

Taufiq Rafat (7 June 1927 – 2 August 1998), was an author and poet. His work influenced other Pakistani poets and he is credited with the introduction of the concept of a "Pakistani idiom" in English literature. Rafat conducted poetry workshops, which influenced many younger poets. His poetry reflects a deep insight into Pakistani social traditions in relation with cultural practices. Rafat examines Pakistani social and cultural standards through lens of criticism. for example his poem "Wedding in Flood" sketches a three dimensional image of social and economical conditions in various perspectives of wedding elements and the families involved.

"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 (palanquin)
This 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 the cot, trunk and looking glass.
What sort of 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 jump 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 wedded at last.*

wedding in flood is a free-verse poem, describing the two different phenomenon in same light. in Pakistan, monsoon is not an ideal season for wedding. usually dry and a bit cold season is considered best for wedding events. Rafat has juxtaposed rain and wedding event connecting it through Pakistani proverb that rain is caused on weddings and marriage ceremonies by girls who lick pots in the kitchen. the first narrative is of mother of the bride who is grieving over the leaving of her daughter, which is perhaps an indication of typical relationship between a married girl and her parents. dowry holds a very significant importance in Pakistani culture associating with honor and family name in society. the way bride's mother counts dowry items, it indicates the poor materialistic conditions and a kind of rural simplicity attached with far flung rural landscapes. another image of palanquin with a foursome symbolizes the reflection of a funeral, dead body carried by four shoulders. poet kinda relates wedding with death that once a girl is married, she is supposed to be cutoff with her family like she is dead now, concentrating on only her in-laws. next voice which readers come across is the voice of bridegroom. typical youth puzzled by feelings of affection for bride by just imagining her physical beauty and the marital issues of being sandwiched between mother and wife. he is also shown to be worrying about a little simple dowry, which he might be able to consider if the girl is archetypical submissive wife and daughter in-law. the third narrative is of bride who locates marriage as risky as flooded river by special reference to the ferryman(a reference to Charon, the ferryman who transports souls in under world.ref. to Hades).palanquin's darkness is shown as the darkness of coffin and her cold body is like a dead body. and again a very typical social pressure is making her worry that her dowry will be ruined because of rain. and we see a different attitude towards state of "being married". bride is not excited about her husband or her marital concerns but she is worried about what kind of people she is going to interact with. the second last narrative is of bridegroom's father who is supposedly representative of past materialistic mindset where marriage was a certain permit to earn a lot of economic benefits in form of dowry. here readers come across the simple items which will be in used of bride only. here one thing which is more noticeable is the attitude of common man towards monsoon. usually monsoon results in floods which is very problematic and catastrophic in developing countries like Pakistan. flood is symbolic to sweeping of the arranged marriage tradition which has been erased by the sudden explosion of modernism. everyone dies in flood meeting with the ends they thought of in sexual and economic perspectives, cancelling all the human success and dignity.