

Investigating the Nature of Love in Mustansar Hussain Tarar's Novel *Piyar ka Pehla Shehar*

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Abstract: *The research investigated the nature of love by exploring the conflict between reason and passion as portrayed by Mustansar Hussain Tarar in *Piyar ka Pehla Shehar* through its protagonists by taking in view the Platonic Theory of Eros. The research offered an analysis of the relationship between the main characters Sanan and Paskal and their ways of navigating through social and cultural dynamics in their romantic relationship. The study used qualitative methods and textual analysis to explore insight into the emotional challenges of romantic relationships by investigating the nature of love that the protagonist experienced. The research revealed that the character's inclination despite being Platonic in approach differs from Plato's as they were deceiving each other in the guise of love. The author both affirmed and diverged from the Platonic ideal of love: He appeared of the view that love was solely not reserved for the beautiful or physically fit but was experienced regardless of physical appearance; however, the ideal love was experienced only for a short moment. Love eventually became a secondary emotion and selfish interests took precedence.*

Keywords: *cultural dynamics, emotional challenges, nature of love, Platonic Theory of Eros, social dynamics*

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Introduction

Love has been the centre of attention in literature and philosophy because of its alluring intricacy and elegant simplicity. Love and romance may be presented and interpreted in many ways across different cultures. This cultural variation depends on how

people of certain societies express their love. As Langford (1999) discusses the “cultural conditioning” (2), of love in different cultures by using particular stories and narratives that help shed light on what it means to people from a specific culture.

Platonic love is a strong affection between two people who are attracted to one another but not in a sexual way. “First Chaos came, and then broad-bosomed Earth, the everlasting seat of all that is, and love” (Plato, 66). This research explores the Platonic concept of Eros in Mustansar Hussain Tarar’s *Piyar ka Pehla Shehar* by investigating the nature of love in the novel. So, the study investigates the nature of love practiced by characters in a romantic relationship.

Paskal, a physically disabled character becomes a metaphor for love, and an interesting conflict between human beings and emotions is witnessed throughout the story. Paskal’s physical impairment does not impede her in any way, and she is making important progress in her life. Her Paskal’s character embodies all that is positive about femininity. Naveed Sadiq writes:

“پاسکال کی محبت خالص ہے۔ اس میں معصومیت، سہرنگی اور شہید واپسنگی کے جنبات موجود ہیں اور وہ اپنی محبت میں کسی بھی حد تک جانے کے لیے تیار ہے۔ پاسکال کے برعکس سنن دنیاداری میں ڈوبا ہوا مرد ہے اس لیے محبت کو نبھانے کی صلاحیت اس میں کم کم

ہے وہ پاسکال کو چھوڑ دینا ہے اور واپس اپنے لیے ہے“ (Sadiq, 2023, p. 24). “Paskal’s love is pure, with feelings of purity, submission, and intense commitment who is willing to go to any extent for her love. Sanan, unlike Paskal, is a man committed to travelling and as a result, he leaves Paskal and returns to his homeland” (my trans).

Research Objectives

This research aims to investigate the nature of love and identify the philosophy of love that the author synchronizes within *Piyar ka Pehla Shehar* by exploring the following objectives:

1. To analyse the author’s perspective of defining love in his fiction.
2. To evaluate the author’s perspectives of capturing the reality of love in his society.
3. To determine the manifestation of pure and innocent love by Tarar (2006) from the Platonic concept of love.

Research Questions

The objectives of this research are translated into the following research questions:

1. What is the author's perspective of defining love in his fiction?
2. How well does he succeed in capturing the reality of love in his society?
3. How does the manifestation of pure and innocent love by Tarar (2006) differ from the Platonic concept of love?

The conflict between reason and passion has been widely portrayed in Western classical literature. This conflict mostly arises when love between a man and a woman collides with social, political, or cultural restraints. For instance, Helen of Troy although, was the most beautiful woman in the world yet caused the greatest war of all time. "It is apparently impossible to deny that the war occurred at all, or even that it was fought over Helen" (Blondell, 2013, p. 118).

In medieval literature, the most typical trope has been the relationship between

a man and a woman and the resistance from social or political factors. This resistance serves to test the strength of their love and commitment. For example, in medieval romances the knight always has to prove his bravery to the father of the girl and the woman has to prove her chastity in return. These challenges were often represented through quests, tests of loyalty, and the need to prove one's worth to gain approval from those in authority. Marie de France's *Chevrefoil* provides a perfect example of this common plot of medieval romances.

Tristan and Iseult are entwined in passionate and forbidden love. Tristan and the Queen's love is forbidden due to her marriage to King Mark. This separation causes them great suffering and longing for each other. "I've heard and found it written, too, / Of their love, so noble and true, / Which brought great suffering until they / Died together on the same day" (France, 2018, p. 155). The resistance from King Mark's authority becomes a significant obstacle to their love. "King Mark was

full of angry spite / At his nephew
Tristan because the knight / Loved the
Queen. The King gave orders/
dismissing Tristan from his borders”
(France, 2018, p. 155). The separation
between Tristan and the Queen leads to
a deep sense of yearning and
melancholy. “Tristan was sad and
downhearted. / From his homeland he
departed / To Cornwall where dwelled
the Queen” (France, 2018, p. 156).
When they finally meet, there is joy, but
parting is filled with sadness. “Great
joy there was between those two / They
spoke all that they wanted to. / She told
him that a peace accord / Would
reconcile him with his lord, / Who now
was sorry he had sent / His nephew into
banishment” (France, 2018, p. 157). In
this way, the societal norms, authority
figures, and challenges that Tristan and
Iseult face mirror the enduring struggle
of lovers against external obstacles that
test their devotion and fortitude.

