



CULTURAL METAPHORS AND METONYMIES OF WEDDINGS IN PAKISTANI ANGLOPHONE POETRY: A CULTURAL LINGUISTIC STUDY

Nadia Akram
naichrus@gmail.com

National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Dr. Zawar Hashmi

National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Abstract

This article examines the cultural conceptualization of weddings in Pakistani Anglophone poetry through the framework of Cultural Linguistics. It explores how Pakistani poets writing in English use metaphor and metonymy to represent a wedding not simply as a private union between two individuals but as a collective cultural event shaped by ritual, emotion, family honour, social status, gender roles, and economic exchange. The study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach and draws particularly on the concepts of cultural schemas, cultural categories, cultural metaphors, cultural metonymies, and collective cultural cognition. The analysis focuses on selected poems by Taufiq Rafat, Moniza Alvi, Nadir Hussain, Rizwan Akhtar, Mona Hassan, and Hibba Memon. The findings show that weddings are conceptualized as journeys, performances, spectacles, feasts, marketplaces, transactions, social inspections, and negotiations. The poems also employ metonymies such as the caravan of cars, palanquin, hennaed hands, dholak, brass band, dowry items, drawing room, tea service, and matchmaker. These figurative patterns reveal that the wedding functions as a rich cultural schema in Pakistani Anglophone poetry. While the poets preserve familiar cultural meanings associated with celebration, hospitality, family ties, and ritual continuity, they also question social display, dowry, class judgment, the objectification of women, and the limited agency of brides. The study concludes that metaphor and metonymy serve as important linguistic and conceptual resources through which Pakistani poets represent, negotiate, and critique their cultural experience.

Keywords: *Collective Cultural Cognition, Cultural Linguistics, Cultural Metaphor, Cultural Metonymy, Pakistani Anglophone Poetry, Wedding Schema.*

Corresponding Author: Nadia Akram (National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan)

Email: naichrus@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Language is deeply connected with the ways communities understand and interpret their experiences. It does not simply communicate information; it also carries memories, values, beliefs, and patterns of thought developed through social and cultural interaction. The ways people describe relationships, rituals, emotions, and social institutions are often shaped by the cultural knowledge they share with others.

The relationship between language and cultural knowledge has received considerable attention in Cultural Linguistics. Drawing on cognitive linguistics, anthropology, and theories of distributed cognition, Cultural Linguistics examines how communities develop and transmit shared ways of conceptualizing experience (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2011, 2017). Sharifian argues that cultural meanings are not fixed systems stored equally in the minds of all individuals. Rather, cultural conceptualizations emerge through collective experiences and are distributed among members of a community in different ways. Individuals may participate in shared cultural knowledge while also interpreting and reshaping it according to their own experiences.

This understanding of culture is particularly useful for literary analysis. Poetry often reflects the relationship between individual expression and collective experience. Poets draw upon familiar cultural meanings, images, and practices, but they may also question, transform, or reinterpret them. Figurative language becomes especially significant in this process because metaphors and metonymies allow writers to express complex social experiences through culturally meaningful images.

Cognitive approaches to metaphor and metonymy have shown that these processes are not merely decorative features of literary language. Metaphor allows one area of experience to be understood through another, while metonymy creates meaning through associations between closely related elements within the same conceptual domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Radden & Kövecses, 1999). In literary texts, these patterns can reveal how communities understand experiences such as identity, relationships, social roles, and institutions.

Pakistani Anglophone poetry offers a rich context for exploring these connections between language and culture. Pakistani poets writing in English frequently incorporate local traditions, rituals, objects, and social practices into their work. Through this process, English becomes a medium through which Pakistani cultural experiences are represented, negotiated, and sometimes challenged. Their poetry reflects the interaction between inherited traditions, contemporary realities, and individual perspectives.

Among the cultural practices represented in Pakistani Anglophone poetry, weddings occupy a significant place. A Pakistani wedding is not simply the union of two individuals; it is a social event involving families, kinship networks, religious practices, economic exchanges, and public participation. Wedding rituals such as *baraat*, *mehndi*,

nikah, and rukhsati carry meanings that extend beyond the events themselves. They are connected with ideas of honour, reputation, hospitality, gender roles, class identity, and family relationships.

Previous studies of Pakistani Anglophone poetry have explored themes such as postcolonial identity, migration, cultural hybridity, gender, politics, and social transformation. While these studies have contributed significantly to understanding Pakistani literary expression, less attention has been given to the cultural conceptualizations that shape poetic representations of social practices. In particular, the wedding has rarely been examined as a cultural schema organized through metaphorical and metonymic patterns.

The present study examines how selected Pakistani Anglophone poets represent weddings through culturally grounded metaphors and metonymies. It argues that wedding imagery in these poems does not merely describe a social event; it reflects wider cultural understandings of transition, celebration, status, exchange, evaluation, and negotiation. At the same time, these poetic representations reveal tensions within wedding practices by questioning material expectations, social judgment, gender inequality, and the limited agency often experienced by women.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What cultural metaphors shape the representation of weddings in selected Pakistani Anglophone poems?
2. How do culturally grounded metonymies represent wedding rituals, objects, identities, spaces, and social relationships?
3. In what ways do these metaphors and metonymies preserve, negotiate, or challenge Pakistani cultural conceptualizations of weddings?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Metaphor, Metonymy, and Cultural Conceptualization

Cognitive approaches have significantly changed the study of metaphor and metonymy. Earlier literary approaches often treated figurative language mainly as a stylistic device used to create imagery or aesthetic effect. Cognitive Linguistics, however, regards metaphor as a basic feature of thought through which one domain of experience is understood in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metonymy also contributes to meaning-making by establishing associations between closely related elements within the same conceptual domain.

