

Transcending Patriarchal and Cultural Construct in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*

Srilakshmi Movva

Prasad V. Potluri Siddhartha Institute of Technology, Vijayawada, A. P., India

Christopher Rajasekaran W

School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

Poliseti C Viswanath

Pragati Engineering College (A), Surampalem, Andhra Pradesh, India

Jayasree Tati

DVR & Dr. HS MIC College of Technology, Kanchikacherla, Andhra Pradesh, India

Rambabu Basireddi

Aditya Engineering College (A), Surampalem, India;

Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (Deemed to be University), Vaddeswaram, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India

Siva Nagaiah Bolleddu

Department of English, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (Deemed to be University), Vaddeswaram, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract—This study aims to show how patriarchal civilizations physically, emotionally, and socially oppress and enslave women. Sidhwa has shown Pakistani gender-based class system quite effectively in her work. She discusses marginalized and double-colonized Pakistani women as victims of patriarchal culture who confront a variety of national and household challenges, and overcomes patriarchal and cultural constructs in order to be in peace with society and culture. This paper ‘Transcending Patriarchal and Cultural Construct in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *The Pakistani Bride*’, attempts to show how women in patriarchal cultures and societies suffer many issues in their lives and how they repress their needs, longings, and emotions in order to find a comfortable position in their households as well as in society at large.

Index Terms—patriarchal, cultural, oppression, marginalized, liberty

I. INTRODUCTION

Bapsi Sidhwa is the most well-known English-language author in Pakistan. In the field of common wealth fiction, she is a fresh and essential voice. She was born into an illustrious family in Karachi on August 11, 1938. Sidhwa's family relocated to Lahore shortly after she was born, but there were few Parsees there, and the Bhandara family was cut off from mainstream Parsee life. Sidhwa's work benefits greatly from his multilingual and multicultural upbringing. Sidhwa self-published her novel *The Crow Eaters* in 1978, at a period when publishing in English was almost non-existent in Pakistan. *The Crow Eaters* has since been published and translated in a number of European and Asian countries, and while *The Pakistani Bride* (1982) was Sidhwa's first novel, it was the second to be published under the moniker Crackling India, also known as *Ice-Candy Man*. In Germany, Sidhwa's third novel won the Literature Prize, and the American Library Association named it a Notable Book the same year. *An American Brat* was published in 1993, and Sidhwa's recent work, *Water*, was released in 2006.

Women the world over, through the ages, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, to get importunately impregnated, beaten up, bullied and disinherited. It was an immutable law of nature (Sidhwa, *Pakistani* 226). By saying so in her second work, *The Pakistani Bride* (1982), Bapsi Sidhwa draws our attention to the wife's social standing in Pakistan. The novel was initially titled *The Bride*, but was then renamed *The Pakistani Bride* and published in India in 1982 for a better comprehension of the story. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* addresses a variety of issues that Pakistani women face. Sidhwa explores women's status at various levels of the social system. Women in the region are denied the right to speak out on local, national, and international concerns. Their fundamental rights are being eroded. The female characters in the tale are strong and powerful. To achieve their identity, they fight against Pakistan's chauvinistic patriarchal society. At last, women reclaim control of their lives.

