

## Deplorable Condition of Women and Patriarchal Domination in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*

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### Abstract

Parsi writers have contributed a lot to Indian English Literature. The Indian Parsi novelists express their feelings in the form of art. The novelists reflect the psychological dilemma of the minority community and its identity crisis through their works. Being a Parsi writer, Bapsi Sidhwa sees a kind of mental migration when she hybrids from her native land, and pours her feelings and thoughts in to her novels. She is known for her exploration of women's inner psyche who aspire to live in modernity, inept to break traditional quality intrinsic in them. Most of her writings contain a pinch of migration and male dominance taste when one chews them. The expatriate writers face multi-cultural situation which merges with their personal anguish due to prejudice. They project the cultural confusion and confrontation of a multi-racial society. The quest for identity, aspiration for belongingness and love for native land is found as a part of non-erasable conscious in all expatriate writers. This paper reveals the socio-cultural background and the authoritative patriarchal Pakistani society in the novel *The Pakistani Bride*. The novel portrays how the

institution of marriage and patriarchy deplores and represses an orphaned girl's self-identity. It also pinpoints the problems of a little girl Zaitoon as an alien in an alien land or culture. It enforces deportation as a pathway to sculpt for belongingness of her 'self'. At the end, Zaitoon succeeds by rejecting the alien culture and tradition.

Keywords: Culture, Patriarchy, Quest for Identity, Inner Psyche, Self.

The novel *The Pakistani Bride* reflects feministic aspiration, quest for identity and disillusionment of a little girl. The protagonist of *The Pakistani Bride* is a naïve girl Zaitoon who is forced into an unhappy marriage by her father resulting from his promise made to his own community people. Zaitoon becomes an orphan as a result of the consequences of Partition between India and Pakistan.

*The Pakistani Bride* projects the socio-cultural background and pinpoints the problems of a woman as an alien in an alien land or culture. It enforces deportation as a pathway to sculpt for belongingness of her 'self'. Zaitoon succeeds by rejecting the alien culture and tradition. She runs away from an alien culture but never makes an attempt to escape from the words of her father.

“You've never been there! You don't understand a thing. I have given my word! I know Zaitoon will be happy. The matter should end.” Sidhwa, Bapsi -92

Bapsi Sidhwa also sketches the psyche of women who are treated as sexual objects by the patriarchal society. Women are brutally victimized in their quest for excellence and womanhood. In fact, women's body turns into a land enriched with wealth, the land which was terribly colonized by the men colonizers. Edward Said centralizes the European culture tradition of defining and identifying the East as 'other' and inferior to the West; comparable with Sidhwa's male characters as East and female characters as West.

“Fiercely kicking out, Zaitoon leapt over the charpoy. She screamed. She backed towards the straw and mud-plastered wall, and screamed. Leaning against it, covering her chest and crotch with her hands, she screamed” Sidhwa, Bapsi-160

Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* paints the struggle of a young isolated girl Zaitoon. The promise, which Qasim has given to Kohistani tribesmen, compels him to get her married to Sakhi, a ruthless tribesman. As a father, Qasim realizes that this marriage knot leads heaven out of hell in Zaitoon's life, but the only motif of Qasim is to conserve his words. The characters are built between the cultural biases. Qasim's attitude clearly sketches the psyche of men who gives importance to prestige and honour. Zaitoon is almost raped and tortured by her husband in a beastly manner on the first night of her marriage. She rebels against her husband Sakhi. The sexual torture makes her to go away from Kohistan. During her flight, she is unable to get relief from the past psyche and her tormented feelings flash like a thunder storm. The novel ends with her epic struggle to find the bridge and cross it. With the presence of scars, the readers could possibly guess in Bapsi Sidhwa's open ending that she will be happy without worries.

The uniqueness found in an individual's personality through complex of mental characteristics, such personality traits were expressed to one's surroundings especially to one's own family and community. Most people adopt the traditions, rules, manners and biases of their culture which shape their life pattern considering it as a signifying factor of their prestige for existence. The feeling of fear for society is fed deliberately by elders and parents through multiple situations to children.

Marriage is considered to be a basic need for sustenance of life just like how humans are in need of oxygen for survival. Of course, it doesn't reflect the reality but inhibits the human race from getting their self-identity and motivating the importance of dependence. In other words, it is

a kind of lovable slavery if mutual understanding doesn't bloom between two people. Marriage is projected to be a way of building a family and not a relationship. The exact hidden views about marriage as a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between an innocent soul and sexual urge soul, sex without expectation is rare. In cases of child marriage the purpose of marriage totally varies.

In the concept of child marriage, marriage is seen as a way to maximize fertility, secure family alliances and also protect the girl from pregnancy. A study estimates that about a third of marriages in rural Pakistan involve the exchange of brides between two households. Significant proportions of young women may try to refuse sex, but in many cases husbands force sex (Quoted in Solotaroff L.Jennifer and Rohini Prabha Pande-32-33). The question that arises is that how could a child who is not even aware of sex be secure in the name of marriage. Such non-consensual sex is commonly referred as rape. Zaitoon bears the harsh assault and the excruciating pain by her husband Sakhi, experiencing a man sexually forcing her for pleasure. This incident dreadfully attacks the psyche of Zaitoon, in result of her mental change and physical torture.

“A husband under no circumstances or intention should forcefully bind his wife in matrimony nor should he protect her without her wishes; and a wife must not seek love and compassion, forcefully” (Manusmiriti).