Romance was presented as idealized
love, chivalry, and beauty. Similarly, in
the Victorian era, literature explored a
more complex view of love, reflecting
societal changes. Some works

highlighted the practicality of marriage,
while some works explored the
passionate and sometimes destructive
nature of love. For instance, Bronte
(2019) in *Jane Eyre* portrays the
complexities of love through the
relationship of Jane and Mr.
Rochester’s, demonstrating how it can
be both, transformational and
challenging, passionate and scarred.
Their journey together navigates
societal norms, personal struggles, and
emotional growth. Mr. Rochester’s
hidden past and his tragic accident
leaves him physically and emotionally
scarred. His disability becomes
symbolic of his emotional and physical
scars. On the other hand, Jane’s
dedication and care demonstrate the
transformative power of her love.
“There was such deep remorse in his
eye, such true pity in his tone, such
manly energy in his manner; and
besides, there was such unchanged love
in his whole look and mien—I forgave
him all” (Bronte, 2019, p. 337).

Both eras shaped our understanding of
love in different ways. Bronte (2019)
exemplifies the shift by depicting the

practicality of marriage as well as the passionate and sometimes destructive nature of love. This reflects the changing societal values and norms of the Victorian era, where love was no longer solely a noble pursuit but also a human experience with all its intricacies. These themes continue to resonate across cultures and eras, underscoring the timeless nature of love and its complexities in literature.

Literature Review

French existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir questions and critiques traditional gender roles in romantic relationships. She highlights how societal norms, cultures and power shape the nature of love. "One's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, using love, friendship, indignation, and compassion" (Fuentes, 2019, p. 208). German Philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel views love as a form of self-recognition, self-development, and self-discovery. "Love and Life are Hegel's first idea about the nature of love, the secret bonds connecting us

together" (Bernstein, 2003, p. 394). Nietzsche (2012) has complex views on love. He takes "the conception of love as the antithesis of egoism" (Nietzsche, 2012, p. 15), and addresses love as the driving force behind all human actions, at the same time, he also questions the romantic notions of erotic love. For him, love demands sacrifice, and it ultimately leads to self-deception.

Ding (1995) in his work "*Love and the Eastern Spirit: A Philosophical Perspective*" argues that love is an important concept and an essential practice in Eastern culture and that the conflict between love and hatred has persisted throughout the history of both Western and Eastern civilization. He explores the spiritual side of the Eastern idea of love. He makes a strong case for the transformational potential of love. His work stimulates thinking and invites contemplation on one's own conception and experience of love. Readers from many cultural backgrounds may easily understand his writing because it skillfully weaves together the profound truths from Eastern traditions with the shared

human experience of love. Love is an “important practice in Eastern culture” (Ding, 1995, p. 183). Karandashev (2015) provides insightful information about the complicated cultural construct of romantic love. Platonic love is purely spiritual and emotional, free from physical desires. “Platonic love presumes that love is solely spiritual, emotional, and devoid of physical desire” (p. 5). Grosse (2021) contends that love is a universal emotion experienced by most people throughout history and in all cultures. Love expresses itself in different ways because cultural values affect how people perceive love and how they feel, think, and act in romantic relationships. Social connections influence the degree and nature of the affection and love people show towards others.

Lindholm (2006) builds the topic of discussion about love to a more comparative and historical level, he contends that romantic love is neither an institution peculiar to the West nor a universal experience. “..... true romantic love is only a Western

experience. But perhaps that too is an illusion” (p. 6). Instead, it is better viewed as a manifestation of the sacred feeling, which takes on different shapes depending on the social context. Although it may flourish or diminish, the underlying motivation is unlikely to disappear. Lindholm (2006) only focused on Western ideals of love ignoring the eastern concept of love. This Western idea of love is somehow seen in Paskal’s character.

Different people can have diverse concepts of an ideal love but it often involves mutual respect, trust, communication, understanding, and support between partners. It is a deep emotional connection that brings happiness, growth, and a sense of fulfilment. Ideals of love can vary from person to person, and what matters is finding a relationship that aligns with one’s values and brings happiness. Fromm (2000) discussed the idea of love according to the broader concept that it is a universal approach that encourages individuality and mutual respect for mankind. “The full answer lies in the achievement of interpersonal

union, of fusion with another person, in love..." (p. 17). He emphasizes that ideal love involves a deep understanding of an individual and his partner, and it requires continuous effort, care, and commitment to maintain a lasting and fulfilling relationship. These viewpoints illustrate that ideal love often encompasses more than just romantic feelings; it involves intellectual, emotional, and ethical dimensions that contribute to a meaningful and enduring connection.

In the introductory part of *Platonic Love from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, the author argues that it has a major "impact on the development of Western thought and culture" (O'Brien, 2022). In particular, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, two of Plato's dialogues, promoted the idea of Platonic love as a means of intellectual and spiritual union. Throughout the *Symposium*, Plato delivers several speeches on love, seeing it as a thirst for higher truths and everlasting beauty. "...is that life, above all others, in which man should dwell, in the contemplation of absolute

beauty..." (Høystad, 2009, p. 48). Platonic love is centred on this philosophical foundation which places a strong emphasis on the quest for knowledge, visual beauty, and the transcendent. By examining these concepts of Platonic love one realizes that Plato focuses on the spiritual connection rather than physical intimacy.

Sheffield (2011) sheds light on the multifaceted nature of friendship, exploring how it extends beyond the traditional bounds of romantic love i.e., Eros that often dominate discussions of relationships. Sheffield (2011) in his approach searches the text for passages and dialogues that highlight the complexities of Platonic relationships. His analysis has significant philosophical ramifications. "Socrates draws the conclusion that desire is, in fact, a beneficial kind of madness" (Sheffield, 2011, p. 256). By emphasizing on friendship in the *Phaedrus*, the author asks readers to question the established hierarchy of love forms and the consequences of true connection between persons. In Plato's

Philosophical framework, the examination of friendship serves as a lens to grasp the ethical, emotional, and intellectual components of human interactions. Thus, the significance of friendship in supporting personal growth, intellectual interaction, and moral development is consistent with arguments in literature, contemporary psychology, sociology, and ethics. Sheffield (2011) invites us to consider how traditional philosophical conceptions of friendship might deepen our understanding of human connections today. Friendship, despite its conventional link with romantic love, is a fundamental component of human connection. This study not only adds to the understanding of Platonic dialogue, but also highlights the lasting importance of philosophical inquiries into the dynamics of friendship and love in moulding human experience and interaction.