This understanding has broadened the study of figurative language. Metaphors and metonymies do not simply embellish a literary text; they reveal how people organize knowledge, interpret experience, and express culturally shaped meanings. In poetry, figurative expressions may therefore provide insight into the assumptions, values, and

conceptual patterns through which a community understands relationships, identities, rituals, and social institutions.

2.2. Cultural Linguistics and Literature

Cultural Linguistics builds on the insights of Cognitive Linguistics while giving greater attention to the role of culture in shaping conceptualization. Drawing on the work of Palmer (1996) and Sharifian (2011, 2015, 2017), it examines how language reflects culturally constructed ways of understanding experience. The framework brings together ideas from cognitive linguistics, anthropology, distributed cognition, complexity theory, and cultural studies.

A central concept within Cultural Linguistics is cultural cognition. Cultural knowledge does not exist only within isolated individual minds. It develops through social and linguistic interaction and is distributed across members of a community. However, it is not shared or internalized in exactly the same way by everyone. Individuals draw on collective knowledge while also interpreting it through their personal histories, social positions, and immediate contexts.

This view is especially useful for literary analysis. Literary texts emerge from particular cultural environments, yet they do not simply reproduce the beliefs and practices of those environments. Poets draw on shared cultural meanings but may also revise, question, or reinterpret them. Poetry therefore brings collective cultural knowledge into contact with individual imagination.

Sharifian (2020) argues that poets express both culturally shared and idiosyncratic conceptualizations. A poem may preserve meanings that remain active within a community, but it may also retain traces of earlier beliefs and practices. Literary texts can thus function as archives of cultural conceptualization while also offering critical or alternative ways of understanding cultural experience.

Although Cultural Linguistics has been applied to proverbs, idioms, political language, humour, policy discourse, and everyday communication, its use in literary studies remains comparatively limited. Sharifian (2020), for instance, applied the framework to Khayyām's poetry and examined conceptualizations of life, fate, existence, and religious tradition. Hozhabrossadat (2018) examined the cultural conceptualization of fanā, or spiritual death, in Rumi's Mathnavī. These studies show that Cultural Linguistics can illuminate the relationship between poetic expression, collective cultural knowledge, and the individual perspective of the poet.

2.3. The Wedding as a Cultural Schema

The concept of cultural schema is particularly useful for examining recurring social experiences. A cultural schema includes the roles, actions, expectations, values, emotions, and sequence of events associated with a culturally familiar practice. It is therefore broader than the recognition of an event as a category.

Sharifian (2017) distinguishes between a wedding as a cultural category and a wedding as a cultural schema. As a category, a wedding is recognized as a particular type of social event. As a schema, however, it includes knowledge of the people involved, the expected rituals, the sequence of activities, appropriate behaviour, material objects, emotional responses, and the social meanings attached to the event.

In Pakistani society, the wedding schema includes practices such as baraat, mehndi, nikah, and rukhsati, as well as bridal clothing, jewellery, music, food, dowry, photography, hospitality, and family participation. These are not isolated cultural details. Together, they form a network of knowledge through which weddings are experienced, recognized, and interpreted.

Cultural metaphors help organize different dimensions of this schema. A metaphor such as WEDDING IS A JOURNEY may be widely understandable, but its meaning in Pakistani poetry is shaped by culturally specific practices. The groom's arrival in the baraat and the bride's departure during rukhsati give the journey metaphor distinct social and emotional meanings.

Culturally grounded metonymies operate through association within the same wedding schema. A particular object, action, person, sound, or space may stand for a wider ritual or institution. Hennaed hands may represent bridal identity, the palanquin may evoke rukhsati, the dholak may stand for pre-wedding female festivities, and the drawing room may represent family respectability during a marriage proposal. Such expressions are meaningful because readers familiar with the culture recognize the wider knowledge activated by them.

These concepts allow literary analysis to move beyond merely identifying figures of speech. They help explain why certain images carry culturally specific meanings and how those meanings contribute to the representation of wedding experience.

2.4. Pakistani Anglophone Poetry and Cultural Experience

Pakistani Anglophone poetry provides a significant context for examining the relationship between language and cultural knowledge. Pakistani poets writing in English frequently incorporate indigenous vocabulary, religious references, domestic spaces, regional landscapes, rituals, and culturally familiar objects into their work. Terms such as baraat, nikah, mehndi, rukhsati, gharara, dholak, and palanquin introduce local knowledge into English poetic discourse.

This use of English does not merely reproduce British or Western literary traditions. Pakistani poets reshape the language through local experience. English becomes a medium through which cultural memories, social tensions, and forms of collective knowledge are expressed. The poetry therefore reflects the interaction between inherited traditions, contemporary realities, and individual viewpoints.

Wedding poetry is particularly important because it brings together several aspects of Pakistani social life. Weddings involve religious practice, kinship, family honour, hospitality, social status, gender roles, material exchange, and communal participation. They are both personal and public events, and their meanings extend far beyond the relationship between the bride and groom.

Research on South Asian marriage practices has shown that weddings function as social institutions through which families establish alliances, express honour, display status, and maintain kinship relations. Werbner (1990, 2002) discusses the importance of prestige, public display, and communal recognition in South Asian social life, while Twamley (2014) examines the role of family relationships and expectations in marriage practices.