Bapsi Sidhwa confesses that her real experiences in Pakistan during the 1947 partition era were depicted in the novel *The Pakistani Bride*. The story is based on a true story about a tribal lady that Bapsi Sidhwa learned about on her wedding journey to the Karakoram Highway. The story is based on a true story of a Punjabi woman who married a hillman. When she tried to flee her husband's savage conduct, he hacked off her head and tossed her torso into the river. In the story, however, Sidhwa provides a dramatic finale by allowing her protagonist Zaitoon to escape her husband's hands.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An Indian critic, Paranjape, believes that the tribe's whole code of honor is based on the idea of sexual supremacy and possessiveness (Dahawan, 1987). Patriarchy has always used the female body as a site of oppression to retain control over women (Sanchez et al., 2005). Sanchez also believes that no woman can claim to have complete control over her body. It is the key to women's autonomy. Because of their quiet majority, Spivak refers to the women of the subcontinent as subalterns. She also believes that colonialism strengthened the role of women in India (Spivak, 1988). Patriarchy is the term used to denote male dominance and authority over women (Millet, 1977). Millet's theory of subordination argues that women are a dependent sex class under patriarchal domination. Further it was claimed that patriarchy is a kinship system in which males trade women (Mitchell, 1971). Males have always had the female as a secondary being. They've traditionally been thought as a lowly beings and extensions of their men. Also, patriarchy is defined as a set of social relations between men and women, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create independence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women (Jagger & Rosenberg, 1984). "Capitalistic patriarchy" is defined as a dialectical interaction between capitalist class structures and hierarchical sexual structuring that is mutually reinforcing (Elsentein, 1995). She believes that Feminism's subversive tendency is facilitated by the recognition of women as a sexual class because liberalism is founded on the exclusion of women from public life on the same class basis. The patriarchal structure necessary for a liberal society would be overthrown if the demand for full gender equality were to be pushed to its logical conclusion. Walby defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990, p. 20). She explains patriarchy as a system because this helps us to reject the notion of biological determinism (which says that men and women are naturally different because of their biology or bodies and, are, therefore assigned different roles) or "the notion that every individual man is always in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one" (Ibid).

III. AFSHAN'S MARRIAGE: A COMMERCIAL DEAL

Sidhwa interrogates the institution of marriage by presenting three married couples to the readers: Afshan and Qasim, Zaitoon and Sakhi, and Carol and Farukh. How the concept of marriage is used and exploited to legitimize the expropriation and abrogation of women's personal independence and bodily autonomy. *The Pakistani Bride* is a representation of the Kohistani community's cruel treatment of women (A local tribe in Pakistan). Women are the least important members of the Kohistani community. They're handled as though they're animals. They are denied of basic rights such as the ability to make their own decisions. Women are treated as though they were a commodity. It was demonstrated in the example of Afshan, who married a ten-year-old Qasim, who was ten years younger to her. It's to make it easier for Qasim's father to clear the debt. It's to make it easier for Qasim's father to clear the debt. The right of Afshan to pick her life mate, as well as her emotional state of mind, is utterly disregarded. Under truth, due to her father's inability to repay the debt, Afshan was sold to Qasim's father in the guise of marriage. This "commercial deal" depicts the plight of Pakistani women. The severity of the brutal treatment of women may be shown in the fact that Qasim's father wanted to marry Afshan himself at first, but she was married to Qasim at the last minute. Afshan has no idea that the most crucial decision she will ever make might have gone any way. She came dangerously close to becoming her husband's stepmother. Women are separated from their homes all across the world in the guise of marriage, but the house that receives her never owns her. Throughout her life, a woman battles for acceptance in her new family. In the narrative, however, Afshan is seen gradually gaining Qasim's and his mother's admiration.

From Qasim's boyhood through maturity, the narrative depicts a quick progression. It's an example of a blooming marital relationship between a woman and a husband, despite their vast age difference. The death of Qasim's wife and children follows shortly after. From the highlands to the Punjab plains, he migrates. With a job as a security guard in a bank, he acquires a new identity. Qasim is the book's main character who has to deal with the aftermath of "partition" between India and Pakistan. He is forced to "dislocate" to a completely alien terrain, people, and culture due to events beyond his control. Then Qasim relocates to Punjab, where he remains for four years. Qasim is having trouble adjusting to his new circumstances. When questioned by the bank manager, Girdharilal, his incapacity to grasp the changes in the environment is reflected by his inability to perceive anything wrong in his behaviour. Because Girdharilal has wronged Qasim, he decides to avenge himself by murdering him. The 1947 Partition gives him the opportunity to exact his vengeance. He gets away from the allegations by fleeing the town. Later, he joins the refugees on a train bound for Lahore.

IV. VIOLENCE OF PARTITION

The Sikhs ambush the train transporting the Muslim refugees before it reaches its final destination. All of the passengers on the train were ruthlessly killed by the Sikhs. Both of Zaitoon's (formerly known as Munni) parents were assassinated right in front of her eyes. She hides behind Qasim, unable to watch the horror. Qasim believes that the best way to save the girl in such tumultuous environment is to adopt her. In Zaitoon, Qasim has visions of his daughter, who died of smallpox. He adopts the vulnerable kid, pledging to care for her as if she were his own child.