Plato's theory of Love: Rationality as Passion is discussed in *Symposium*, in which various characters deliver speeches on the nature of love. "Symposium whose explicit subject is

the nature of love" (Amir, 1970, p. 6). Amir (1970) argues that according to Plato, love is a basic part of human existence with physical and spiritual dimensions, Eros, which is frequently interpreted as passionate love or desire. Her study examines Plato's idea of love from the perspective of rationality as a passion; it is a sophisticated examination of how reason and emotion connect within Plato's philosophical framework. When multiple levels of love are investigated, it provides a vehicle for humanity to search for a connection with a greater reality. The researcher would be investigating the nature of love practiced in *Piyar ka Pehla Shehar* from a Platonic lens in different dimensions because it gives one the chance to delve into deep philosophical ideas, comprehend how past views have influenced present ones, and develop an understanding of the complex nature of human emotions and interactions with others.

Demos (1934) interacts with the complex idea of love, exploring its nature and repercussions. The purpose

of this review of literature is to investigate Demos's work in understanding Eros within the context of philosophy and literature. From Plato to current researchers, the study of love particularly the notion of Eros, has been a key issue that frequently reflects larger cultural and societal influences "The Eros is the principle of relationship" (Demos, 1934, p. 337). Many characters in literature go through the experience of love and many of them are Platonic in their approach.

Levy (1979) engages with key themes and questions presented in Plato's work. "For anyone who wants to think philosophically about love, the only way to begin is to reflect on the problems raised in Plato's Symposium" (Levy, 1979, p. 285). Symposium has long been recognized as a seminal work in Western philosophy, exploring the nature of love and its diverse manifestations. He argues that philosophically, love is reflected through Plato's Symposium. His analysis serves as a testament to the

enduring allure and philosophical richness of Plato's exploration of Eros.

Research Methodology

The study is based upon a constructivist paradigm, which views reality as a socially constructed phenomenon and emphasizes the importance of understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals in their cultural context. Under this paradigm, data collection methods are used to gather rich and detailed information on the cultural experiences of the protagonist. The research involves the qualitative methodology to examine the in-depth understanding of the protagonist's experiences with the notion of love and expression of romantic relationships among the characters. Qualitative content analysis is being done in this research- as it allows for an in-depth exploration and understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the protagonist in relation to love and romantic relationships. It involves collecting data through close analysis of the novel as well as relevant

academic articles, research papers, and documents.

Findings

In this section, the research findings revealed how the characters tied up in a romantic association provide us the prospect to investigate love from a Platonic as well as writer's point of view

Love and Platonic Point of View

“The course of true love never did run smooth” (Shakespeare, 1907, p.12). The characters develop the feelings of sympathy that emerge in the initial meeting and quickly reach the heights of friendship through different encounters and events. This friendship proves to be fuel to the fire, and takes its flight on the path of love. Secondly, the author has not set down this tale of love spanning years or months, but within a few days, this love begins and reaches its culmination.

Sanan develops feelings of sympathy at first that have ultimately developed a friendship for Paskal in his heart. Sanan tries his best not to speak his heart out and express his love for Paskal. Sanan

is concealing his inner feelings and struggling to find words which could express his love at the beginning of their meetings. His modesty and humbleness prevented him from giving the encouragement that any lover has, “...., how great is the encouragement which all the world gives to the lover” (p. 477). Characters representing Plato's idea of “open loves” are better than “secret ones” (p. 477). Sanan warns Paskal about their love. He doesn't want to impose unrealistic expectations on Paskal, despite the flower of love growing in his heart. The reason that he was not able to express his love was out of fear whether he could fulfill his commitment or not. He says, “I don't want to make you a promise that I can't fulfill and hurt you”(my trans p. 149).

”میں تم سے کوئی ایسا وعدہ کرنا نہیں چاہتا جو میں پورا نہ کر سکوں اور تمہاری دل آزاری ہو”(p.149).

“Everyone sees that love is a desire, and we also know that non-lovers desire the beautiful and good” (p. 543). While controlling his emotions, Sanan does not ignore the fact that he is a tourist.

He knows that Paris is not his permanent residence and that he will leave her one day. He kept on reminding Paskal about this and kept on asking if she has any other male friend who can accompany her. Sanan asks Paskal, "You don't have any male friends. I mean...." (p. 116). "میرا مطلب ہے۔" "تمہارا کوئی دوست لڑکا نہیں ہے۔" "ہے...." (p.116).

Lovers who adhere to socially acceptable boundaries have to face an emotional and mental struggle in their life. From Sanan and Paskal's conversation, we come to know that Paskal is going through the same struggle, she does not even want to think of parting her way from Sanan. "But, why are you asking me all this, It's nothing special. Even then I thought that I am a tourist. And when tomorrow..... I haven't thought about tomorrow until today" (p. 116).

"مگر تم مجھ سے یہ سب کچھ کیوں پوچھ رہے ہو؟

بس کوئی خاص بات تو نہیں
پھر باہی

زونہی مجھے خیال آگیا تھا کہ میں تو سیریاچ ہوں۔
کل کو جب.....
آنے والی کل کے بارے میں میں نے آج تک سوچا
نہیں" (p.116).

According to Plato, a mutual desire is produced when one person recognizes and honors the qualities and virtues of the other. A shared sense of care results from this mutual respect. This sort of love is referred to as the "beautiful kind of love" because it is done rightly and morally.

But on the same principle he who gives himself to a lover because he is a virtuous man, and in the hope that he will be improved by his lover's company, shows himself to be virtuous, even though the object of his affection be proved a villain, and to have no virtue; and if he is deceived, he has committed a noble error. For he has proved that for his part he will do anything for anybody for sake of virtue and improvement, and nothing can be nobler than this. Thus, noble in every case is the acceptance of another for the sake of virtue (p. 479).

Sanan's strong feelings of love sometimes show their colour i.e., he

praises Paskal and expresses his feelings and also assures her that he neither pities her nor takes care of her out of sympathy. Paskal says to Sanan: "I feel like my aunt was wrong. The emotions that are reaching me at this moment are not only sympathy and pity. "Yes" Sanan said politely and smiled (p. 113).

