

A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND STYLISTIC STUDY OF RAHMAN ABBAS'S "ROHZIN"

DR. REHANA KAUSAR

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, HEAD OF URDU DEPARTMENT, LAHORE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN UNIVERSITY,
LAHORE, PAKISTAN.

DR. SHAISTA HAMEED KHAN*

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF URDU, GC UNIVERSITY, LAHORE. PAKISTAN.

HAFIZA AYESHA SADDIQA

PHD SCHOLAR, LAHORE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN UNIVERSITY, LAHORE, PAKISTAN.

ABSTRACT

Rehman Abbas stands among the foremost fiction writers of Urdu literature—those rare voices who, through the depth of their thought, the courage of their expression, and the mastery of their art, have bestowed upon the Urdu novel an entirely new dimension. Abbas represents the modernist and progressive spirit of contemporary Urdu fiction. His bold writings, intellectual profundity, and fearless portrayal of social realities have earned him a distinctive place in the literary landscape.

KEYWORDS: contemporary, modernist faith, love, identity, politics,

INTRODUCTION:

Rehman Abbas belongs to that rare generation of writers who have revitalized the Urdu novel—both in thought and in form. He is not merely a storyteller but a sensitive thinker and keen observer, who captures, with profound insight, the ceaseless struggle between man, society, and love. Abbas portrays both the bitter and the beautiful aspects of life with unwavering honesty. His characters, though drawn from ordinary lives, embody entire universes of human emotion. They are not mere participants in a story—they become mirrors of society. They love, they dream, they fall, and at times, they rebel. It is this human color, this vivid realism, that brings his novels so close to truth. The recurrent themes in his fiction—love, faith, identity, politics, and social oppression—testify to his fearless literary conscience. He does not shy away from delicate or controversial subjects that many prefer to avoid. For Abbas, literature is not merely a source of entertainment, but a means to unveil truth, however bitter it may be. This very courage of expression lends his art its unique stature.

Among his distinguished novels are *Nakhlistan ki Talash*, *Khuda ke Saaye Mein Aankh Micholi*, *Ek Mamnoo Mohabbat ki Dastaan*, *Ruh-e-Jameel*, and *Zabran Khwab*. Each novel carries within it a new vision, a fresh pain, and a renewed hope. His *Ek Mamnoo Mohabbat ki Dastaan* (A Forbidden Love Story) especially brought him both fame and controversy. In this work, Abbas tells the story of a human soul crushed between love, religion, and social constraint—a narrative both heart-wrenching and exquisitely beautiful. Rehman Abbas's style is simple yet deeply affecting. His sentences are short, fluid, and graceful—carrying with them both intellectual depth and poetic charm. He thinks like a philosopher, yet writes with the tenderness of a poet. His prose shines with both linguistic clarity and emotional intensity. He does not merely narrate stories; he stirs questions in the reader's heart—

Who am I? What is love? What is the price of truth? I

In Abbas's vision, love itself becomes a living character—a radiant force that dispels all darkness. Yet for him, love is not confined to romance; it is a philosophical awakening, a bridge connecting man with his own soul and the world around him. Alongside love, resistance also forms a central current in his writings. Through a quiet yet powerful voice, he protests against tyranny, hypocrisy, and narrow-mindedness. His works whisper the eternal message: *truth may be silenced, but it can never be erased*. Another significant thread in his fiction is the search for identity and selfhood. His characters, seemingly ordinary, confront profound existential questions: *Why do I exist? Where lies my freedom? What is life without love?* It is this philosophical depth that distinguishes Abbas's novels from conventional Urdu fiction. In recognition of his literary contributions, Rehman Abbas has received several honors, most notably the Sahitya Akademi Award. Yet, for him, the greatest reward remains the reader who discovers themselves within his words. His prose leaves a lasting resonance, born from the union of truth, humanity, and emotion. In conclusion, Rehman Abbas is among those rare writers who have transformed language into a metaphor for human experience. His pen is a confluence of love, truth, and defiance. In his writing dwells both the softness of the heart and the strength of the mind. He

belongs to that noble lineage of writers who see literature not merely as art—but as nourishment for both the heart and the intellect.

