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An Analysis of NusratNaseem's Writing Style in the Context of *KehkashanHaiYeh Mere Khwabon Ki* and *Hashiya-e-Khayal*

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Abstarct:

Nusrat Naseem's writing style with specific reference to her two significant prose works, *Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki* and *Hashiya-e-Khayal*. Situating her literary contribution within the cultural and intellectual tradition of Kohat and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the study traces her biographical background, literary evolution, and thematic concerns. The article examines her reflective, memory-driven, and spiritually infused prose in *Kehkashan HaiYeh Mere Khwabon Ki*, highlighting its engagement with personal experience, cultural memory, feminist consciousness, symbolism, and poetic sensibility. Simultaneously, it explores her critical temperament in *Hashiya-e-Khayal*, where she emerges as a balanced, postmodern reviewer who combines objectivity with empathy, textual analysis with character portrayal, and scholarship with accessibility.

The study emphasizes Nusrat Naseem's commitment to simplicity, clarity, fluency, and purposefulness in both creative and critical writing. Her ability to respect the reader's intellectual freedom, avoid ideological imposition, and transform criticism into a meaningful dialogue is discussed in detail. The article

also underscores her distinctive approach to literary reviews, where attention to the author's personality, intellectual background, and social context enriches textual understanding. Overall, the article positions Nusrat Naseem as a credible, humane, and thoughtful voice in contemporary Urdu prose, whose work bridges creativity and criticism while preserving cultural, social, and moral values.

Keywords

Nusrat Naseem, Urdu Prose, Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki, Hashiya-e-Khayal, Literary Criticism, Essay Writing, Writing Style, Feminist Consciousness, Cultural Memory, Postmodern Review.

Kohat is an ancient and historic district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that was granted divisional status on August 1, 1984. This region is mentioned in ancient Buddhist texts as well, which points to its deep historical roots. For centuries, Kohat has remained a center of learning, literature, and religious education. In the stretch from Ghazni to Attock, it was regarded as a prominent hub of religious and intellectual activity. Renowned figures in Persian, Pashto, Hindko, and Urdu emerged from here, including writers such as Ahmad Faraz, Syed Fariq Bukhari, Ahmad Pracha, and Rahim Gul.

“Consequently, the famous Pashto writer and religious guide HazratAkhunDarvez (RA), the renowned and beloved poet of Pakhtunkhwa Hazrat Rehman Baba (RA), and countless other elders completed important stages of their education in Kohat. Even today, the shrine of Hazrat Haji Bahadar in Kohat remains a place of pilgrimage for people. Many distinguished poets of Persian, Pashto, and Hindko lived and worked here, and this region has always remained at the forefront in serving the Urdu language.”(1)

Nusrat Naseem belongs to this fertile intellectual soil. She was born on March 22, 1954, in Kohat. She is known by her real name and does not use a pen name. A large part of her childhood was spent at her maternal grandfather's home, where love, comfort, and close family bonds shaped her personality. This is why memories of the past, the warmth of relationships, and domestic culture appear with striking authenticity in her writings.

NusratNaseem came from a family where the desire for education existed, but circumstances often stood in the way. Her mother herself could not receive formal education, yet she placed great value on learning for her children. Nusrat Naseem pursued her studies from primary level through an MA in Urdu and an MA in Islamic Studies. Her academic journey stands as proof that marriage and household responsibilities need not become barriers to education.

Professionally, she chose teaching. She served at Nisar Shaheed Degree College, Risalpur, as well as in private educational institutions. She also worked as editor and assistant editor of Nisar Magazine. After retiring in 2014, she formally stepped into the literary world, although her writings had already been appearing in newspapers and magazines before that.

Her literary work began with a religious inclination. Her first book, *Aaiye Haath Uthain Hum Bhi*, is a collection of prayers and supplications. After that, her writing gradually expanded in scope. *Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki* includes social, cultural, and intellectual essays in which readers find a graceful blend of past and present. Her autobiography, *Beetay Hua yKuch Din Aisay Hain*, holds special significance. It beautifully preserves the culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly Kohat, along with women's lives, family relationships, and social values. This book was selected for the Abaseen Literary Award 2021.

Her third book, *Guzartay Lamhon Ki Aahat*, is a reportage based on the days of the COVID-19 pandemic, marked by a strong religious consciousness. In *Hashiya-e-Khayal*, she presents serious and thoughtful reviews of various scholarly and literary works. Her style is graceful, fluid, and thought-provoking. She weaves memory, observation, and spiritual feeling into a single thread.