Material exchange is another important aspect of marriage. Dowry, jewellery, furniture, household goods, and wedding expenses may represent parental care, domestic preparation, and social standing. At the same time, they may create economic pressure and reinforce unequal expectations. Donnan (1988) and Makino (2019) demonstrate the continued significance of material exchange in the formation of marital relationships.

Gender also shapes the wedding schema. The bride frequently occupies the visual centre of the ceremony through dress, jewellery, cosmetics, henna, and ritual presentation. However, visibility does not necessarily provide greater agency. Practices such as bride-viewing, dowry exchange, and public evaluation may place women under greater scrutiny than men.

These tensions are visible in Pakistani Anglophone poetry. Brides may be represented as flowers, pearls, prizes, commodities, or objects of display, while grooms may be evaluated through income, education, foreign employment, and material possessions. Domestic spaces, drawing rooms, food, and tea service may similarly become signs of class, upbringing, and family respectability.

2.5. Research Gap

Pakistani Anglophone poetry has frequently been studied in relation to postcolonial identity, migration, cultural hybridity, gender, politics, religion, nationalism, and social change. These approaches have offered important insights into Pakistani literary expression. However, they do not always explain how poetic images emerge from culturally shared schemas, categories, and associations.

Similarly, previous studies have examined Pakistani weddings, dowry, gender roles, family relationships, and marriage practices, while Cultural Linguistics has been applied to poetry in a limited number of studies. Yet insufficient attention has been given to the wedding as a cultural schema constructed through both metaphor and metonymy in Pakistani Anglophone poetry.

Existing scholarship has not fully explored how poets organize wedding experience through conceptual domains such as journey, performance, spectacle, marathon, feast, marketplace, transaction, social inspection, and negotiation. The cultural meanings carried by wedding objects, spaces, sounds, gestures, and participants also require closer examination.

The present study addresses this gap by examining cultural metaphors and culturally grounded metonymies in selected Pakistani Anglophone poems. It investigates how poets draw on shared cultural knowledge while also questioning materialism, class judgment, patriarchal expectations, public display, and women's limited agency.

3. Theoretical and Analytical Framework

This study draws on Sharifian's framework of Cultural Linguistics, which examines how language reflects culturally shaped ways of understanding experience (Sharifian, 2011, 2017). The framework assumes that members of a cultural community develop shared patterns of knowledge through social interaction, historical experience, and participation in cultural practices. These patterns are neither fixed nor equally distributed among all individuals. Instead, they exist as flexible forms of cultural knowledge that people draw on, adapt, and sometimes challenge.

The central concept in this study is the cultural schema. A cultural schema is a structured body of knowledge associated with a recurring experience or event. It includes not only the event itself but also the participants, objects, actions, emotions, values, and expectations connected with it. In the present study, the wedding is treated as a cultural schema that includes rituals such as *baraat*, *nikah*, *mehndi*, and *rukhsati*, together with bridal clothing, jewellery, music, food, family participation, and social expectations.

The study also draws on the concept of cultural metaphor. Within Cultural Linguistics, metaphors are not understood simply as individual creative expressions. They may also reflect culturally established ways of conceptualizing experience. A metaphor connects two domains of knowledge and allows one experience to be understood through another. When weddings are represented as journeys, for example, the source domain of movement, travel, departure, and destination helps structure marriage as a transition from one stage of life to another.

Alongside metaphor, the study examines culturally grounded metonymy. Metonymic meanings depend on associations that are recognizable within a particular cultural context. An object, action, place, sound, or person may represent a wider cultural practice because members of a community understand the connection between them. A *dholak*, for instance, may evoke pre-wedding festivities, a *palanquin* may represent *rukhsati*, and a drawing room may stand for family respectability during marriage negotiations.

This framework allows the analysis to move beyond identifying figures of speech at the textual level. It makes it possible to examine how figurative expressions draw on wider cultural knowledge and how poets use them to preserve, reinterpret, or question social practices. Metaphor and metonymy are therefore treated as both linguistic patterns and forms of cultural conceptualization

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach to examine how the wedding schema is constructed through metaphor and metonymy in selected Pakistani Anglophone poems. The analysis focuses on the relationship between poetic language and the cultural knowledge associated with wedding rituals, marriage arrangements, family relationships, gender roles, social status, and material exchange.

4.1. Selection of the Corpus

The corpus consists of selected poems by Taufiq Rafat, Moniza Alvi, Nadir Hussain, Rizwan Akhtar, Mona Hassan, and Hiba Memon. The poems were selected purposively because they represent different aspects of the Pakistani wedding schema. These include wedding processions, bridal preparation, baraat, mehndi, nikah, rukhsati, dowry, marriage proposals, family evaluation, hospitality, and the transition into married life.

The selection was not intended to provide a complete account of wedding representations in Pakistani Anglophone poetry. Rather, the poems were chosen because they contain culturally meaningful references to wedding practices and offer varied perspectives on ritual, gender, class, family expectations, material exchange, and individual agency.

4.2. Identification of Metaphorical Expressions

The identification of metaphorical expressions was guided by the Metaphor Identification Procedure developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). Each poem was first read closely to establish its overall meaning and context. The relevant lexical units were then examined individually.

For each lexical unit, its contextual meaning was compared with its more basic contemporary meaning. A word or expression was treated as metaphorical when its meaning in the poem differed from its basic meaning but could still be understood through comparison with it. This procedure helped distinguish metaphorical uses from literal description.

Once the metaphorical expressions had been identified, they were grouped according to recurring source domains and conceptual similarities. These groupings were then examined to determine the broader cultural metaphors through which weddings and marriage were represented. The metaphors are discussed in the analysis section with

reference to their linguistic expressions, source and target domains, cross-domain mappings, and cultural significance.

