

① Pain is caused on weddings and marriage ceremonies by girls who
lick pots in the kitchen.
Based on the Pakistani proverb.

Wedding in the Flood

They are taking my girl away forever.
Sobs the bride's mother, as the procession
forms slowly to the whine of the clarinet.
She was the shy one. How will she fare
in that cold house, among these strangers?
This has been a long and difficult day.
The rain nearly ruined everything.
But at the crucial time, when lunch was ready.
It mercifully stopped. It is drizzling again
as they help the bride into the palankeen.

② ⇒ The girl has been licking too many pots.
Two sturdy lads carrying the dowry
(a cot, a looking-glass, a tin-trunk,
beautifully painted in grey and blue)
lead the way, followed by a foursome
bearing the palankeen on their shoulders.
Now even the stragglers are out of view.

I like the look of her hennaed hands.
Gloats the bridegroom, as he glimpses
her slim fingers gripping the palankeen's side.
If only her face matches her hands,
and she gives me no mother-in-law problems.
I'll forgive her the cot and the trunk
and looking-glass. Will the rain never stop?
It was my luck to get a pot-licking wench.
Everything depends on the ferryman now.
It is dark in the palankeen, thinks the bride.
And the roof is leaking. Even my feet are wet.
Not a familiar face around me
As I peep through the curtains. I'm cold and scared.
The rain will ruin cot, trunk, and looking-glass.
What sort of a man is my husband?
They would hurry, but their feet are slipping.
And there is a swollen river to cross.

They might have given a bullock at least.
Grumbles the bridegroom's father; a couple of oxen
would have come in handy at the next ploughing.
Instead, we are landed with a cot, a tin trunk, and a looking-glass.
All the things that she will use!
Dear God, how the rain is coming down.
The silly girl's been licking too many pots.
I did not like the look of the river
when we crossed it this morning.

Come back before three, the ferryman said.
Or you'll not find me here. I hope
he waits. We are late by an hour.
Or perhaps two. But whoever heard
of a marriage party arriving on time?
The light is poor, and the paths treacherous.
But it is the river I most of all fear.

Bridegroom and bride and parents and all.
The ferryman waits: he knows you will come.
For there is no other way to cross.
And a wedding party always pays extra.
The river is rising, so quickly aboard
with your cot, tin trunk, and looking-glass,
that the long homeward journey can begin.
Who has seen such a brown and angry river
or can find words for the way the ferry
saws this way and that, and then disgorges
its screaming load? The clarinet fills with water.
Oh what a consummation is here:
The father tossed on the horns of the waves,

And full thirty garlands are bobbing past
the bridegroom heaved on the heaving tide,
and in an eddy. Among the willows downstream.
The coy bride is truly bedded at last.

PUACP

Taufiq Rafat

General Introduction

Arrival of the Monsoon" first collection book published in 1985

Lines:

1. Kitchens were places
2. We grew up in.
3. High-roofed, spacious
4. They attracted us
5. With the pungency
6. Of smoke and spices
7. From December beds
8. We hurried to cheer
9. Of wood fires, above
10. Which sang black kettles.
11. Once there we dawdled
12. Over last night's curry
13. And fresh bread dripping
14. From the saucepan, eggs,
15. And everlasting bowls.
16. Of tea, Discussions
17. Births, deaths, marriages,
18. Crops, Mother presided.
19. Contributing only
20. Her presences, busy
21. Ladling, ladling.
22. Noise was warmth.
23. Now in these
24. Cramped spaces, there is
25. No time for talk. A
26. Stainless homogeneity
27. Winks back our sneers.
28. Chairs are insular;
29. They do not encourage
30. Intimacy like slats.
31. The table tucks bellies in
32. We would not dream
33. Of coming to this place
34. To savour our triumphs,
35. Or unburden our griefs.
36. Chromium and Formica.
37. Have replaced the textured
38. Homeliness of plaster, teak.
39. Everything is clean as a hospital.
40. The surrealist clock,
41. Where once the eloquent.

42. Grandfather swung,
43. Clicks forward, stiffly.
44. We are deferential
45. To the pleasures
46. Of electric toast, and take
47. Our last gulps standing up.

Themes:

- Traditional life versus Modern life
- Village life versus City life
- Nostalgia for the past
- Lament on modernity.
- Replacement of old culture and tradition by modern influences.
- Modern man devoid of love, devotion, joint family, loyalty, intimacy, kindness, honesty.
- Old kitchen as a symbol of tradition, culture, innocence, joint family, love, compassion, close to nature, un materialistic, pure and simple.
- Modern kitchen as a symbol of newness of modernity, abandonment of tradition and traditional way of life, materialistic society, lack of sympathy, compassion, love and destruction of human values. It represents hollow men, waste landers, disloyal, cramped hearted modern society.

Changing values