Qasim performs odd jobs in Lahore to supplement his income. He wants to educate Zaitoon despite his little salary. He doesn't want her to grow up to be illiterate like him. When Qasim tells about his hilly country, she becomes enthralled. She imagines herself in a lovely setting. She romanticizes the region's land as well as its inhabitants. Zaitoon believes the inhabitants of the region are bold, honest, and principled, based on her father's statements. Zaitoon goes to school for five years and makes close friends with Miriam and other street kids.

V. ZAITOON'S MARRIAGE: AN ACT OF PENANCE

Qasim offers to marry Zaitoon to a hill man in order to rekindle his relationship with the people of Kohistan. Though he may be returning to his roots and embarking on a trip that would lead to a reunion with his "own" people, he is not alone; he is accepting a "gift" as an act of penance for his lengthy absence and to demonstrate his dedication to renewing his links. And what greater "present" could he receive than his adoptive daughter? He somehow overlooks the reality that the area, as well as the marriage union, might both be detrimental to Zaitoon.

The writer draws a distinction between the males of the two civilizations, tribal and plains. She shows this through the character of Ashiq, who is concerned for Zaitoon's safety amid the barbaric tribal community. Sidhwa makes it plain that Zaitoon is fearful of the world she is going to enter. Even though Zaitoon is just sixteen years old, she is completely oblivious of her dilemma when she enters the wilds of Kohistan. Zaitoon's concerns are realised when she discovers Sakhi is much like the other tribal guys. Sakhi leaves no room for Zaitoon to be mistreated. Even for minor offences, Sakhi emotionally and physically assaults Zaitoon. When Sakhi notices Zaitoon making a move toward the Army jeep, he loses his cool. He gets irritated and in rage verbally abuses her: hissing "You whore...He cleared his throat and spat full in her face. You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs...you wanted to stop and fuck didn't you?"(185).

Zaitoon, in her life, is shown to suffer at the hands of all males. Her father uses her as a conduit to reach out to his ancestors. He decides to marry her to a relative of his without her consent. Sakhi, a hill guy, is the groom he chooses for her. He is entirely unconcerned with his daughter's safety and happiness. Sakhi has been cruel to her since the first day of their marriage. When she refuses to consummate their marriage, he thrashes her. Against her will, he imposes himself on her. She feels abandoned since no one understands her pain or can help her find a way to get out of it. He is the least compassionate towards her, in addition to her anguish. He hires Yunus Khan, his younger brother, to keep track on Zaitoon's every move. Sakhi treats his mother and wife severely in order to maintain his reputation in front of his family and society. The psychology of a man after marriage is described by John Stuart Mill in his book *The Subjection of Women*. Man regularly beats his wife to demonstrate his macho might and gain control over her. He says:

The physical violence that is habitual is exercised on his unhappy wife, who is the only adult person who can't block his brutality or escape from it. Her dependence on him doesn't fill him with a generous forbearance, making it a point of honour well to one whose life situation is entrusted entirely to his kindness. Rather, it gives him the notion that the law has handed her over to him as his, to be used at his pleasure, and that he isn't expected to practice the consideration towards her that is required from him towards everybody else (Mill, 1869, p. 20).

Even after she has completed all of the responsibilities entrusted to her, Zaitoon's misery continues. She can no longer tolerate the harshness that has been put on her. Sakhi's callous, cruel, and severe treatment causes her to flee his tyrannical grip. Zaitoon chooses death over the harsh treatment that would inevitably kill her in the future. She does not want to go through life like her mother-in-law, Hamida. She understands that no one would be able to save her from her predicament. She doesn't even sure where she'll go if she manages to get away. She just anticipates that if she leaves home to get away from her husband's grasp, she would lose her way in the maze of hills and become lost in the hills.