4.3. Identification of Metonymic Expressions

The identification of metonymic expressions was guided by Littlemore's (2015) approach, adapted from Steen's (2007) framework. This procedure was used to identify expressions in which one culturally familiar element stood for another closely related element or for a wider wedding practice.

The poems were first read closely to identify words and phrases that appeared to carry metonymic meaning. Particular attention was given to objects, spaces, sounds, actions, gestures, and participants associated with the wedding schema.

Each possible metonymy was then examined in its immediate poetic context to determine what it represented. The relationship between the expressed element and the wider meaning was formulated clearly before the expression was classified. Unlike metaphor, which involves comparison across distinct conceptual domains, metonymy depends on contiguity or association within the same domain.

The source and target of each metonymic relation were then identified. The source was the element explicitly mentioned in the poem, while the target was the wider ritual, identity, action, event, or social meaning it evoked. The identified metonymies were classified according to recurring relations such as part for whole, whole for part, object for user, instrument for action, and place for event.

The final step involved interpreting these metonymies within the Pakistani cultural context. An expression was treated as culturally grounded when its wider meaning depended on shared knowledge of wedding practices, social roles, rituals, and values. This made it possible to explain why particular objects, sounds, places, or gestures carried meanings that extended beyond their literal presence.

4.4. Interpretation of Cultural Meanings

After the metaphors and metonymies had been identified, they were interpreted within the wider context of Pakistani cultural cognition. Attention was given to the ways the poems draw on shared knowledge of wedding rituals, family roles, gender expectations, hospitality, class identity, public reputation, and economic exchange.

The analysis also considered whether these figurative patterns preserved familiar cultural meanings, adapted them to changing social conditions, or questioned established practices. The study therefore moved from individual linguistic expressions to broader conceptual patterns and then to their cultural significance.

The study does not assume that wedding practices or their meanings are uniform across Pakistan. Cultural understandings of weddings may vary according to region, class, gender, generation, and individual experience. The findings are therefore limited to the recurring patterns represented in the selected poems.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. The Wedding as a Cultural Schema

The selected poems represent the wedding not as a single ceremonial event but as a complex cultural schema shaped by ritual, movement, display, exchange, evaluation, and negotiation. A cultural schema includes the shared roles, expectations, objects, actions, and meanings associated with a recurring cultural experience (Sharifian, 2017). In the Pakistani context, weddings involve family relationships, social reputation, economic expectations, gender roles, and communal participation. The poets draw on this shared cultural knowledge, but they do not reproduce it uncritically. Their representations often reveal tensions between celebration and pressure, continuity and change, and individual experience and collective expectation.

The wedding schema in these poems includes culturally familiar elements such as *baraat*, *rukhsati*, bridal clothing, jewellery, music, food, dowry, guests, and marriage negotiations. These elements do not carry meaning in isolation. Together, they form an interconnected body of knowledge through which marriage is understood as both a joyful occasion and a socially regulated experience. Metaphor and metonymy allow the poets to bring different dimensions of this experience into focus. Some figurative patterns emphasize transition, celebration, and cultural continuity, while others expose material pressure, gender inequality, public scrutiny, and the limited agency of the bride.

5.2. Wedding as a Journey

One of the most prominent conceptualizations in the selected poems is *WEDDING IS A JOURNEY*. Through images of roads, vehicles, processions, departure, crossing, and arrival, marriage is presented as movement from one stage of life to another. This journey is not only physical. It also marks a change in identity, family relationships, social position, and emotional experience.

In Moniza Alvi's "The Wedding," the speaker recalls travelling with her bridegroom:

"We travelled around roads with English names, my bridegroom and I" (Alvi, 1997, p. 40).

The couple's physical movement suggests the beginning of married life, but the phrase "roads with English names" adds another layer to the journey. It places the marriage within a culturally hybrid setting in which Pakistani experience intersects with English language, colonial history, and modern urban space. The journey therefore involves not only a marital transition but also the speaker's negotiation of cultural identity.

The metaphor becomes more culturally specific in poetic representations of *baraat* and *rukhsati*. In "A Wedding," Hussain describes the groom as being:

"Escorted by a caravan of cars,

A strange and somewhat mournful procession" (Hussain, 1997, p. 171).

The "caravan of cars" presents the wedding journey as a collective movement rather than a private transition undertaken by the couple alone. Family members, guests, vehicles, and public display all become part of the event. The word "caravan" also evokes an extended and ceremonious journey, reinforcing the communal character of the *baraat*.

At the same time, the procession is described as "mournful," which unsettles the expected atmosphere of celebration. The description brings the emotional cost of marriage into view, particularly the bride's separation from her family and familiar surroundings. The wedding journey thus carries two opposing meanings: it marks union and beginning, but also departure and loss.

A similar tension appears in Mona Hassan's "Wedding Farewell," where the bride is placed on:

"a palanquin,
a Toyota taped with roses" (Hassan, 2006, p. 21).

The image brings the traditional palanquin and the modern car together. Although the Toyota has replaced the older mode of transport, it continues to carry the symbolic meaning of *rukhsati*. The juxtaposition shows how wedding customs may change in outward form while retaining their emotional and cultural significance. The decorated vehicle becomes part of a ritual of departure through which the bride leaves one household and enters another.

Hassan further compares the bride's slow movement in high heels to that of Neil Armstrong on the moon:

"moving slowly in four-inch heels" like "Neil Armstrong on the moon" (Hassan, 2006, p. 21).