Nusrat Naseem's personality is gentle, humane, and deeply committed to relationships. She regards Hindko as her mother tongue, has a distinct voice in Urdu, and also commands English. Her columns, essays, and autobiographical writings are, in essence, documents of a past yet precious social era.

“Professor Nusrat Naseem is a humane writer, a literary NGO in herself, and an institution in her own right. She took up the pen at a very young age. She is a biographer, short story writer, author, editor, and educationist. She served as editor of *Nisarin* and *Kotal Rang*, and in the sphere of public service, she was elected three times as a Lady Councilor from her constituency during the era of General Zia-ul-Haq.” (2)

In this way, Nusrat Naseem is not only a custodian of Kohat's literary tradition but also holds a respected place as a female literary voice. Her writings remind us that literature is not merely a craft of words, but a means of preserving culture, relationships, and the lived experiences of life.

Drawing a “final” line in the history of Urdu literature in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is genuinely difficult. The material is scattered, a great deal of work remained buried in manuscripts, and many reference books are no longer easily accessible. Even so, one thing is clear: the tradition of Urdu in this region—and of its early forms such as Hindi and Hindavi—is very old and gradually matured over centuries.

When it comes to the beginnings of Urdu prose, one of the earliest examples often cited is *Tafsir-e-Hindi*, which scholars regard as an extremely early text. After that, another major and ancient reference is *Khair-ul-Bayan*, written by Pir Rokhan Bayazid Ansari and dated to 1530. This book is important both linguistically and literarily, because it clearly shows the early prose tendencies of the region and the direction of religious and intellectual expression at the time.

Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki is a collection of diverse essays written on a wide range of subjects. The book comprises a total of forty-one short essays. On the opening page, Nusrat Naseem herself clearly defines the nature of the book by describing it as “a collection of varied essays on different themes.” In this constellation of writings, she records her personal experiences and observations of life. These essays revolve around feelings of love and belonging, childhood memories, social values, religious and cultural festivals, spiritual states, and themes connected with mysticism. Commenting on the book, Nasir Ali Syed writes:

“The dreams shimmering throughout this constellation appear less like essays and more like pictures. This collection is a captivating album that contains not only images, but also interpretations of many of NusratNaseem’s fulfilled and unfulfilled dreams.”(3)

The author presents her observations and emotional states in simple words and with remarkable brevity. This economy of language enhances the emotional and aesthetic impact of the writing.

A glance at some of the essay titles in *Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki* is enough to suggest the direction and subject of each piece. In “*Mere Bachpan Ke Din*” (The Days of My Childhood), the author revives childhood memories, recalling how festivals were once celebrated with joy, warmth, and careful preparation.

In “*Zara Umr-e-Rafta Ko Awaaz Dena*” (Calling Back the Passing Age), she journeys into the past and presents memories of Ramadan, describing how children would gather around mosques to hear the call to prayer.

In “*Pat Jhar Ke Rang Mein*” (In the Colors of Autumn), she reflects on the relationship between the season of autumn and the stages of human life. Another essay, “*Qaumi Kitab Mela Aur Hum*” (The National Book Fair and Us), narrates her experience of visiting a book fair, allowing the reader to travel alongside her through the lively atmosphere of books and readers.

Nusrat Naseem does not shy away from highlighting social evils. Her essay “*Bad-Unwani Aur Rishwat Satani*” (Corruption and Bribery) addresses these bitter realities of society with honesty and concern. The book opens with memories of childhood, a phase that holds deep significance for everyone. Through vivid recollections of an earlier era—celebrations of Shab-e-Barat, the spiritual and social vibrancy of Ramadan, and the domestic roles of women—she paints living images of a past age. Beneath the surface of each essay, the reader encounters a subtle message: the importance of relationships, the sincerity that once defined them, and how materialism has gradually overshadowed emotional bonds. The warmth and purity of earlier times, she suggests, have slowly been replaced by the dominance of money.

Within these brief memoir-like essays, the author brings together shades of multiple genres. At times she reflects on the poetic merits of a poet, at others she reviews a book, narrates a journey, or captures a fleeting moment of life.

Nature, in her view, conceals the secrets of the universe, and uncovering them requires reflection and contemplation—a call that only a few receptive souls accept. By interpreting different times of the day as stages of human life, Nusrat Naseem creates a striking symbolic picture. Morning becomes a metaphor for the innocence of childhood, noon represents the peak of struggle and effort, and evening signifies calm, satisfaction, and repose. Yet evening is brief; soon the sun sets, symbolizing the arrival of life’s final stage and the preparation for eternity. Through this allegorical style, she thoughtfully highlights the deeper meaning of human existence.