“مجھے یوں محسوس ہوتا ہے جیسے مہری خالہ نے غلط کہا تھا۔ اس وقت جن جذبات کی آنچ مجھ تک پہنچ رہی ہے ان میں صرف ہمدردی اور رحم ہی نہیں۔" ہوں" سانان نے بولے سے کہا اور مسکرا دیا“ (p.113) .

Both the characters forget the cultural differences between them that was a major hindrance in their relationship. "Cultural values and traditional behaviours influence the expressions and experiences of love and transfer passionate love as primarily based on a sexual attraction into romantic love as an idealized and culturally affected way of loving" (Karandashev, 2015, p. 15). Sanan also does not express his feelings as it will isolate and offend them both later. This shows the wound that love gives can never be filled. In the flow of emotions at another place, he says,

Paskal, you know that when I was coming, I also expressed my desire to meet you in the car..... A desire that started as a crush and then like you're my feelings crossed the boundaries of friendship turned into a whirlwind situation. I didn't express my feelings to you on purpose; I knew I would leave anyway (pp. 194-195).

پاسکال تمہیں معلوم ہے کہ میری آتے وقت گاڑی میں میں نے ہی تم سے ملنے کی خواہش کا اظہار کیا تھا..... ایک خواہش جو پسندیدگی سے شروع ہوئی۔ پھر تمہاری طرح میرے احساسات بھی پسندیدگی اور دوستی کی حدیں عبور کر کے ایک طوفانی کنڈیت سے دوچار ہو گئے۔ میں تم سے اپنے جذبات کا اظہار جان بوجھ کر نہیں کرتا رہا۔ مجھے معلوم تھا کہ

میں ہر صورت یہاں سے چال جاؤں گا“ (194-195) . (pp. 195)

Contrary to Sanan's avoidance, Paskal is tired of getting sympathy from people because of her disability. She feels that Sanan's love is the universe for her and is ready to do anything to get it. Love, according to Plato, is the greatest force known to man. "Such is the power of love; and that love which is just and temperate has the greatest power and is

the source of all our happiness and friendship with the gods and with one another” (p. 454). Despite knowing that Sanan is a tourist, and he does not want to stay here, she sits down and ponders over the situation. She knows that living without Sanan will be very difficult for her, so at first, she tells Sanan to stay in France. After listening to Sanan's experience of being constrained or compelled by circumstances that resonate with his navigating the complexities of life. “Experience of love creates courage to sacrifice” (Helin, 2003, p. 421). Paskal also agrees to sacrifice and is ready to go to Lahore with him. She tells him “When I ask you to stay in Paris, it means that you should stay with me. And if you stay with me, Like anywhere, even in any city.....In Lahore?” (p.195).

میں جب تمہیں بیس میں رہنے کے لیے کہتی ہوں تو اس کا یہ مطلب ہوتا ہے کہ تم میرے پاس رہو اور، اور اگر تم میرے پاس رہو کہیں بھی، کسی شہر میں بھی.....الہورمیں؟ (p.196)

By looking closely at the nature of the love of these two characters, it seems

that Paskal has gone too far in love with Sanan. Her feelings seem too intense for him, like a stormy ocean, feelings surge and recede, forming the waves which resonate within the core of her being. Sanan becomes the whole world to her for which she is ready to sacrifice whatever she owns. She is even ready to abandon her country, her relationships, and her culture, and wishes to live in Lahore. She aims to conquer the love of Sanan for which she has taken a decision and is ready to change herself. “I will learn your language. I will adopt your society. I will dress like the girls of your country. You were the one who told me that, when I wear earrings, I look like a Pakistani girl” (p.196).

“سنان میں تمہاری زبان سیکھ لوں گی۔ تمہاری معاشرت کو اپنا لوں گی۔ تمہارے ہاں کی لڑکیوں جیسا لباس پہنوں گی۔ تم ہی نے تو کہا تھا کہ میں جہم کے پہن کر بالکل ایک پاکستانی لڑکی لگتی ہوں (p.196)

Sanan truly loves Paskal, but at the same time, he seems to be caught in the love of his country, the burden and responsibilities of family and friends. Again and again, he feels that he will be

forced to leave everything and stay in France. In the labyrinth of his mind, words seem to elude it is difficult for him to express his feelings in words. To leave everything and live in France was not possible for him which he described by saying “I always had to go back” (my trans p. 194).

Paskal’s love seems to be simple and innocent. Sanan and Paskal, due to their cultural differences, have seemingly mismatched opinions, feelings and opposing viewpoints that create negative impressions. On a deeper level, this impression leads Sanan to self-realization and knowing each other. Recollecting on Paskal’s concern on parting way on the day which torments her for every single moment. This torment is “the source of the greatest blessings” (p. 549), and a sign of love. This shows the intensity of love Paskal has for Sanan.

Like every member of Western society, Paskal is not familiar with the feelings and affections of the family to which people are bound and connected and that is the reason why she asks Sanan to live with her, “Why can’t you

stay away from your family?” (p.196).

“تم اپنے خاندان سے علیحدہ کیوں نہیں رہ سکتے
ہے“ (p.196).

Sanan’s character in the novel is portrayed as a boy from a lower middle-class family in Pakistan. Being a part of such a family, he cannot abandon his traditions and social restrictions even if he wants to get free from all bounds and norms. He knows that the social values will be chains on his feet all his life. His love is forced by circumstances, traditions and values. He knows that a non-Muslim, disabled girl like Paskal will not be able to make a place for her in Pakistani society and knows that she would never be accepted by society, even her family. Sanan does not want to take Paskal away from her country to Pakistan for happiness for a few days and suffer of forever. Sanan believes that by staying with her father and aunt she will ultimately forget him one day or the other and move on in life with someone else. In order to save her from suffering and pain, he wants to leave her. Sanan expresses something like this: “No, Paskal, this is not the case. I

love you so much and this feeling has been born in me for the first time. Because of this feeling, I cannot see you sad. I know you won't be happy there" (p. 196).