His novel *Rohzin* stands as a luminous testament to this vision. *Rohzin* is the story of a young man named Asrar, who wanders through life in search of love, meaning, and the essence of his own existence. From childhood, his world has revolved around the sea. It was the sea that claimed his father's life, yet strangely, Asrar feels no fear of it. On the contrary, he feels drawn to its depths—as if the ocean carries within it a secret meant only for him. He speaks to it, longs to submerge himself within it, and senses in its vast silence a mysterious pull that calls him again and again. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that Asrar is no ordinary youth. He is deeply introspective—a thinker, a dreamer, and a seeker of truth. Many people cross his path, but it is the *women* in his life who leave the most profound imprints upon his soul. Each woman teaches him something new, reshaping him in subtle yet transformative ways. Rehman Abbas's *Rohzin* occupies a unique place in the modern history of Urdu literature. It is not merely a story—it is a journey of thought and emotion, an exploration of humanity that leads the reader into the silent chambers of the inner self. The title *Rohzin* itself means *the sorrow of the soul*—that quiet ache which cannot cry out, which cannot be expressed, yet continues to breathe within the human spirit every moment. This unspoken grief forms the central pulse of the novel. The story opens with a startling line:

"It was the last day of Asrar and Hina's life." 2

With this single sentence, the author places the reader at the threshold of the story's end, only to then lead them backward through flashback, allowing the narrative to slowly unfurl. This cinematic and emotional technique gives the novel its haunting rhythm. The first turning point in Asrar's life arrives on a stormy night when he meets Jameela. Rain lashes the city, the wind roars like the sea, and amid that tempest, their intimacy is born. For Asrar, this becomes his first physical experience of love. Yet rather than shame or confusion, he feels a strange awakening—an understanding that perhaps the soul can be reached through the body. Later, another woman enters his life—Shanti. She is a simple woman, yet her soul is luminous with truth. Unlike others, she sees Asrar not as a client but as a human being. In her presence, Asrar feels a rare calm. Through her, he begins to see life from new perspectives. Yet within him remains a restlessness—a thirst that no tenderness can quench. Then comes the most beautiful turn in the tale—the arrival of Hina. One day, Asrar visits the shrine of Haji Ali. A light drizzle falls; the air carries the scent of prayer and salt. In that ethereal moment, he sees her—Hina—standing like a vision. The scene, the rain, the shrine—all merge into a mystical atmosphere, as if destiny itself had written this meeting. Hina enters Asrar's life as an Aphrodite of love and beauty—not merely a woman, but a presence, a divine emotion that seeps into his soul. Their love blossoms—at once physical and spiritual. They draw close to one another, yet a faint sadness always shadows their union. Asrar feels that his soul bears a wound, an emptiness that even love cannot fill. Hina's nearness brings him fleeting peace but not completion. He knows he loves her, yet within that love dwells an unexplainable melancholy. As the story deepens, other figures appear—Aimal, Vidi, and Yusuf, Hina's father—each carrying their own worldview. Yusuf, a wise and perceptive man, teaches Asrar that life is not merely love but also responsibility and awareness. Yet Asrar remains a man more attuned to the realm of feelings than to the logic of the world. A quiet war begins within him—between love and society, between body and soul, between truth and illusion. He speaks to himself, questions God, and sometimes even confides in the sea, which becomes his mirror—reflecting back his own fragmented image. As time passes and circumstances shift, Asrar's bond with Hina begins to fade. He realizes that love is a moment, not an eternity—but a moment so true that it can illuminate an entire life. Hina's face in the rain, the echo of the sea's voice, and the memory of their love remain etched forever in Asrar's being.

In *Rohzin*, Rehman Abbas does not merely tell a story; he builds a bridge between the physical and the metaphysical, between passion and pain, between the sea outside and the sea within. It is a novel where love becomes philosophy, sorrow becomes revelation, and the human heart becomes the vessel of divine mystery. The Ending of *Rohzin* — Love, Loss, and the Wound of the Soul. The novel *Rohzin* concludes on a deeply moving and contemplative note. Asrar stands by the sea, rain falling around him, and asks himself: *Is love truly the cure for the soul—or merely a dream?* He knows he has lost much, yet he has learned one eternal truth: without love, the human soul remains incomplete, whether that love lasts a lifetime or only a fleeting day. The very word *Rohzin* means *"the wound of the soul"*, and Asrar's entire life revolves around this inner wound. Through love, he tries to heal it, yet each love leaves behind a fresh scar. His story is steeped in sorrow, beauty, rain, and love—as though life itself were a long, unending rainfall where both joy and grief are equally drenched. Rehman Abbas reminds us that every human being carries their own *Rohzin*, their own quiet wound of the soul—and that we are all, in some way, walking through our private tempests. This is the novel's central message: love can break us, yet it is also the force that completes us. The protagonist, Asrar, is a sensitive, introspective dreamer who moves from a small village to the vast city of Mumbai in search of livelihood—and, unknowingly, in search of the meaning of his own existence. For him, Mumbai is not merely a city; it is an entire universe—a place of blinding light and deep shadow, of love and loneliness alike. Amid the city's noise and chaos, Asrar not only seeks work but also grapples with questions of identity, desire, and the human spirit.