One of the most significant essays in this colorful collection is devoted to Sethi House in Peshawar. The author skillfully depicts this historic heritage site, describing its beautifully carved wooden balconies, upper stories, courtyards, doors, and decorative motifs. These elements stand as living images of Peshawari culture and tradition, vividly conveyed through her evocative language. While reading these pages, one repeatedly wishes that a few photographs of Sethi House had been included, so the reader might visually accompany the literary journey—though the author has shared such images on social media.

“All the buildings were adorned with beautiful wooden craftsmanship; balconies and upper rooms on both sides of the street looked exceptionally graceful.”(4)

In the book *Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki*, Nusrat Naseem’s personal experiences, observations, emotions, feelings, and intellectual inclinations are clearly reflected. These are inner states that naturally and unintentionally find their way into any creative writing. The book consists of essays rooted in the author’s lived experiences and scenes closely observed from life. Nusrat Naseem does not impose her beliefs or viewpoints on the reader. Her pen respects the reader’s intellectual freedom. She presents ideas, yet leaves the choice of acceptance or rejection entirely to the reader. This quality turns her writing into a dialogue rather than a sermon.

The strength of Nusrat Naseem’s writing lies in its ability to provoke thought. Her aim is not to steer the mind in a single direction, but to open new windows of reflection. As a result, the reader’s heart and mind remain active, and the text does not end with the final line; it continues its journey within the reader’s thoughts. Stylistically, she prefers brevity over excessive detail, yet this conciseness never results in a loss of meaning.

Her deep attachment to the pen and the book is especially noticeable throughout the work. She does not view the pen merely as a tool for writing, but as a means of expressing emotions, giving voice to inner states, and achieving mental purification (catharsis). To her, the pen is a sacred trust and a boundless power through which a person attains peace and inner satisfaction. This belief lends her writing a distinct spiritual depth.

Each essay fully reflects its subject, whether it is connected to social life or mirrors the author’s personal emotions. In this context, the following verse aptly captures her style:

“Guldasta-e-ma‘nikoajabdhang se baandhoon
Ekphoolkamazmoon ho to sau rang se baandhoon” (5)

Today’s reader, often afflicted by mental restlessness and intellectual fatigue, appears to be searching for precisely such writing. NusratNaseem’s essays fulfill this need. Her prose not only provides mental comfort but also gives the reader the courage to look inward—and it is this very quality that grants her a respected place in contemporary prose literature.

Travel memories also occupy an important place in NusratNaseem’s writing. Her recollections include journeys both small and large: trips to Islamabad for book fairs, visits to Murree’s scenic

valleys, travels to Dubai, and observations of the ancient ruins of Mohenjo-daro. Above all these, however, stands her journey to the sacred lands of Makkah and Madinah. The detailed account of this spiritual voyage draws readers in as companions, walking alongside her step by step.

In essence, *Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki* is not merely a collection of essays; it is a reflective, cultural, and spiritual document that preserves personal memory alongside collective experience, rendered in a gentle yet deeply meaningful prose style.

In *Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki*, Nusrat Naseem's choice of poetic verses reflects her refined and mature poetic taste. She includes verses within her essays that are fully in harmony with the subject and deepen the meaning, whether the theme is corruption or the evening of life. Her essay on Faiz Ahmed Faiz stands out as a fine example of her poetic sensibility, where she presents Faiz's hope, optimism, and intellectual breadth in a simple yet effective manner.

“Yehdaaghdaaghujala, yehshab-gazidasahar
Wohintezaaarthajiska, yehwohsahar to nahin”(6)

The book also clearly reveals Nusrat Naseem's feminist consciousness. She speaks candidly about a woman's existence, her deprivations, and social injustices, particularly in the essay “*Wujood-e-Zan Se Hai Tasveer-e-Kainaat Mein Rang*.” Her writing is accessible yet intellectually layered; it urges the reader to think and awakens social awareness.

Language is the soul of any piece of writing, and everyday usage and idiom breathe life into that soul. The most striking quality of Nusrat Naseem's writing is that she never allows the language to become heavy or cumbersome. Her style is idiomatic, natural, and rooted in everyday speech, so the reader never feels alienated. She has full command over the use of language, which is why her prose moves forward with ease and fluency.

In her essays, Nusrat Naseem employs simple and familiar Arabic and Persian words that are easily understood and add to the beauty of the language. There is no artificial ornamentation in her diction; instead, there is smoothness and flow. Her use of idioms is well-timed and balanced, clarifying meaning while also creating a sense of pleasure.

