Rafat feels free to share sensual impulses with his reader for the sake of emotion. Rafat's veritable gallery of impulses manifests changing moods of lovers drawn from male and female psyches to introduce surprising situations in peace and war. The uninhibited expression of male sensual impulses at the sight of a wet lady and white 'memsahibs', to have sex at any time, copulate under pressure, and commit adultery are unveiled directly. Rafat, a free artist, describes various sexual experiences, explicitly and implicitly, to celebrate the passion of sensuality as a natural instinct. Rafat also draws sexual themes carried through regional metaphors to convey the core of the intended meaning. The metaphor of salt-lick, wind storm, candle flame, blade of grass, sugarcane, encyclopedia, geographical directions, hilly areas, marshlands, clouds, and naked horseback, etc, bear sexual connotations. The reparative reading of Rafat's love poetry unmasks his intention to write for art's sake and please the reader intellectually and emotionally. It helps the reader reestablish his lost relationship with poetry. Moreover, Rafat's agenda is not to draw some spiritual philosophy from his sensual poetry but to deal with sexuality more rationally as an instinct to be fulfilled like hunger.

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