Several women enter his life, each embodying a different shade of love and self-discovery. Miss Jameela is the first spark—his teacher, who awakens in him the tender curiosity of first love. Their bond, though touched by physical intimacy, is primarily intellectual and emotional, standing at the delicate crossroads of innocence and awakening. Then comes Shanti, a courtesan—not a symbol of decay or shame, but of pain, truth, and compassion. Her character defies social stereotypes. The relationship between Asrar and Shanti is not one of mere bodily pleasure; it is a communion of two wounded souls seeking solace in each other's company. Both are incomplete beings, yearning to fill the voids life has carved within them. Finally enters Hina, the most profound and complete woman in Asrar's journey. She is deeply spiritual yet intellectually free—a woman shaped by two contrasting forces. Her mother represents the rigid face of religious extremism, while her father, Yusuf, is lost in mysticism and the unseen world. Between these extremes, Hina grows into a woman who fears religion, questions it, and yet embraces love without hesitation. When Asrar meets her, they become each other's definition of life itself. Their love transcends boundaries—it is physical and spiritual, sensual yet sacred. It is not merely the union of two bodies but the recognition of two souls. In one another, they seek that serenity which perhaps neither prayer nor philosophy could offer. But love, in Abbas's world, is always touched by sorrow. The very depth of their connection becomes the reason for their undoing. By the time they reach the final moments of their lives, the reader realizes that love never truly ends—it merely transforms, taking on new forms in the eternity of memory.

Rehman Abbas, through *Rohzin*, redefines the themes of love and sexuality in Urdu literature. He refuses to treat desire as sin or shame; instead, he presents it as a natural and sacred aspect of human experience. He shows that the longing of the body is not separate from the yearning of the soul—it is, in fact, a vital part of the soul's fulfillment. To deny or suppress this desire is to silence a part of one's own spirit. Through Asrar, Abbas suggests that the body and soul are not opposites but two dimensions of the same human truth. The novel also delves deeply into religion and extremism. Abbas portrays how religion, when stripped of love, becomes a force of fear. He presents characters who, in the name of faith, spread hatred and suppress the human heart. In contrast, figures like Asrar and Hina believe that the true essence of religion lies in humanity, compassion, and love. This perspective places *Rohzin* firmly within the realm of modern philosophical fiction—a work that questions, enlightens, and heals. In *Rohzin*, the city of Mumbai is not merely a backdrop but a living, breathing character. Its streets, shrines, monsoon rains, and boundless sea are woven into the fabric of the story. The sea, in particular, becomes a symbol of life itself—serene on the surface, yet concealing untold storms within, much like Asrar's own soul. Rehman Abbas captures the city's dialects, moods, and rhythms with exquisite precision, giving the novel an unmistakable aura of realism and poetic depth. In the end, *Rohzin* is not just the story of one man—it is a meditation on what it means to feel, to love, to lose, and to endure. It whispers to every reader that beneath our differences, we all carry the same wound—the longing to be whole through love. Throughout *Rohzin*, a subtle yet profound philosophical undercurrent runs beneath the surface of the narrative. Rehman Abbas writes:

“Desire lives in the soil; it knows no season.” 3

This single line encapsulates the essence of human nature. No matter how pious, wise, or spiritual a person may become, desire remains alive within them—quiet yet eternal, sacred yet unsettling. It is the pulse of existence itself. Abbas's *Rohzin* is therefore far more than a story of love; it is a mirror reflecting the human soul, its longings, its sorrows, and its unquenchable thirst for meaning. Through this novel, Abbas portrays the inner restlessness of human life—the sadness, solitude, and inner conflict that arise from the soul's incompleteness. The very title, *Rohzin*, literally meaning *“the wound of the soul,”* stands as a metaphor for that silent ache which trembles within every heart but can never fully be uttered. The protagonist, Asrar, embodies this existential wound. A sensitive, dream-filled youth, he travels from his village to the sprawling city of Mumbai, not merely to earn a living but to find himself. For Asrar, Mumbai is not a setting—it is a living organism, a breathing world of light and darkness, noise and silence, rain and sea. The city mirrors his inner landscape—its chaos, its beauty, and its endless hunger for meaning. Three women—Miss Jameela, Shanti, and Hina—shape the map of Asrar's emotional and spiritual evolution. Each woman represents a distinct expression of love, and yet all are bound by a single thread: the inseparable union of love and desire. Miss Jameela awakens his earliest emotions. She is an intelligent, graceful woman who teaches Asrar that love is not confined to words or ideals—it breathes through the body as well. Through her, he learns that affection and attraction can coexist with innocence and curiosity. Shanti, the courtesan, enters his life as a symbol not of sin, but of truth and purity born from suffering. Her presence challenges society's moral binaries, revealing that it is not nature but *society itself* that creates the notion of sin. Between Asrar and Shanti, love transcends the physical; it becomes a journey into the depths of human being, where the body becomes a vessel for spiritual revelation. Then comes Hina, the most profound and complex figure of all—a woman at once religious and intellectually liberated. Her mother represents the rigidity of religious fanaticism, while her father, Yusuf, is lost in mystical abstraction. Hina grows up suspended between these two extremes—fear and faith, devotion and doubt. She questions religion, challenges convention, and dares to love with her entire being. When she meets Asrar, their union

feels destined. Their love is both earthly and transcendent—a meeting of bodies that leads to the awakening of souls. Yet this union, for all its beauty, carries within it the seed of tragedy. From the novel’s first line—

“It was the last day of Asrar and Hina’s life,” 4

The reader is aware of their fated end. The story, circular in its design, begins and ends at this point, enclosing their love in a timeless frame of destiny. Through Hina, Abbas explores multiple dimensions of womanhood—faith, rebellion, sensuality, and self-awareness. She is a woman who dares to live and love, yet society and fate conspire to deny her that right. Her story becomes a lament for all those silenced by the twin forces of convention and destiny. At the heart of *Rohzin* lies Abbas’s philosophy of desire. He presents desire not as sin but as the foundation of life itself. As he writes, “Desire lives in the soil, and it knows no season.” This line echoes throughout the novel, illuminating every moment of Asrar’s journey. Through him, Abbas conveys that no matter how spiritual or disciplined one becomes, the instinct to desire—to love, to seek, to touch—remains alive. This desire can lead to creation or destruction, to divinity or despair—but it is always human, always real. In *Rohzin*, the tension between body and soul is constant and deliberate. Abbas refuses to separate them; instead, he shows that the physical act of love can itself become a spiritual experience. In the relationship between Asrar and Hina, this philosophy reaches its purest form: they seek the soul through the body, transcendence through touch. Yet society’s gaze, the fear of religion, and the invisible threads of destiny prevent their union from reaching completion. Abbas captures this moment of transcendence in lyrical, evocative prose:

“In the intoxication of union, they were no longer themselves. That moment was the pinnacle of their love. They lived not within their own bodies but in each other’s eyes. Their souls were illuminated, yet the world around them vanished. Rain, sea, stones—nothing existed. They had forgotten who they were. It was a moment of self-dissolution, a moment some call ‘nirvana.’ In that union of breath, they reached a point where, in the enchantment of desire, their souls touched the evolutionary edge of existence, and for an instant, they were blinded by light.” 4

This passage encapsulates what *Rohzin* truly is: a meditation on the mystical unity of love, body, and soul, and the eternal human struggle to find wholeness in a fractured world. In the end, *Rohzin* stands as a philosophical novel disguised as a love story—a tale where every emotion carries the weight of metaphysics, and every touch becomes a question about the meaning of being alive. In *Rohzin*, Rehman Abbas delivers a bold and penetrating critique of religious extremism and spiritual hypocrisy. He reveals that when faith becomes devoid of love, it breeds only fear, rigidity, and deceit. Through the contrasting figures of Hina’s parents, Abbas presents this conflict in human form: her mother is a prisoner of blind devotion, while her father, Yusuf, is lost in the fog of mysticism and superstition. Between these two extremes—irrational piety and detached spirituality—Hina is raised, torn between submission and rebellion. This tension shapes her into a woman who questions, resists, and ultimately defines faith on her own terms. For Abbas, true religion is that which teaches love, that which awakens compassion for the suffering of others. Asrar embodies this philosophy. He rejects the outer trappings of dogma and seeks divinity within the human heart. His defiance of hypocrisy and extremism becomes an act of spiritual courage. He stands, quietly but firmly, against social constraints and moral duplicity. As the critic Chand Narang observes,