“نہیں یہ بات نہوں پاسکل مجھے تم سے بے انتہا محبت ہے اور اس احساس نے میرے اذہر پہلی مرتبہ جنم لیا ہے۔ اس احساس کی وجہ سے میں تمہیں دکھی نہوں دیکھ سکتا مجھے معلوم ہے تم خوش رہ رہ سکو گی” (p.196).

The characters in the novel are instructors, like Plato, who guide their loved ones to eternal satisfaction and happiness that love is the pursuit of the highest good, which might be seen as pointing people in the direction of eternal fulfillment and happiness. “And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love” (p. 486). But in contrast to Plato, characters restrict love within the constraints of social relationships and cultural norms.

The characters used traditional ways to express love without the need for physical intimacy. The necessary stimulant of love is a passion that is moderated and governed by the wisdom

of reason rather than the heat of emotions or else it will go beyond the boundaries. Reason distinguishes bad from good and consequently; can control one's desire. From Sanan's point of view, reason and passion shape the novel's trajectory. Plato elucidates this concept by saying, “There are two guiding and ruling principles which lead us: When opinion by the help of reason leads us to the best, the conquering principle is called temperance; but when desire, which is devoid of reason, rules in us and drags us to pleasure, that power of misrule is called excess” (p.543).

If bold emotions are expressed somewhere they can be seen through these words when Paskal said, “You cannot go...My lips are in your way. Paskal started to come closer and then her earrings disappeared into Sanan's eyes eventually, his lips began to tremble in their place” (p.150). جا سکتے..... میرے لب تمہارے پاس سے میں ہیں۔ پاسکل اور قریب آئی گی اور پھر سنان کے آنکھوں میں اس کے جھمکے معدوم ہوتے گئے اور ان کی جگہ اس کے ہونٹ لرزنے لگے” (p. 150).

Paskal is blind to truth and reality; she lives in an imaginary world because all this romantic association was for a very short time, but she does not accept reality. Ignorance and lack of knowledge prevent lovers from entering the world of pure love, which is home to virtue and beauty that endures forever and where passion and reason work together to provide a lifelong sense of fulfillment.

“Love is analysed as an element of social action and therefore of social structure” (Goode, 1959, p. 38). Living in Western society, we can see that Paskal is a bit inclined towards physical relationships, but Sanan seems to reject and get rid of such offers throughout the novel. He repeatedly explains to Paskal that all this is against his traditions and social values, and he also does not like all this. Paskal wants to be close to Sanan and feels that the acquisition of the body is necessary. However, Sanan’s love is related to the soul, not the body. He doesn’t want to hurt Paskal just for the sake of intimacy. According to him, the time they have spent together is the most beautiful and

they have accumulated so many memories that now the whole life can be lived with the help of these memories. He tells Paskal that “On Christmas Eve. Thousands of miles away from here in my room...my feelings by covering this long distance will reach you. You will not be alone, Paskal!” (p. 197).

“کرسمس کی شام کو یوں سے ہزاروں میل دور
میں اپنے کمرے میں بیٹھا..... میرے
احساس کی لو یہ طویل ناصلے طے کر کے تم تک
پہنچ جائے گی۔ تم اکیلی زہیں ہو گی پلسکل
!“ (p.197)

Passions and reason to the extreme level would not produce any positive results. One has to find a way in between as extremes at every point can prove to be harmful. In Sanan and Paskal’s affection, both characters make an effort to establish that the secret of happiness is the fusion of passion and reason. Characters are seen as Platonic to some extent in delineating romantic relationships. According to Plato, real knowledge and enduring happiness are attained by lovers only when their desires are accompanied by mutual intelligence

and understanding. "The love of the noble mind, which is in union with the unchangeable, is everlasting" (p. 478). Sanan believes that the moment they are parting is the best time because after that the separation will be more difficult for them, for now, each other's presence may also hurt and torture them, but after that time, they will both remember each other happily for the rest of their lives and these memories will give them peace.

One year from today, ten years from now. There will be someone thousands of miles away who will miss you for that too. The joys of those days will kindle a flame in his heart whose warmth will give him comfort and satisfaction in the dark and cold paths of life. Only because of you Paskal (p. 198).

آج سے ایک سال بعد، دس سال بعد، ہزاروں منزل دور ایک ایسا شخص ہو گا جو تمہیں اس لمحے یاد کر رہا ہو گا۔ ان دنوں کی مسرتیں اس کے دل میں ایک ایسی لو جالیں گی جس کی گرمی زندگی کی تازگی اور سرد راہوں میں اسے سکون اور اطمینان بخشنے گی۔ صرف تمہاری وجہ سے پاسکل (p. 198)۔

The sincerity and selflessness of the characters is what makes it true love. The characters offer acceptance, understanding, and unconditional love, and both Sanan and Paskal have a strong and permanent bond that endures the test of time rather than being based solely on passing feelings. Characters' love is free from physical pleasures with external beauty and physical closeness, at the same time this love looks realistic, shedding light on the truthful nature of love.

Love and Tarar's Point of View

The paper critically analyses Tarar's stance towards love highlighting the implications of departure from traditional notions of Platonic love and how much he has succeeded in depicting the reality of love in his society. In Tarar's novel, a noticeable contradiction of Platonic love is evident, but the characters seek refuge in the ideals of Platonic love. Plato views love in a spiritual and intellectual context, where love serves to move beyond physical beauty and seek deeper truths and connections. "all men are bringing to the birth in their bodies

and their souls. Reid (2019) supported the idea that there is a certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation and this procreation must be in beauty and not in deformity” (p. 498). Tarar (2006) penned the novel in accordance with the standards of his society and culture. He prioritized the practice of love in a realist environment, rather than linking and putting it in a situation where intellectual considerations would be more significant. This is the reason why he defines Sanan’s character rationally in an approach keeping this society and culture in consideration. However, Paskal’s love is based on her psychological needs.

In the novel, characters retreat to Platonic love. Tarar (2006) presents characters who seek solace and refuge in Platonic love’s idealized form. The characters crave a kind of love that is free of physical desires and defined by an emotional connection built on sympathy and friendship.