Zaitoon is given away at a young age when the family feels that she is capable of performing her duties as a wife. To put it bluntly, marriage occurs exactly at the time when she reaches puberty. Qasim as a man feels she is too weak and young to withstand sex. Although he knows the crude reality, he promises Zaitoon in marriage to a tribesman with the stark mentality of a father. The nature of psychology is quite scientific and not philosophical. Like science, it

believes in cause and effect relationship, utilizes observation experiments and other scientific methods for its study. It is a developing behavioral science therefore it is termed as developing positive science of behavior. Here, Qasim plays a dual role by representing the psyche of a father and man. The major negative impact on child marriage (Zaitoon's marriage) results in sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse of children violates the inherent dignity and worth of a child and involves cumulative breaches of various rights. Zaitoon suffers a lot because of the unequal power relations that exists in child marriage. Difference in age, expectation, sex, and psyche makes the couple like a trapped rat in the hands of cat. In fact, the existing practice puts some young girls in a fix and they are not able to negotiate safe sex with their husband.

“Her body, after all, had not been prepared for the pain. His action was shockingly strange and her abandon in their preceding intimacies suddenly seemed to her indecent. ‘What are you doing?’ she gasped. ‘Stop it!’ Her body twisted and convulsed. Hardly feeling her hands pushing at his chest Sakhi pressed harder and Zaitoonscreamed” Sidhwa, Bapsi 163

The present women generation is changing from traditional mythological structure to the postmodern arena by the concepts like struggle for liberty, independence, identity, social foundation etc., which are still a query for women. Women are intolerably trapped in emotional bonding, and Zaitoon is coaxed and destined to obey the orders of her adopted father because of the affection she had for him within her. Whereas her father resembles the male icon of male privilege society.

“She (Miriam) gave her strips of cloth, frayed with washing, and taught her the discipline of washing them for re-use. ‘You are now a woman. Don’t play with boys - and don’t allow any man to touch you. This is why I wear a burkha...’” Sidhwa, Bapsi 55.

Women get married considering men as their life partner not as master, but Zaitoon becomes the slave for Sakhi both physically and mentally. Compulsion of men make women to walk on fire; they are blazing day by day without flame. Women are never given a chance to express their own suggestions before their own family during decision making and women are labeled as speaking dumbs.

In actuality, the relation of the sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as it is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general: whereas woman represents only the negative defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity. (Quoted in Currie and Raoul 2)

The motive of inserting penis can't be deemed as a bonding of a true soul to the pure soul and this inhumane act of Sakhi reveals only the urge for sex or flesh. If someone is in love showers it through sex in a proper situation it is accepted by women. But such activity lacks in Zaitoon's life.

John Donne in *No Man Is An Island* puts forth that the course of everyone's life is related to that of everyone else. Each person is embedded in a complex social system families, friends, neighbours, communities and societies. The most direct and immediate influence on personality development is of course the family especially the effects of parents on children. Children are also affected by the environments and culture in which they grow up and Zaitoon is the victim who is eventually caught up in the mire.

The psyche of men forces to snap the threads of relationship with a girl, if the girl is not ready to bow heads for the words of men, and his psyche orders him to cut her off. Qasim orders Zaitoon to get marry to tribesman, when she opposes with perfect reason for rejection, men psyche focus only on his promise about the girl to tribesmen. When Yudhishtira, the eldest son of King

Pandu and Queen Kunti in Mahabharatha, born out of Dharma filled with truthful, knowledgeable and justice, he failed to save the life of Draupathi. For Yudhishtira words seem more important than the life and chastity of women. Life of men is allied with prestige, and according to him, word is everything, but life of women are allied with chastity and obedience.

‘ I’ve given my word. On it depends my honor. It is dearer to me than life. If you besmirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands’. Sidhwa, Bapsi -158

The above psyche of men is found in women too, but they never surrender totally in words rather for emotions, love and family. For women, family is their whole world. Zaitoon accepts the words of her father not because fear for death, the reason is love for her father.

If I must marry, marry me to someone from the plains. That jawan at the camp, Abba, I think he likes me. I will die rather than live here. Sidhwa, Bapsi-157

The psyche of women, if men oppose her wish, she will not try to control or kill others rather she will hurt herself. Most women are psychologically perceptive, some are extremely impassive, this kind of impassive nature evoke from oneself through controlling all her emotional feelings consciously in her subconscious mind. Zaitoon who accepts her marriage proposal by depressing her intense loath, as the result of suppression runs away from the mountain and crosses the bridge leaving her identity as both wife and daughter.

“One shall give his daughter in the proper form, even though she may not have attained (the age), to a bridegroom who is of exceptionally distinguished appearance, and her equal”  
verse 9.88 (The Marriage of Girls- Manusmiriti)

“She (Zaitoon) floated through scenes of her past. They had a charming immediacy. Reminiscences melted into hallucination, and the delirium receded. Every now and then, she would

re-enter the present to know: ‘I must find the bridge – I must get out of here...’ .Sidhwa, Bapsi -  
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The author gives an open ending with the girl who crosses the bridge. The author doesn't continue the story after her escapism, because it is fixed wrongly by Sita-Rama epic, that when a women crosses the circle or leaves the hands of men there starts her life is trapped or embedded in a mire. But in reality women's mental and physical power explicates when she believes in herself and her decision, to stamp this thought in every women the author makes Zaitoon to escape from the clutches of patriarchal authority and break her uncomfortable zone.

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