“Rohzin marks a new turn in Urdu fiction. Rehman Abbas has woven love, sexuality, and spirituality into a single narrative thread, giving the Urdu novel an entirely new intellectual direction.” 5

In *Rohzin*, Mumbai is far more than a backdrop; it is a living character—vibrant, chaotic, breathing in rhythm with the novel’s emotional pulse. Its streets, rains, sea, and noise emerge as metaphors for human life itself. The sea, ever restless, mirrors Asrar’s own heart—vast, deep, and turbulent beneath a calm surface. Abbas paints the city with such sensory precision that the reader seems to walk its alleys, feel its monsoon, and hear its storms. The narrative also weaves in the historical realities of Mumbai—the communal riots, the bomb blasts, and the haunting aftermath of violence. Even suicide bombers appear briefly as symbolic presences, representing the destructive fusion of faith and fanaticism. In these passages, Abbas’s storytelling evokes the magical realism of Salman Rushdie and Gabriel García Márquez, blending social tragedy with mystical imagination. Rehman Abbas writes with a poetic, symbolic, and philosophical style. His prose, though simple in diction, carries hidden layers of meaning. His sentences are short, yet vast in resonance; his tone, lyrical but restrained. He neither dramatizes emotion nor intellectualizes it; instead, he strikes a natural balance between feeling and thought. The novel’s structure employs flashback with remarkable mastery. Moving between past and present, Abbas captures the fluidity of memory and time, giving the narrative a dreamlike continuity. At certain points, reality and imagination merge seamlessly—the world of thought and the world of flesh dissolving into each other. It is this blend of realism and introspection that sets *Rohzin* apart from conventional storytelling. Abbas’s prose, though deceptively plain, carries poetic gravity. His words hold emotion and philosophy in equal measure—soft as prayer, sharp as thought. He can reveal both the rigidity of religion and the tenderness of love with the same ease. His writing has the clarity of daylight and the depth of twilight. From

a broader literary perspective, *Rohzin* represents a turning point in modern Urdu fiction. Its psychological realism and fearless engagement with taboo subjects echo the influence of Freud and D.H. Lawrence, yet its soul remains rooted in Indian social and cultural soil. Abbas explores the labyrinths of human emotion, desire, and identity with rare finesse. Ultimately, *Rohzin* is a multi-layered novel. On one level, it is a story of love and the soul; on another, it is a critique of religion, society, and the fears that haunt human existence. The three principal characters—Asrar, Shanti, and Hina—represent the three dimensions of being: desire, emotion, and faith. Abbas shows that when these forces coexist in harmony, the human being becomes whole; but when one is repressed, life turns incomplete. Thus, *Rohzin* is more than a love story—it is a spiritual allegory, a reflection on the human condition. It tells us that the pain within the soul cannot be healed by hatred or religious rigidity, but only by love, in all its forms—tender, tragic, and transcendent. Rehman Abbas has given Urdu literature a masterpiece of thought, emotion, and humanity—a novel that invites its readers to rediscover themselves, to speak once more with their souls and their loves. That, ultimately, is the true power of *Rohzin*. Muhammad Hasan Askari once remarked that

In every age, it is the reader's duty to make stern and unwavering demands of contemporary writers. Rohzin is not merely a major work of Urdu fiction; it is a mirror—one in which we behold the truth of our times, our society, and the concealed depths of our own being. 6

Rehman Abbas, with rare courage, has articulated what many hesitate to voice. His prose is bold yet tender, imbued with sincerity and emotional resonance. It is for this reason that *Rohzin* is not simply a novel, but an experience—one that lingers in the reader's heart long after the final page is turned. It feels as though *Rohzin* is not a tale of ordinary love, but the story of the pain within the human soul, the silent cry that dwells in every being. The way Rehman Abbas weaves together the threads of love, desire, faith, and the spirit pierces the heart with quiet intensity. Through Asrar's character, the reader comes to realize that within every human lies an incompleteness—a void that no presence can wholly fill. Through Hina, Shanti, and other figures, the author reveals a profound truth of life: that love brings both joy and sorrow, and without either, existence remains unfinished. When the novel ends, it does not feel concluded; rather, it seeps into the consciousness of the reader, echoing like an unspoken memory. This, indeed, is the novel's greatest triumph—that it lives on within the reader, like an unfinished dream or an old wound that, when recalled, makes the heart feel at once lighter—and heavier.

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