The comparison makes the bride's new environment appear unfamiliar and difficult to navigate. Like an astronaut entering an unknown world, she moves cautiously into a new household, surrounded by new relationships and expectations. The humour of the comparison does not remove its underlying unease. Instead, it suggests that marriage requires the bride to enter a social space in which even ordinary movement feels strange and carefully observed.

The journey metaphor therefore presents marriage as transition, but not necessarily as progress toward a secure or clearly defined destination. In these poems, the journey may involve excitement, uncertainty, separation, and vulnerability. It reflects the culturally familiar movement of the wedding procession while also drawing attention to the emotional and social changes experienced by the bride.

5.3. Metonymies of *Baraat* and *Rukhsati*

The journey metaphor is supported by culturally grounded metonymies. The "caravan of cars," for example, stands for the wider institution of the *baraat*. The vehicles do more than carry the groom and his relatives. Their movement announces the groom's

arrival, makes the wedding publicly visible, and may also display the family's social and economic position.

The palanquin and the rose-covered Toyota similarly evoke the larger ritual of rukhsati. Rather than describing every stage of the farewell, the poet uses culturally recognizable forms of transport to activate the wider experience of departure, separation, and emotional transition.

Tears, embraces, and farewell songs may also function metonymically because they represent the emotional dimension of rukhsati. Individual gestures and sounds come to stand for the collective ritual through which the bride's departure is acknowledged by the family and community.

5.4. Wedding as Performance and Spectacle

The selected poems present the wedding as both a performance and a spectacle. The metaphor *WEDDING IS A PERFORMANCE* is most clearly expressed through theatrical language such as "show," "stage," and "audience." These expressions turn the ceremony into a public event in which the bride and groom occupy central roles while the guests watch, respond, and participate as spectators. The related metaphor *WEDDING IS A SPECTACLE* draws attention to visual display through clothing, decoration, photography, and the transformation of ordinary spaces into elaborate wedding venues.

In Mona Hassan's "Wedding Farewell," the bride's gharara is described as:

"crimson, heavy

with ancestral knowledge of craft" (Hassan, 2006, p. 21).

The dress does not directly realize the performance metaphor, but it contributes to the visual presentation of the bride. As a culturally significant object, it functions metonymically by representing bridal identity, inherited craft traditions, and family prestige. The phrase "heavy with ancestral knowledge" is itself metaphorical, as cultural knowledge is presented as a physical weight carried by the garment. The dress therefore connects the bride with earlier generations while also making her part of the public display of the wedding.

The groom's turban also contributes to this ceremonial presentation. Hassan describes it as being worn "as a fashion statement." The phrase introduces irony by suggesting that the turban may function more as an element of appearance than as a deeply meaningful cultural symbol. While the bride's dress carries "ancestral knowledge," the groom's turban appears to be associated more closely with style and display. This contrast suggests that cultural symbols may not carry the same significance for every participant.

In "Winter-Weddings of Lahore," Rizwan Akhtar extends the spectacle beyond the bride and groom and transforms the city itself:

"neighborhoods turn into glitzy parks"

and "all tracks lead to marquees" (Akhtar, 2017, p. 107).

These expressions contribute mainly to the metaphor *WEDDING IS A SPECTACLE*. Ordinary neighbourhoods and roads are temporarily transformed into brightly decorated spaces, while marquees become centres of public gathering. The wedding occupies the city visually and socially, making family celebration, hospitality, and status visible to the wider community.

Photography further strengthens this sense of spectacle. Guests pose for cameras, and flashes and camcorders turn the event into something to be recorded and viewed again. Cameras and photographs function metonymically because they represent the wider culture of public display and social documentation associated with contemporary weddings. The ceremony is performed not only for those present but also for future viewers.

The metaphor *WEDDING IS A PERFORMANCE* appears most directly in Hussain's "A Wedding," where the ceremony is described as a "glittering show." Once the public event ends, the couple is left:

"on another stage

Without an audience" (Hussain, 1997, p. 171).

The words "show," "stage," and "audience" clearly belong to the source domain of theatre. During the ceremony, the couple performs before family members and guests and remains at the centre of public attention. After the "show" is over, however, they move to a private stage where they must confront married life without the protection or support of the audience.

The movement from one stage to another exposes the difference between the public image of the wedding and the private reality of marriage. The ceremony appears glittering and carefully arranged, but the couple's later experience may involve uncertainty, unfamiliarity, and unequal power. The theatrical metaphor therefore reveals how public celebration can conceal private tension.

Taken together, the metaphors and metonymies in these poems present the wedding as an event that is staged, watched, recorded, and socially evaluated. The theatrical expressions directly construct the wedding as a performance, while bridal clothing, the groom's turban, decorated spaces, marquees, cameras, and photographs contribute to the wider spectacle through visual and cultural association.

5.5. Metonymies of Ceremonial Identity and Public Display

The performance and spectacle metaphors are reinforced by several culturally grounded metonymies. Bridal clothing, the groom's turban, decorated spaces, marquees, cameras, and photographs refer not only to individual objects but also to wider aspects of the wedding ceremony.

In "Wedding Farewell," the bride's gharara functions metonymically as a sign of bridal identity, inherited craftsmanship, and cultural tradition. The garment identifies her

as the bride and connects her appearance with family history and ceremonial expectations. Similarly, the groom's turban represents his ceremonial role and public identity within the wedding, even though the description of it as a "fashion statement" introduces irony and suggests that the symbol may have become part of visual display.

The transformation of neighbourhoods into "glitzy parks" and the repeated reference to marquees also work metonymically. These spaces stand for the larger culture of public celebration, decoration, hospitality, and social status associated with urban weddings. They make the wedding visible beyond the private family sphere.