“جسے ہم دردی اور پیار کے اس حسین ام نواج کے بغیر اب تک اس کی زندگی غیر مکمل رہی ہو۔

جسے وہ ان کے طویل فاصلے آج کی شہ

دریائے سین کے کنارے اس اباہج لڑکی کو سہارا کے لئے ہی طے کر کے آیا ہو“ (p. 114).
“As if his life has been incomplete without this beautiful combination of compassion and love. As if tonight, he had travelled such a long distance on the banks of the River Seine just to support this handicapped girl” (p. 114). This elucidates Plato’s ideal that love should move beyond the physical being and strive for intellectual understanding. Diotima explains that the progression of love should lead from the physical world and beauty to higher levels of understanding and contemplation of “absolute beauty” and the understanding of its essence.

For he who from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love...all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is (p. 503).

Plato projects above physical connection where people are intellectually and spiritually engaged. While the physical aspect is evident, there's an underlying emphasis on a profound emotional and spiritual connection between people, "And when one of them meets with his other half, the actual half of himself, whether he be a lover of youth or a lover of another sort, the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy, and would not be out of the other's sight, as I may say, even for a moment..."(p. 485). The novel presents characters who find solace and refuge in the ideals of Platonic love contrary to the character's inclination; Tarar vehemently rejects its existence as an attainable reality. The author's narrative choices demonstrate a conviction that love, in any form, is inherently driven by selfish desires and is bound by human imperfections. This dismissal of Platonic love stems from a desire to challenge conventional romanticized notions. This critique investigates the contrasting viewpoints presented in the novel, aiming to shed

light on the implications of negating such a fundamental concept and the impact it has on both the characters and the readers.

Throughout *Piyar ka Pehla Shehar*, the characters remain under the veil of Platonic love. They believe that the purity and transcendent nature of love can offer them emotional fulfilment without the complications of physical desire. Sanan appears to express his concern and asks Paskal about finding a potential partner, while Paskal responds with a more nuanced viewpoint. Sanan suggests that there might be many individuals who are interested in dating her, but due to her reserved demeanour, they might not openly express their attraction. Paskal counters this by stating that some of the elements of Western dating culture conflict with her moral principles, and some even clash with her physical limitations. For her love is above physical needs or violating moral principles.

Here, when a boy expresses his desire to meet a girl, he wants her to accompany him for a dance, sit with him in the back rows of the cinema,

engage in kissing and cuddling, and then For some of these things, I am physically disabled and some are against my moral principles (p. 116).

یہاں جب کوئی لڑکا کسی لڑکی سے ملنے کی خواہش کا اظہار کرتا ہے تو وہ چاہتا ہے کہ لڑکی اس کے ساتھ رقص کے لہوئے جائے سہما کی پچھلی نشانیوں پر بیٹھ کر بوس و کنار کرے اور اور پھر ان چیزوں میں سے چند انک کے لئے ہیں جس مانی طور پر معذور ہوں اور کچھ میرے اخلاقی اصولوں کی زد میں آجاتی ہیں“ (p. 116).

Tarar's divergence from Platonic love is contrary to the nature of love characters follow in the novel. Characters fit them according to the ideals of Platonic love whereas Tarar (2006) explicitly contradicts the Platonic approach of characters which is a non-physical, intellectual, and spiritual form of love. This contrasts with the character's inclination towards this idealized concept of love and portrays hypocrisy in love where characters are deceiving each other in the guise of love. When Sanan is fascinated towards Paskal, he is not

aware that Paskal is disabled and is attracted to her physical beauty.

She looked extremely annoyed. Sanan looked at her carefully for the first time. Her big eyes were deep blue hue, and her straight nose was slightly elevated at the tip. And the short, cropped hair looked very good on the reddish white round face. He could not see her well in the darkness last night. She was undoubtedly very beautiful (p. 25).

وہ بے حد آزرده نظر آ رہی تھی۔ سانان نے پہلی مرتبہ اسے غور سے دیکھا۔ اس کی بڑی بڑی آنکھوں گہرے نیلے رنگ کی تھیں اور ستواں ناک سرے پر قدرے اوپر کو اٹھی ہوئی۔ سرخ و سپد گول چہرے پر چھوٹے کٹے ہوئے بال بے حد باہلے لگ رہے تھے۔ پچھلی شب کو تاریکی میں وہ اسے اچھی طرح نہیں دیکھ سکا تھا۔ وہ یقیناً بے حد حسین تھی“ (p. 25).

Discussion

The author has portrayed Sanan as having a rational approach towards relationships, taking societal norms into consideration. This indicates that Sanan prioritizes practical and societal aspects over purely emotional or spiritual connections. According to Lukšik and

Guillaume (2022) that for love, a person is willing to reach any point and to go to great lengths for the sake of his beloved. He can even risk his own life to save his loved one.

For what lover would not choose rather to be seen by all mankind than by his beloved, either when abandoning his post or throwing away his arms? He would be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than endure this. Or who would desert his beloved or fail him in the hour of danger? The verist coward would become an inspired hero, equal to the bravest, at such a time; Love would inspire him. That courage which, as Homer says, the god breathes into the souls of some heroes, Love of his own nature infuses into the lover (p. 474).

However, Sanan is parting ways with Paskal, citing societal disapproval as the reason for their separation. Sanan tries to explain this to Paskal so that she doesn't get hurt. Moreover, through Sanan's character, Tarar is painting a picture of his Pakistani society.

Paskal, I know the highs and lows of our society. In ours, marriage is not just for one person. It involves the wishes of

all members of the family. For a successful marriage, the mutual consent of the husband and wife is essential, more than this one has to care for the wishes of relatives. You will fail in this as a member of a western society (pp. 195-196).