According to Dr. Sarwat Rizvi, fluency, smoothness, and spontaneity are hallmarks of Nusrat Naseem's writing, but most important is her distinctive personal style, which sets her apart from others.

“Along with fluency and smoothness, spontaneity is a defining feature of Nusrat Naseem's writing. Most importantly, however, it is her own distinctive style that sets her apart and gives her a unique identity.” (7)

Hashiya-e-Khayal is a book consisting of twenty-one essays in which Nusrat Naseem presents reviews of books belonging to different literary genres. In these reviews, her breadth of reading, depth of understanding, and refined literary taste become clearly visible. A review, in essence, is the balanced presentation of a book's strengths and weaknesses, and within a literary context it is carried out according

to established principles and conventions. According to Gyan Chand Jain, review and criticism are closely related forms of the same discipline, both aimed at facilitating a deeper understanding of a literary work.

1. AayaHaiBulawaMujheDarbar-e-Nabi Se
2. Do Hanson Kajora
3. SunehreHaath
4. Alif Allah Meem Muhammad ﷺ
5. Tulu
6. SurkhSayyara
7. Taqareez o Mazameen-e-Hamd o Naat
8. To Bah Hai Bhai
9. Use ParwaazKarne Do – Par EkNazar
10. AgliBaar
11. Baoni
12. Jhd o Justuju
13. Hadi-e-Aalam
14. Musafir
15. Nostalgia
16. Bahawalpur Mein Ajnabi
17. YehKhushKalamiMujhe Bab-e-Ilm Se Bakhshi
18. WohTanzaKarGayiMujhKo
19. Reza Reza
20. Lab Silay Hue
21. YehAankheinIstaaraHain

Some of Nusrat Naseem's reviews were first published in literary journals and were later compiled into book form. A distinctive quality of her criticism is that it guides the reader rather than confusing them. She does not confine herself to a single genre; instead, her range of study extends from travelogues and autobiographies to short stories, poetry collections, children's literature, devotional writings, and newspaper columns. Her style is marked by brevity and conciseness, which prevents the reviews from becoming heavy and instead makes them meaningful and engaging.

According to Akram Kunjahi, Nusrat Naseem's literary curiosity leads her toward deep and thoughtful reading, and she succeeds in transferring the pleasure of that reading experience to her audience. It is precisely this quality that makes *Hashiya-e-Khayal* a reliable and valuable book of literary reviews.

Since *Hashiya-e-Khayal* consists of critical and review-based essays, its style is more research-oriented than creative. While discussing different writers and their books, Nusrat Naseem avoids complicated or tangled vocabulary. She expresses her ideas in clear, flowing language and keeps the reader with her throughout the intellectual journey.

For a reviewer, examining a book's structure and style is a basic requirement, and Nusrat Naseem fulfills this responsibility with care. Keeping the book's style, subject, and intellectual dimensions in view, she observes the conventions of literary language and critical writing. Clarity is a defining feature of her prose, allowing the reader to connect easily with the text.

One notable strength of her style is the subtle way she weaves personal experiences into her reviews such as references to prayer and human connection during illness—which lends her writing sincerity and emotional truth. Overall, her manner of expression is simple, graceful, and accessible, marked by smoothness and ease, with no trace of artificiality or affectation.

It is true that many reviewers tend to overlook purposefulness while discussing a book. They move on after merely outlining the text's qualities and themes, without shedding light on the author's personality or presenting the intellectual and social background from which the work emerges. Yet a deeper understanding of any book requires familiarity with the author's environment, upbringing, and mental formation.

Nusrat Naseem fully observes this principle. At the very beginning of her reviews, she introduces the reader to the author. She offers a brief yet meaningful account of the writer's personality, academic background, domestic setting, and intellectual training, enabling the reader to approach the book with a more conscious and informed understanding. In this way, her essays do not remain merely informative; they actively awaken the reader's comprehension and awareness.

Purposefulness and usefulness are clearly evident in every essay by Nusrat Naseem. In the books she reviews, she highlights the positive and constructive aspects of life. For her, literature is not only a source of pleasure but also a means of guidance in life. That is why her writing carries the idea of "art for art's sake" alongside "art for life's sake." Simplicity, spontaneity, and sincerity are the defining features of her prose—qualities that both influence the reader and compel thoughtful reflection.