Photography and camcorders carry a similar metonymic meaning. Cameras stand for the wider practice of recording, displaying, and preserving the ceremony. They also represent the importance placed on appearance, social visibility, and the creation of an ideal public image.

These metonymies support the broader conceptualization of the wedding as a performance and spectacle. While theatrical expressions such as "show," "stage," and "audience" directly realize the performance metaphor, clothing, spaces, and cameras provide the culturally recognizable signs through which that performance is organized and displayed.

5.6. Wedding as a Marathon

The metaphor WEDDING IS A MARATHON appears explicitly in Rizwan Akhtar's "Winter-Weddings of Lahore," where the city is described as running:

"a marathon of winter-weddings
a relay of dholkis, baraats and nikkahs
hog every place, from hand to hand" (Akhtar, 2017, p. 107).

The source domain of a marathon presents the wedding season as prolonged, demanding, and marked by continuous activity. Rather than appearing as a single ceremony, weddings unfold through a succession of events that involve families, guests, neighbourhoods, and the wider city. The verb "runs" gives Lahore an active role, as though the city itself were participating in an extended race.

The expression "a relay of dholkis, baraats and nikkahs" develops the metaphor further. A relay consists of successive stages in which movement continues from one participant to another. In the poem, one wedding event follows another, and celebrations seem to pass "from hand to hand" across families and communities. The plural forms "dholkis," "baraats," and "nikkahs" indicate that the poem is not describing one wedding alone. It presents an entire season in which similar ceremonies take place repeatedly throughout Lahore.

The phrase:

"all tracks lead to marquees" (Akhtar, 2017, p. 107)

extends the imagery of a race. "Tracks" suggests the routes followed by runners, but within the wedding context, these routes are the crowded roads leading guests towards marquees. The expression shows how the movement of the city becomes centred on wedding venues. Roads, cars, neighbourhoods, and banquet spaces are drawn into the continuing rhythm of the wedding season.

The race imagery reaches its conclusion in the phrase:

"quick hugs and tears blur the finishing line" (Akhtar, 2017, p. 107).

The "finishing line" represents the end of the wedding ceremony, particularly the emotionally charged moment of farewell. However, the line is "blurred" by tears and embraces, suggesting that the ending is neither simple nor clearly defined. For the bride and her family, the conclusion of the celebration also marks separation and the beginning of a different stage of life.

The metaphor carries both celebratory and critical meanings. A marathon is associated with energy, endurance, coordination, and achievement, but it also requires sustained effort and may lead to exhaustion. Similarly, the wedding season brings excitement and collective participation, while also placing physical, emotional, social, and financial demands on families and guests.

The metaphor therefore captures the repetitive and demanding nature of urban wedding culture in Lahore. Weddings occur one after another, drawing the whole city into an extended cycle of movement, festivity, obligation, and emotional strain. What begins as celebration gradually becomes an endurance test, and the "finishing line" brings not only completion but also fatigue and separation.

5.7. Metonymies of the Wedding Season

The marathon metaphor is reinforced by several culturally grounded metonymies that evoke the wider wedding season. In the expression "a relay of dholkis, baraats and nikkahs," individual ceremonies stand for the larger cycle of weddings taking place across Lahore. Each term refers to a particular stage of the wedding schema, but their collective use brings an entire season of repeated celebration into view.

The plural forms are significant. They suggest that the city is not occupied by a single wedding but by many overlapping ceremonies. Dholkis, baraats, and nikkahs therefore function as parts that represent the wider social phenomenon of the winter wedding season. Their succession also supports the relay metaphor, as one event appears to follow another without pause.

Wedding venues carry a similar metonymic meaning. In the lines "neighbourhoods turn into glitzy parks," "all tracks lead to marquees," and guests are shown "huddling in banquet halls," particular places stand for the weddings being held there. The marquees and banquet halls do not simply provide physical settings; they represent the repeated public celebrations that temporarily reshape the city.

The transformed neighbourhoods also stand for the collective visibility of the wedding season. Decorations, traffic, glossy cars, crowds, and illuminated venues make private family occasions part of the public life of Lahore. Through these spatial metonymies, the entire city appears absorbed into the continuing rhythm of wedding activity.

The dholki also carries a wider cultural association. It refers not only to a musical instrument or a single gathering but to pre-wedding singing, women's participation, family interaction, and ritual preparation. Its inclusion in the "relay" compresses this broader cultural experience into one recognizable term.

Together, these metonymies support the marathon metaphor by showing how separate ceremonies, sounds, and venues come to represent an extended season of communal activity. They present Lahore's winter weddings as a continuous social cycle in which one event follows another and the city repeatedly reorganizes itself around celebration.

5.8. Wedding as Feast and Hospitality

Food is an important part of Pakistani wedding culture, where hospitality is closely tied to family honour, generosity, and social reputation. In the selected poems, this aspect of the wedding schema is expressed through the metaphor *WEDDING IS A FEAST*.

In Taufiq Rafat's "Loot," the wedding is imagined through the language of abundance:

"All you have got so far are crumbs

Compared to the big feast coming" (Rafat, 1985, p. 15).

The contrast between "crumbs" and the "big feast" gives the wedding a sense of anticipation and excess. For the child in the poem, the feast represents the most exciting part of the celebration, something larger and more rewarding than the small pleasures already enjoyed. At the same time, the metaphor reflects the cultural importance of food in Pakistani weddings, where sharing a meal becomes part of collective participation and celebration.