پلسکل میچھے اپنے معاشرے کی اونچ زبچ کا علم ہے۔ ہمارے ہاں شادی صرف ایک فرد کی نہیں ہوتی۔ اس میں خاندان کے تمام افراد کی خواہشات کا دخل ہوتا ہے ایک کامیاب شادی کے لیے جہاں میاں بیوی کا باہمی اتفاق ضروری ہے اس سے کہیں زیادہ رشتہ داروں کی خوشنودی کا خیال رکھنا پڑتا ہے تم ایک اجزی معاشرے کے فرد کی

اس میں ناکم رہو گی “ (pp. 195-196) . Tarar (2006) penned down in his novel about the world of deceptive relationships that are away from ideal love. “Love is of something, and that which love desires is not that which love is or has; for no man desires that which he is or has and love is of the beautiful” (p. 456). Love is directed towards the beautiful even then Sanan is trying to convince Paskal that he has to go back as his family is waiting for him.

“پاسکل پاکستان میں میرے ماں باپ اور بہن بھائی میرا انتظار کر رہے ہیں۔ میں نے ان سے وعدہ

کیا تھا کہ میں چہرہ ماہ میں واپس لوٹ آؤں گا۔ میں ان کے پیار اور خلوص کے خوبصورت بزدہنوں میں بری طرح جکڑا ہوا ہوں۔ یورپ میں تو اسے مشرقی پیار اور خلوص کو جانچنے کے لیے بہمانے بھی نہ ہوں گے۔ مجھے ہر صورت واپس جانا ہے“ (pp.195-196).

Paskal, my parents and siblings back in Pakistan are waiting for me. I had promised them that I would return after a few months. I am bound by the beautiful ties of their love and sincerity. In Europe, there won't be any measures to gauge this Eastern love and devotion. I have to certainly go back, no matter what" (my trans p. 193-194). This shows his priority scale on which his family and societal values stand in comparison to his love for Paskal. Moreover, Tarar (2006) paints hypocrisy in love that is felt when Sanan talks about living in love through memories. For instance, when Sanan says to Paskal that she won't be alone on Christmas.

“نہیں سن ان نے اس کا کندھا آس تہ سے دبایا تم اس بالکل اکتالی نہیں ہو گی پاس کل“ (p.193).
“No, Sanan squeezed her shoulder gently, Paskal, you won't be alone this time” (p. 193). He was

ironically referring to his presence on Christmas Eve with Paskal whereas in reality he had to return to his homeland. لیکن تم نے گنگو کے آغاز میں یہ کیوں کہا تھا کہ میں اس مرتبہ کرسمس پر اکتالی نہیں ہوں گی؟ میرا مطلب تھا کہ تمہارے پاس ان دنوں کی حسین یادیں ہوں گی۔ ایک خوبصورت احساس جو بت کم لوگوں کے نصیب میں ہوتا ہے۔ کیا تم اپنے آپ کو آج کا چمکیال دن وہاں گزارنے کے بعد مختلف محسوس نہیں کرتیں؟ میں آج سے چند روز پہلے کا سن ان نہیں رہا۔ تم میرے خیال اور میرے وجود کا ایک الزمی حصہ بن چکی ہو“ (p.196).

But why did you say at the beginning of the conversation that I will not be alone this Christmas?? I mean that you will have beautiful memories of these days. A beautiful feeling that very few people have. Don't you feel different after spending this bright day here? I am not the same Sanan, I was a few days ago. You have become an integral part of my thoughts and my existence (p.196).

Tarar emphasizes that all forms of love are inherently intertwined with desires either emotional, psychological, or physical. This implies that even genuine emotional connections are

influenced by underlying desires and motivations. "Plato links true friendship with freedom. Friends respect each other's freedom. They love each other in a way that is uplifting and supportive of freedom, virtue, and wisdom. This is the proverbial ideal of Platonic love" (Fiala, 2022, p. 150).

Tarar's rejection of the Platonic ideal is also evident in Paskal's character; her love for Sanan is based on her psychological needs. Paskal knew that due to her disability, she would never find a man who would stand by her side for life. Her beauty fades in front of her disability and no one loves her. "I said that people are temporarily mesmerized by my face and express their desire to meet me and later realize their folly and change their minds" (p. 109).

“میں نے کہا نہا نا لوگ میرے چہرے سے وقتی
اپنی طور پر مرعوب ہو کر مجھ سے ملنے کی خواہش
دیتے کا اظہار کر بیٹھتے ہیں اور بعد میں انہیں
حماقت کا احساس ہوتا ہے تو وہ اپنا ارادہ بدل
(P. 109).

Paskal, due to her past experiences, knew that people only sympathize with her for some time and then get annoyed. Sanan was the best choice for her and

wishes to stay with Sanan at any cost. She only wants love from him and is trying every possible way to convince him. She says, I also love you very much. I also want to share my sorrows with you. I also want you to support my weak arms and I also need a companion for the long and painful journey of life. You will then say that a Pakistani girl does not express her feelings in this way. You tell me what else to do. You yourself know that my feelings for you are not limited to affection and friendship. They have intensified. But you never expressed your feelings to me. Sanan! If you just tell me once that you don't like me, I'll leave right now, but if you have even a little space in your heart for me, please tell me (p. 194).

میں بھی تمہیں بے پناہ پیار کرتی ہوں۔ میں بھی
بن تمہارے ساتھ اپنے دکھ بانٹنا چاہتی ہوں۔ میں بھی
اذیت چاہتی ہوں کہ تم میری کمزور ہاتھوں کا سہارا
جاؤ اور مجھے بھی زندگی کے طویل اور
ناک سفر کے لیے ایک ساتھی کی ضرورت ہے۔ تم
پھر کہو گے کہ ایک پاکستانی لڑکی اپنے جذبات
کا اظہار اس طریقے سے نہیں کرے گی۔ تم ہی بتاؤ
سنان میں اور کیا کروں تم خود جانتے ہو کہ میرے
احساسات تمہارے بارے میں ہیں دیکھی

اور صرف دوستی تک ہی محدود نہیں رہے۔ ان میں شدت آچکی ہے۔ ادھر تم نے کبھی بھی اپنے جنبات کا اظہار مجھ سے نہیں کیا۔ سنن اگر تم صرف مجھے ایک مرتبہ یہ کہ دو کہ تم مجھے پسند نہیں کرتے تو میں ابھی اسی وقت یہاں سے چلی جاؤں گی لیکن اگر تمہارے دل میں میرے لیے نہوڑی سی جگہ بھی ہے تو پلیز کہہ دو (p.194)

Sanan knew that he had to face the challenges in initiating his relationship with Paskal so in the guise of societal pressure he was running away from her. For him, it was not possible to take Paskal along with him as not only he but also his society would not accept a handicapped lady. Paskal thought that she was physically disabled which is why Sanan was reluctant to accept her. “Sanan, if I was not disabled, would you have changed your mind? You are Disabled? Sanan brought her closer to him and said, I have told you before that you are not disabled. I am the disabled who, despite wanting to accept you, cannot do so” (my trans p. 197).