Zaitoon aims to flee Sakhi and the tribal ways of life before he murders her in the cause of honour, despite his lack of confidence. When a wife abandons her husband and family, it is seen as a disgrace not just to her husband and family, but also to the entire society. Killing such a lady is said to be the only way to save the family's honour. Neither her family nor the culture that encourages her to take drastic measures are interested in learning about the conditions that lead her to do so. Sakhi and his people treat her as if she were an animal. Zaitoon, on the other hand, has vowed to make every effort to break free from her marriage. In her quest for escape, she is once again confronted with brutality by a different clan. The opposing tribal group sexually assaults her. The notion of respecting a woman is nebulous, and it has no application in the Kohistan Community. When Sakhi and his father learn of the situation, they do not hesitate to pursue legal action against those who have harassed Zaitoon. She flees yet more, this time with a special willpower to survive and fight against their horrors. She eventually triumphs in her battle against the barbarous Kohistan society. Her battle for survival is fueled by her unwavering will to fight back against their savagery, which would have failed in the hands of a weak-willed individual. The family that is supposed to shield her from all kinds of misfortunes is wanting her

life in order to wipe away the humiliation she has brought upon herself by fleeing the marriage. She achieves freedom from the crimes in a brave manner. As Cynthia Abrioux states in "A study of the Stepfather and the Stranger in the Pakistani Novel *The Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa" (Abrioux, 1990, pp. 68-72), that the manner in which Zaitoon ultimately survives proves the fact that if a woman has a defiant spirit she can overcome the oppressive shackles of men. Even after she had survived, she could not expect assistance from her father, who is equally bound by the same sense of honour as the rest of his tribe.

VI. CAROL'S MARRIED LIFE: HYPOCRITICAL STANDARDS

Carol's husband, Farukh, is a shining example of Pakistani men's hypocritical standards. He comes from a well-to-do contemporary household. He acts as if he opposes the country's traditional cultural norms. Despite his opposition to Kohistan's barbaric methods, he chastises his wife for smiling and conversing with other guys. He may be from a civilised civilization, but his attitude toward women is the same as that of Kohistan's males. His marriage relationship suffers as a result of his attitude. The most shocking aspect is that he defends his activities, which help to facilitate Carol's unlawful connection with Major Mushtaq (the commander of the Army post).

Despite the fact that Mushtaq has a wife and four children, Carol adores him. She threatens to kill herself if he (Mushtaq) abandons her. Carol approaches him and asks him to marry her, but he dismisses her plea. Carol's appeal is rejected by Mushtaq, who loves his wife and has no intention of abandoning her. Mushtaq represents masculine chauvinism since he has no qualms about having an extramarital romance with the wife of a friend. At the same time, he cautions Carol about overstepping her bounds when she meets Sakhi and Misri Khan. Carol is expected to abandon her American identity and become a subservient Pakistani wife, according to Mushtaq.

VII. TRANSCENDING PATRIARCHAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCT

Carol, Miriam, and Afshana are all female characters that follow the male patriarchal society's laws. They never dare to oppose their family's male members. The work not only depicts a woman's struggle and daring, but it also clearly depicts the patriarchal society of Pakistan. According to Sidhwa, Pakistani society is doomed as a result of such habits and behaviors, which contribute to the country's instability and backwardness. Sidhwa's unique orientation to women is exemplified by Zaitoon's ultimate freedom. According to her, women should not submit to patriarchal society's oppression and instead resist it with the fervor and tenacity of a social crusader.

Zaitoon, with her bravery and heroism, manages to break out from her abusive marriage. The escape may surely be viewed as a victory for patriarchal culture. She is set free from her harsh husband and the tribal tribe's honor-obsessed civilization. In the conflict between life and death, she triumphs. Zaitoon's passion for liberty exemplifies the women's never-say-die spirit.

Sidhwa claims in her novel, *The Pakistani Bride*, that the schism between the two societies will never be healed, whether it is between the US and Pakistan or between the hills and the plains. The two cultures do not agree or respect each other because one civilization values and respects women while the other insists that women be governed by males. Carol is said to have attained liberty when she boldly breaks up with her husband and goes to her home nation of the United States. Zaitoon sees the light of day after escaping tribal life and getting assistance from the Army on the plains. Sidhwa continues, saying that a peaceful life awaits her in Lahore. After a reasonable amount of time has passed, Ashiq may propose marriage to Zaitoon.