The feast also carries a social meaning. Families often express generosity and hospitality through the quantity, variety, and presentation of food. A large meal may therefore communicate care and respect for guests, but it may also become a measure of family status and social standing. The metaphor captures both sides of this practice: the genuine pleasure of communal eating and the pressure to meet public expectations.

5.9. Food and Hospitality as Metonymy

Food-related details also function metonymically by standing for the wider practice of wedding hospitality. In Akhtar's poetry, the phrase "the clatter of food" evokes more than the sound of plates and serving dishes. It brings to mind the crowded banquet hall, the movement of guests, the serving of meals, and the shared experience of eating together.

Here, the sound of food service represents the larger social scene of hospitality. A single sensory detail gives access to the wider wedding event and to the family's effort to receive and satisfy its guests.

Hospitality in these poems is therefore not presented simply as an act of kindness. It is also connected with social visibility, family reputation, and the desire to leave a favourable impression. Food becomes both a source of communal pleasure and a means through which families perform generosity before others.

5.10. Wedding as Marketplace and Transaction

One of the most critical representations in the selected poems is the conceptualization of the wedding as an economic exchange. Through the metaphors *WEDDING IS A MARKETPLACE* and *WEDDING IS A TRANSACTION*, poets highlight the influence of material values and social competition within marriage practices.

In Rafat's "Loot," the language of marketing and competition transforms the wedding into a marketplace:

"marketing the likely spots" and a "glittering shower of coins" (Rafat, 1985, p. 153).

The vocabulary of the market introduces ideas of competition, exchange, and acquisition. Guests become participants in a social economy where money, gifts, and status circulate. The metaphor suggests that weddings may become spaces where social relationships are negotiated through material display.

The transactional aspect becomes more direct in Nadia Hussain's "The Wedding," where the groom:

"goes to claim his prize" and the ceremony ends with "the deal completed" (Hussain, 1997, p. 171).

The language of "prize" and "deal" creates a sense of commodification. Marriage is presented through the language of possession and exchange, reducing a personal relationship to a social transaction.

This representation does not simply criticize marriage itself; rather, it questions the ways in which social and economic expectations may influence the understanding of marriage.

5.11. Dowry as a Metonymy of Social Value

Dowry functions as an important metonymy within the wedding schema because individual objects represent wider ideas of family honour, economic status, and social expectation.

In Rafat's poetry, objects such as:

"a cot, a looking glass, a tin trunk, beautifully painted in grey and blue" (Rafat, 1985, p. 134)

represent the material preparation associated with marriage. These objects are not merely household items; they symbolize the bride's transition into married life and the contribution expected from her family.

At the same time, these objects reveal the economic pressures associated with marriage. Dowry may represent parental care, but it may also reinforce the idea that a woman's value is connected with the possessions she brings into marriage.

Alvi challenges this material understanding of dowry when the speaker states:

"I insisted my dowry was simple-a smile, a shadow, a whisper" (Alvi, 1997, p. 101).

Here, emotional and symbolic qualities replace physical possessions. The alternative dowry represents a different understanding of value, one based on identity and personal presence rather than material exchange.

5.12. Wedding as Social Inspection

Marriage arrangements in the selected poems are also represented through the metaphor *WEDDING IS A SOCIAL INSPECTION*. This conceptualization highlights the ways families evaluate one another through appearance, behaviour, possessions, and domestic environment.

In Rafat's "A Middle-Class Drawing Room," a marriage visit is described as an occasion where the family's suitability is judged:

"to judge the suitability of this house for a cousin to be married into" (Rafat, 1985, p. 15).

The drawing room becomes more than a physical space. It represents family identity, class position, and social respectability. The arrangement of furniture and the attempt to hide imperfections reflect the pressure to present an acceptable image to others.

5.13. Drawing Room and Tea Service as Metonymies

The drawing room functions metonymically because it represents the larger family being evaluated. Visitors do not judge only the room itself; they interpret it as evidence of manners, status, upbringing, and domestic ability.

Similarly, tea service represents a wider process of social evaluation. The preparation, serving, and behaviour during a marriage visit become signs through which families assess one another. Ordinary domestic actions acquire cultural significance because they participate in the larger process of marriage negotiation.

5.14. Wedding as Negotiation

The wedding schema also includes processes of negotiation, especially within arranged marriage contexts. Mona Hassan's "I Married Him Because the In-Laws Were Well-Groomed" presents marriage arrangements through humour and irony. The poem highlights the careful evaluation involved in establishing compatibility between families.

The speaker explains that the in-laws:

"did not take over the drawing room like a military coup" (Hassan, 2006, p. 21).

The comparison humorously presents family interaction as a form of negotiation where power, respect, and boundaries must be managed. The success of the relationship depends not only on the individuals involved but also on the behaviour and acceptance of extended family members.

The poem presents marriage as a social process shaped by diplomacy, observation, and compromise rather than purely personal emotion.

5.15. Matchmaker and Bride-Viewing as Metonymies

The matchmaker represents the wider network of social connections involved in arranged marriages. The figure does not simply introduce two individuals; she represents family networks, community knowledge, reputation, and social mediation.

Similarly, bride-viewing functions as a metonymy for the broader process of evaluating a prospective bride. The practice involves judgments about appearance, manners, family background, education, and suitability.

Through these representations, the poems reveal how marriage arrangements may involve unequal forms of observation and evaluation, particularly when women become the primary subjects of assessment.

6. Findings

The analysis shows that Pakistani Anglophone poets present weddings as layered cultural experiences rather than as simple ceremonial occasions. In these poems, weddings bring together ritual, family relationships, emotional transition, social reputation, economic exchange, gender expectations, and public display. Metaphor and metonymy allow the poets to draw on familiar cultural knowledge while also revealing the tensions within it.