“سنن اگر میں اپنا چ نہ ہوتی تو کیا تم اپنا ارادہ بدل دیتے؟ تم اور اپنا چ؟ سنن نے اسے اپنے قریب لاتے ہوئے کہا، میں نے پہلے بھی تمہیں بتایا ہے تم اپنا چ نہیں ہو۔ اپنا چ تو میں ہوں جو تمہیں اپنا

لینے کی خواہش کے باوجود ایسا نہیں کر سکتا” (p. 197).

Tarar also sheds light that everyone at some point in their life becomes disabled or handicapped whether that person is aware of it or not. The characters experience internal conflicts and external resistance, yet their story of love sheds light on the rigid expectations, constraints on emotional expression, challenges of living together and the pressure to conform to traditional norms that create complex dynamics within relationships. “Paskal, just like you are physically disabled, everyone in the world is disabled for one reason or another. Sometimes compulsions make a person disabled. “What kind of compulsions? The compulsions of an Eastern society,” said Sanan softly, which you as a western girl would never understand” (p. 193).

“پاسکل جس طرح تم جسمانی طور کا معذور ہو اسی طرح دنیا کا ہر شخص کسی نہ کسی وجہ سے معذور ہوتا ہے۔ بعض انسان کو اوقات مجبوریاں بھی انسان کو اپنا چ بنا دیتی ہیں۔ کیسی مجبوریاں؟ ایک مشرقی معاشرے کی مجبوریاں

سنان نے آسرنہ سے کہا، جنہوں نے شادی نہ ایک مرغی لڑکی سمجھنے میں ناکام رہی گی” (p. 193). Sanan was not willing to take Paskal along and she tried every trick to convince him. She says, “But I am not asking for anything. Even though I am disabled, I can do all the housework by myself. Yesterday I made coffee and sandwiches for you, didn't I! I will also get a job” (p. 195).

“لیکن میں تو کچھ بھی نہیں مانگ رہی۔ میں اپنا ج بوتے ہوئے بھی گھر کا سارا کام کاج خود کر سکتی ہوں۔ کل میں نے تمہارے لیے کافی اور سینٹوچ بنائے تھے نا! میں نوکری بھی کر لوں گی” (p.195).

After all of Sanan's excuses and explaining pressures on him, Paskal's love seems like selfish love that is devoid of all these compulsions. Due to her horrible past, she doesn't want to think about her unpleasant memories but gradually she has grown out of it and started thinking about the future. Sanan uses the map in her room to tell her his way back to Pakistan, she misunderstands the map and burns it. She crosses all boundaries of insanity not out of love for Sanan but for her

own sake. To Plato, love is unpleasant if not done in a beautifully.

In the first place, a hasty attachment is held to be dishonourable, because time is the true test of this as of most other things; and then again there is a dishonour in being overcome by the love of money, wealth, or of political power, whether a man suffers and is frightened into surrender at the loss of them, or is unable to rise above the advantages of them. For none of these things are of a permanent or lasting nature; not to mention that no generous friendship ever sprung from them.

There remains, then, only one way of honourable attachment which custom allows in the beloved, and this is the way of virtue; any service which the lover did was not to be accounted flattery or dishonour, and the beloved has also one way of voluntary service which is not dishonourable, and this is virtuous service (p. 478).

Tarar's rejection of the Platonic approach to love creates a disharmony between the character's ideals and the reader's expectations. As readers we are aware of characters that evolve

through selfless, Platonic connections, inspiring them to believe in the power of love. Tarar's rejection of the ideals of Platonic love challenges this emotional connection, potentially leaving us disillusioned and detached from the character's journey of love. By critical understanding of the text through the author's perspective, we come to know that both Sanan and Paskal are in a deceptive relationship. They are making decisions on their needs instead of love. This viewpoint not only challenges the character's beliefs but also seeks to dismantle the philosophical foundation on which their refuge is built.

Conclusions

The investigation of the nature of love in the novel *Piyar ka Pehla Shehar* reveals a complex portrayal of the conflict between reason and passion. The research investigated the intricate dynamics of love between the protagonists and explored it from a Platonic theory of Eros. Sanan's love is bound by the responsibilities he carries for his family and his sense of duty to

his own culture. Ultimately, the character's love is a reflection of the complexities of human relationships, where emotions often clash with societal expectations. It is a love that goes beyond physical desires and is based on a deep emotional connection. However, it is also a love bound by the limitations of society, making it both beautiful and bittersweet.

The characters in the novel strive to follow ideal love but their actions and decisions are often influenced by societal pressures, personal desires, and practical considerations. Tarar's contradiction of Platonic love as an unattainable reality serves as a critique of romanticized notions of love, emphasizing that emotional connections arise with desires, whether they are psychological, or physical. The characters experience internal conflicts and external resistance that highlight the nature of their love. Sanan prioritizes rationality and chooses social aspects over purely emotional or spiritual connections, leading to his decision to part ways with Paskal. Furthermore, the character of Paskal

embodies the idea that love is driven by psychological needs. Her love is shaped by her disability and past experiences. This challenges the traditional view of Platonic love as a purely spiritual and intellectual connection. It highlights the hypocrisy of love in which characters deceive each other under the veil of love. This shows the world is a platform of deceptive relationships that are away from ideal love and serves as a reminder that love, in all its forms, is a complex component of human existence which is often shaped by personal desires, societal norms, and practical considerations.

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