"Great and noble people never forget their poverty and difficult circumstances. It is said about Hakim Saeed that after the creation of Pakistan, while wandering the streets of Karachi in search of employment, the sole of his shoe was completely worn out. He continued to wear the same shoe while walking on Karachi's scorching roads. Later, God blessed him abundantly, to the extent that he rose to the position of Governor of Sindh. That very shoe, preserved in a frame and displayed in his drawing room, remained a reminder of his days of hardship."(8)

An effective and credible review of a book is possible only when the reviewer rises above personal bias and individual likes or dislikes while forming an opinion. In the past, critics were often influenced by literary movements and ideological trends, which made complete neutrality difficult to achieve. With the decline in the intensity of such movements in the postmodern period, criticism gained greater freedom and balance.

Nusrat Naseem can be regarded as a representative of this postmodern critical attitude. She does not allow her personal preferences to interfere with her reviews. Her commentary adds to the reader's knowledge and brings to light those aspects of a work that may remain unnoticed in a

superficial reading. Her interpretations clarify the text and provide the reader with both understanding and enjoyment.

While reviewing any book, Nusrat Naseem makes a conscious effort to understand its title, subject, and the intellectual aims of its author, yet she does not offer blind endorsement of the author's views. Where necessary, she allows space for disagreement, thereby maintaining full critical neutrality. It is this quality that distinguishes her as a serious and reliable reviewer.

“She enriches the reader's knowledge, brings to light those facets of a creative work that remain hidden from the reader's view in a cursory reading or fail to become apparent due to limits of understanding, and through the reviewer's interpretations these aspects are clarified and become a source of pleasure and intellectual delight.”(9)

Generally, a reviewer confines herself to the book alone and avoids discussing the author's personality or other aspects of the writer's life. Nusrat Naseem's distinction lies in the fact that, along with the book, she also brings into view the author's personality, intellectual journey, and other writings. In this way, the reader encounters not just a single text but a fuller portrait of its author. Elements of character portrayal naturally enter her reviews, making them more than purely critical exercises and lending them vitality and impact. When writing on autobiographical or biographical works, she presents the author's life in such a way that the reader cannot help but feel influenced by the personality, and while reviewing travelogues, she enables the reader to experience the journey as a participant.

“A child who belongs to an underdeveloped village of Kohat, who goes to primary school without shoes, and who travels miles every day from Kohat to Sore Gul on an old, worn-out bicycle—if such a child grows up to become a renowned cardiologist of the country, and people come from far and wide to benefit from the healing touch of his hands, then this life story truly deserved to be written.”(10)

Similarly, her mature poetic sensibility is clearly evident in her reviews. She does not limit herself to a single genre but demonstrates equal command over various literary forms, including poetry. While reviewing poetry, she does more than quote verses; she highlights their artistic merits, imagery, metaphors, and intellectual dimensions. Her review of Asim Bukhari's poetry collection *Reza Reza* is a strong example, where she brings out the individuality of the verses, the impulse toward social reform, and the poet's inner anguish. Likewise, in her review of Sabin Younis's collection *Yeh Aankhain IstiaraHain*, she explains the eye as a metaphor and, through poetry, presents social suffering, contradictions, and hypocrisy before the reader.

Thus, Nusrat Naseem's reviews are not merely acts of criticism but a graceful blend of character portrayal and poetic understanding, offering the reader both knowledge and aesthetic pleasure.

Nusrat Naseem emerges as a distinctive and credible voice in contemporary Urdu prose through her balanced engagement with both creative and critical writing. *Kehkashan Hai Yeh Mere Khwabon Ki* and *Hashiya-e-Khayal* represent two complementary dimensions of her literary personality: one rooted in memory, culture, emotion, and spiritual reflection, and the other grounded in research, evaluation, and intellectual clarity. Despite differences in genre and purpose, both works are unified by her commitment to simplicity, fluency, sincerity, and respect for the reader's intellectual autonomy.

Her writing neither imposes ideas nor indulges in excessive theorization; instead, it opens spaces for reflection and dialogue. By integrating personal experience, cultural awareness, and ethical responsibility, Nusrat Naseem expands the scope of both essay writing and literary criticism. Her reviews go beyond textual analysis to include the author's personality, social background, and intellectual journey, while her reflective essays preserve fading cultural values and lived experiences with sensitivity and grace.

Overall, Nusrat Naseem's prose contributes meaningfully to modern Urdu literature by bridging creativity and criticism, aesthetics and purpose, and individual memory with collective consciousness. Her work not only informs and delights but also guides, reassures, and invites readers to think deeply affirming literature as a living, humane, and socially relevant practice.

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