In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa explains that the country had gained independence seven decades previously, but that women in that country had not been liberated until now. Due to the cruel treatment of its own women, the country's shortcomings would inevitably implode. The country has yet to provide a safe and respected environment for its women. Even now, words like equality and empowerment remain hazy and underappreciated in their full sense. The ruined relationships of Sakhi and Zaitoon, as well as Carol and Farukh, are the result of the women's mistreatment.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The Pakistani Bride is a story about a marriage alliance and the conflict between cultural adherence and the decided strength of a woman's fortitude in the face of patriarchal society. The work not only depicts a woman's struggle and daring, but it also clearly depicts the patriarchal society of Pakistan. Sidhwa's unique orientation to women is exemplified by Zaitoon's ultimate freedom. According to her, women should not submit to patriarchal society's oppression and instead resist it with the fervor and tenacity of a social crusader. In the conflict between life and death, she triumphs. Zaitoon's preference for liberty is a proof to the never yielding attitude of the women as she becomes victorious in the struggle between life and death:

In *The Pakistani Bride*, she (Zaitoon) is not killed. *The Pakistani Bride* has two endings. I first ended it where there's an illusionary scene, in which she has a nightmare vision of being killed. That's where the book was supposed to end. But by this time I had a different feeling for how the book was supposed to end. I'd inhabited this girl's body and her emotions for so long that I felt it was a shame, considering all that she had been put through, that she should be killed off. One of the privileges of being the author of the stories is you can change the ending and I did just that. At least in the ending she lives, she barely survives, but she lives (Sidhwa,

Pakistani 208).

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Srilakshmi Movva is working as a Professor of English at Prasad V. Potluri Siddhartha Institute of Technology, Vijayawada, A. P., India. She has nineteen years of teaching experience and her research areas include Feminism and ELT. She has 26 papers published in reputed journals and 6 chapters published in edited books. She has presented papers at 29 national and international conferences. She has acted as a resource person for various workshops, delivered keynote address at a couple of conferences, and chaired sessions at national and international conferences.

W. Christopher Rajasekaran works as an Assistant Professor of English at Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India. He has 23 years of experience in teaching. His specializations are British Fiction, Afro- American Fiction and English Language Teaching. He has also taught and designed syllabus for International students from China and South Korea. He has authored 5 books and has 15 papers published in UGC care and 5 Scopus Indexed papers, one of which was published in Springer, Singapore.

Poliseti C Viswanath is working as an Associate Professor of English at Pragati Engineering College (A), Surampalem, Andhra Pradesh, India. He has a doctorate in Translation Studies with a focus on Domestication and Foreignization strategies. He has translated some short stories from Telugu to English by the application of the above two strategies. His research interests include literature, language and translation studies.

Jayasree Tati is currently working as Assistant Professor of English at DVR & Dr. HS MIC College of Technology, Kanchikacherla, Andhra Pradesh, India. She has 28 years of teaching experience and has published 18 papers in reputed journals. She has participated and presented papers in 19 National and International Conferences. Her research areas include ELT and Indian Writing in English.

Basireddi Rambabu is presently working as Assistant Professor in Aditya Engineering College (A), Surampalem, India. He is pursuing Ph.D in ELT. He has 12 years of teaching experience and has published 06 research articles in reputed journals.

Siva Nagaiah Bolleddu is currently working as Associate Professor in the department of English in K L University, Guntur, A. P. He has published 49 research articles (08 in SCOPUS indexed journals and 10 in UGC CARE listed journals) and presented 52 papers in national/international seminars/conferences. He has conducted 28 workshops/FDPs and organised 40 programmes on varied themes of academic and research interests. He has also participated in more than 80 conferences/seminars/workshops/and FDPs. He guided 02 scholars (awarded: 1 and submitted: 1) for PhD and three more scholars are currently pursuing their research under his guidance.