Several recurring metaphors shape the wedding schema. WEDDING IS A JOURNEY presents marriage as a movement from one stage of life to another. Images of roads, processions, vehicles, departure, and arrival give particular importance to the emotional experience of rukhsati. The journey is therefore not only physical. It also involves a change in identity, family relationships, and social position.

The metaphors WEDDING IS A PERFORMANCE and WEDDING IS A SPECTACLE bring attention to the public nature of wedding rituals. Clothing, decoration, photography, music, and ceremonial roles turn the wedding into an event that is staged, watched, and socially evaluated. The bride and groom become the centre of attention, while guests, cameras, and decorated venues contribute to the visual display of family identity and status.

Other metaphors reveal the scale and demands of wedding culture. The metaphor WEDDING IS A MARATHON captures the length, repetition, and effort involved in the wedding season, while the metaphor WEDDING IS A FEAST reflects the importance of

food, hospitality, generosity, and communal participation. These metaphors acknowledge the pleasure of celebration, but they also point to the physical, emotional, and financial pressures placed on families.

The more critical metaphors expose the material and evaluative dimensions of marriage practices. *WEDDING IS A MARKETPLACE* and *WEDDING IS A TRANSACTION* draw attention to money, dowry, possession, exchange, and the treatment of the bride as something to be valued or acquired. *WEDDING IS A SOCIAL INSPECTION* and *WEDDING IS A NEGOTIATION* extend the schema to proposal visits, bride-viewing, compatibility assessment, and family involvement. These metaphors show that marriage is shaped not only by personal relationships but also by class, reputation, social expectations, and family approval.

Culturally grounded metonymies play an equally important role. Specific objects, sounds, places, gestures, and participants evoke wider wedding practices. Cars and processions stand for the *baraat*, while the palanquin, decorated vehicle, tears, and farewell gestures evoke *rukhsati*. Henna, jewellery, bridal clothing, cosmetics, and veils represent bridal identity and ceremonial preparation. Food, tea service, and serving practices stand for hospitality, while drawing rooms and matchmakers represent the wider process of family evaluation and marriage negotiation.

These metonymies depend on shared cultural knowledge. A dholak, hennaed hand, tea tray, or palanquin carries meanings that go beyond its physical presence. Each activates a wider network of rituals, emotions, social roles, and expectations within the Pakistani wedding schema.

The poems preserve many familiar aspects of wedding culture. They represent mehndi, *baraat*, music, food, bridal decoration, family gatherings, and farewell rituals as meaningful forms of cultural continuity. These images reflect the emotional richness and communal importance of weddings in Pakistani society.

At the same time, the poets do not treat these practices as fixed or unquestionable. They show how older traditions continue within changing social settings. The palanquin and decorated car, for instance, reflect both cultural continuity and adaptation. Traditional symbols remain meaningful even when their outward forms change.

The poems also challenge several aspects of wedding culture. Marketplace and transaction metaphors question the influence of material values on marriage, while social inspection exposes class anxiety and the pressure to appear respectable. Images of brides as prizes, pearls, displayed objects, or subjects of evaluation reveal the tension between ceremonial admiration and restricted agency.

Overall, the findings show that metaphor and metonymy connect individual poetic expression with collective cultural knowledge. The poets draw on shared cultural schemas,

but they reshape them through irony, humour, personal experience, and social critique. Their work preserves cultural meanings while also opening them to reconsideration.

7. Conclusion

This study examined how weddings are culturally conceptualized in Pakistani Anglophone poetry through the framework of Cultural Linguistics. The analysis shows that poetic representations of weddings go far beyond descriptions of ritual and celebration. They reveal the emotional, social, economic, and gendered meanings attached to marriage practices.

The wedding schema is structured through metaphors of journey, performance, spectacle, marathon, feast, marketplace, transaction, social inspection, and negotiation. Together, these metaphors present the wedding as a process of transition, public display, communal participation, hospitality, exchange, evaluation, and social obligation.

Culturally grounded metonymies further develop this schema. Objects and practices such as palanquins, decorated cars, henna, jewellery, musical instruments, dowry items, food, drawing rooms, and tea service carry meanings that extend beyond their immediate presence. They evoke wider cultural ideas of bridal identity, family honour, hospitality, femininity, class, ritual continuity, and social status.

One of the main contributions of the study is its use of Cultural Linguistics to examine Pakistani Anglophone wedding poetry. This approach helps explain how poetic language reflects shared cultural cognition while still allowing room for individual interpretation. The selected poets draw on recognizable wedding practices, but they do not simply reproduce them. They preserve their emotional and communal significance while also questioning the pressures and inequalities associated with them.

The poems acknowledge the importance of family ties, hospitality, celebration, and ritual continuity. At the same time, they expose material expectations, class judgment, public scrutiny, the objectification of women, and unequal gender roles. In this way, wedding poetry becomes a space where cultural knowledge is remembered, negotiated, and challenged.

The findings also show that cultural conceptualizations are not fixed or uniformly shared. The poets approach the wedding schema from different personal, social, regional, and gendered positions. Their work demonstrates that literature can preserve cultural knowledge without treating it as unchanging.

The study is limited to a selected group of Pakistani Anglophone poems and does not claim to represent every wedding experience in Pakistan. Future research may examine similar conceptualizations in regional-language poetry, fiction, drama, popular music, film, or digital discourse. Such studies could offer a broader view of how wedding and marriage practices are represented and reinterpreted across Pakistani cultural forms.

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