

## NARRATIVE STYLE OF TAHIRA NAQVI IN ATTAR OF ROSES

The author of Attar of Roses, Tahira is an acclaimed fiction writer, translator and professor who consider herself to be a 'feminist'. In her own writing she has skillfully examined the lives of Pakistani women on both sides of the world, weaving personal stories from Pakistan intricately with the immigrant experience. Reflecting her concerns, most of her characters are socially and politically conscious people who are confronted with important but mundane everyday issues. Tahira Naqvi's work is generically labeled as South Asian fiction; she maintains that she always writes purely from a Pakistani point of view.

These tales of Pakistani society provide an insight into family relationships, marriage, rites of passage, societal roles and the impact of political change. Reading the stories from Tahira Naqvi's short story collection "Attar of Roses," is a psychological tour to the gentler times, when people were assigned to a distinct position in the world and they carried out the duties of that position with dignity without much grumbling. It is the portrait of the society as it exists. The seeds of progressive thoughts are already there in these stories, the narrator in many cases is the mouthpiece for the progress, but the stories themselves are populated by the men and women who have placidly accepted their place in the society and their duties to the family. Tahira Naqvi selects the plot that has proper begging, middle and end. Characters that she selects are the reflection of Pakistani society and their thinking. She didn't choose the setting of any other country but of Pakistan. She portrays Pakistani traditions, culture and its norms. Tahira Naqvi has tried to express the true realistic picture of Pakistani values and customs. These collections of stories deal with the themes of Nostalgia, Match-Making, politics, Matrimonial relations, Love, Feminism and typical social behavior. Attar of Roses provides a real and accurate portrait of Pakistani tradition, culture and language.

. The stories are like the lyrical prose. There are no major upheavals in the lives of the characters, no situations where a crucial life-altering decision is made. The characters are full of free spirit but have consciously accepted their lot. The characters stay within their socially acceptable sphere. The wife in the 'Notebook' comes close to making such a decision. Another woman character faced with the injustice simply has no energy left to fight back. The stories touch many aspects of the educated urban middle class life of Pakistan. Many of the characters are teachers and doctors. The stories are filled with very sensitive and carefully drawn details of the family life. It makes one very nostalgic for those long, fun-filled summer vacations; family visits with cousins, uncles, aunts and grandparents, picnics and weddings and such things. Stories like "Love in an Election Year," "A Peep Hole Romance," and "A Woman of No Consequence," deal with the arranged marriages and the reactions of young girls to three very different faces of the arranged marriages. The last one is a serious tale of the unrelenting desire for sons in the society, with disastrous consequences.

It was a face and body that seemed a ravaged

By time, by marriage, by children? My God, what had happened?

**Baji Sughra** of the "Love in an Election Year" says to Shabo, her cousin, and the narrator of the story,

*"Well Shabo, she wants too much. You can either be a good wife or a good leader. And she wants to be all three."*

Here 'she' in question is Benazir Bhutto. On the surface, the statement looks anti-feminist, but Baji Sughra is a realist, a woman of the world, and a curable romantic. In the end, Shabo, who is hurt by Baji's behavior, says:

*"As we embraced, the sharp gold edges of her long kundan earrings cut into my cheek."*

That sharp cut is the symbol of Shabo's initiation into the adult world. She must now face the harsh realities of life.

The title story "*Attar of Roses*" and another one called "*A Man of Integrity*" have the male protagonists, who are drawn into the mystique of the women outside of their marriages. Portraits of these men are done with a sensitive and a poetic bent. The account of the slowly unfolding temptation is very seductive. Although the two stories end on very different notes, the men come off looking as sensitive souls, good husbands, and good fathers.

The "*Notebook*," is the story of a bride locked in an abusive marriage. She gradually becomes aware of her own creativity amongst her embroiled domesticity. Ironically it releases her from the oppressive ties that bind her. "*New Beginnings*" is a story about the empty nesters. Although many of the stories such as "*Love in an Election Year*," and "*Atonement*" touch on the sociopolitical issues in a lighter vein, "*History Lessons*" is the only one that deals with the politics head-on. A flogging of three teenage convicts is set to take place on the Maidan in front of the Central Jail. The events of the day unfold through the eyes of a schoolteacher. A group of women, hoping to take advantage of the anticipated crowds, is gathered near the Maidan to protest the Shariat law. The dialogue between the liberal thinking youthful teacher and the conservative science teacher clearly brings the two opposing points of views in focus.

"*Shadows*" and "*Master*" are the two of the weaker stories. "*Largesse*" is a story of an ailing grandfather. "A matter of togetherness" is a tale of hypocrisy of the religious society. The woman who valued her religion in life is cheated of her faith in her death due to this hypocrisy. A sharp but muted commentary on the religious fanaticism.

**Similes:**

The stories contain some awesome similes:

*"The afternoon rehearsal was like a load of bricks upon her back."*

*"The words sat like stones on his tongue."*

*"Rehearsal was like a bricks upon her back."*

**“Her shoulders like a harness.”**

**“Her face was ashen and chalky like the color of pure mud.”**

### **Metaphor:**

**“Small pink palm.”**

**The lyrical description of the watch is a metaphor for the timeless gift of love offered by the Grandfather**

### **Cultural vocabulary:**

**She has used different words in her collection of stories that are the part of cultural vocabulary such as:**

**Malmal kurtas and shalwar, Pratha, Chadar and Burka, Kashmiri suit, Bibi, Tonga, Garam Masala, Dhoti, Salaam, Hum Jeety Ge, Allah o Akbar, Haji, Tabla, Dadima, Dadajan, Nikha, Valima, Khuda Hafiz, Chacha ji, Begum sahib, Kajal, Veranda**

### **Color Imagery:**

**Red orange flowers, dark discolorations among vegetations ,Crystalline brightness, Dark brown smudges, Yellow table clothes, Black burka, Purple Whitish coloring, Her jasmine skin, her eyes glistened with a restive sparkle ,and her hair, black like midnight sky , ,Dark hair, Brown spor, Muddy-pink bottle**

### **Political leaders:**

**Prime minister Nawaz Sharif  
Benazir Bhutto**

### **Irony:**

My son Mustafa, Arifa rolled the words over on her tongue silently,  
The boy Mustafa's son, I don't feel...I don't feel what should I for him.  
Didn't feel same surge of affection for the child as he did for the child father.

### **Food imagery:**

Images of food are plentiful and are used to show creative side of the woman trapped in an unhappy domestic life.

Mangoes, Kneading dough, Sugar etc.

### **Cosmetic:**

Eyeliner, Lipstick, Mascara, Foundation, Shade, Cream

### **Onomatopoeia:**

Ufff, Hai.

The stories are a mirror to the life as it existed and may still exist in parts of Pakistan.

Tooba Masood.

