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## STRUGGLES OF WOMEN IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S THE PAKISTANI BRIDE

S. VANITHA<sup>1</sup> , Dr.A.MURUGESAN<sup>2</sup>

Research Scholar<sup>1</sup> , Assistant Professor of English<sup>2</sup>

Chikkanna Government Arts College, Trippur.

### *Abstract:*

The Research paper explores in detail trouble of female corporeality and how the self-sublimates the resultant pain into psychological empowerment. The female characters in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* (1990) occur to be exploited and marginalized entities, reliant on men for their socio-economic needs. This paper describes that their physical pain transforms into a psycho-emotional haven providing them a arena of their own to think and make their own decisions. This specific component has been a neglected area of research in the Sub-continental context. Bapsi Sidhwa is a representative of Pakistan Literature is not only a story teller but an artist who has very enigmatically related the difficulty and exploitation of women in the patriarchal society. Her characters are creative, beautiful, strong willed, brave and modest and not revolutionary. The novel emphatically display that Sidhwa endeavours not only to show the submissive nature of women but also the reactionary aspects of women's nature. The main objective of the presentation of women's meek nature is to show that women are always expected to remain passive and submissive in patriarchal society. They have no rights to raise their voice against the immoral nature of male. On the other side, the novel also exhibits bold and protective aspects of women's nature against the ill-treatment of society towards them.

Keywords: Bride, Patriarchy, Marginalization, Corporeality, Sublimation, Empowerment.

Bapsi Sidhwa has been a recognized novelist in presentation of women's tender condition in the patriarchal society, especially in Pakistani society known for its devastation of women through the tools of religion as well as social codes of society designed by men to command women. "Bapsi Sidhwa belongs to that group of women creative writers who have started to depict the determined women, for whom traditional role is inadequate, a woman who wishes to affirm their independence and autonomy and is perfectly capable of assuming new roles and responsibilities" (Hussain Dar 1). Pakistani Bride is a captivating novel concerning with the pathetic condition of women in the tribal culture. The novel vigorously represents that Sidhwa endeavours not only to show the submissive nature of women but also the contemporary aspects of women's nature. The main objective of the appearance of women's submissive nature is to show that women are always expected to endure inactive and submissive in patriarchal society.

They have no rights to raise their voice against the illegal nature of men. The Pakistani Bride has been a heart touching novel describing the terrible experiences of a girl named Zaitoon before wedding and the aftermath in the male dominating society in Kohistan, Pakistan. The tale of the novel is based on the existence of Zaitoon who is an orphaned girl brought up by Qasim. The novel begins when riots of partition start and in these turmoil Zaitoon's parents are murdered by the crowd. After the massacre of her parents, Zaitoon is adopted by Qasim who brings up Zaitoon like his own child. Later she has to marry with a tribal guy who ruins her marriage life. The novel thematically deals with the suppression of women in the ambience of psychological and sexual hassle by men in the traditional tribal society. In the novel, there are three major women ranging from Zaitoon, Carol and Saki's mother, Hamida who symbolize different aspects of the problems faced by women in the patriarchal world. These different types of problems become symbols of traumatic lives of suppressed women. The lives of women become worse if their families are illiterate and live in a tribal society.

The lives of women become struggle and complicated in the tribal society which everything happens because of their own family and surrounding. Zaitoon visited a remote area of Karakoram Mountain and the girl narrated the story of her wedding experience with her nephew in the tribal land. One month after her marriage, her life became hell in which she could not prolong and exist. This story tempted Sidhwa to write the novel The Pakistani Bride. It revolves the aversion and the problem of the protagonist, Zaitoon who combat to escape from the brutal Pakistani tribal society where she has been

married and suffered. Ashok Kumar's "A Feministic Approach to Bapsi Sidhwa's: The Pakistani Bride" explains it as:

... I felt I had to tell her story. I had not written before. I had a compulsion to write the girl's story and the story of the tribal hidden away in this beautiful part of the world. I started writing a short story about this girl, without my really being aware of it; it was developing into a long story. It was an obsession. (1170)

"The present qualitative analysis pursues different hypothetical concepts such as the feminist literary standpoint theory" by bell hooks (2004) in the postcolonial feminist context and the concept of "Panopticism" (p. 195) and "Docile Body" (p. 135) by Michal Foucault. Standpoint theory is based on three major concepts – context, reputation and location – which enable one to see the relationship between knowledge and power in order to decide on the position of the oppressed in the hegemonic orders. In this context, women in overall appear to be a downtrodden and marginalized group, a victim of masculine hegemonic cultural practices in Pakistan. According to bell hooks (2004) through the oppositional political struggle one 'transgresses' (p. 153) one's moves into another location, out of one's place, which gives pleasure to the oppressed. This choice according to hooks is crucial as it determines our capacity to react and envision the new and alternative choices to lead the defiant political gesture (p. 153) and perhaps to gain power through relocation of identity. Viewpoint theory focuses on the torture of the marginalities but the very experience of being located at margins is neither a complete deficiency nor a fulfilment. It gives knowledge, chance to extemporize and conceptualize alternatives. The oppressed can look both from inside and outside in an attempt to focus their attention on the margin as well as on the centre which provides them oppositional world view.

In The Pakistani Bride the patriarchal Pakistani society operates by means of phal logocentric norms imposed by men upon women. For example, although only ten years old; Qasim's pride on his masculinity is evident when his father places "a heavy muzzle-loaded in his arm (p. 7), which becomes a figure of manhood for him. He is told that he has to marry a girl who has been won in return of the payment of a loan from Rasham Khan: "Qasim's father had made sure that this one was able-bodied- was worth than the loan due" (p. 7). It is seeming that the society imposes and regulates gender roles by assigning men the remarkable position (as the powerful master who can govern and lead), while women are reduced

to barro position as being weak and an outcast property, totally dependent and under constant threat of being disheartened, abused and sexually exploited by men.

The women in the novel are sold like objects or won either in the name of family dignity or to settle male-bullies and male scores. Being “a man, conscious of the rigorous code of honour by which his tribe lived” (p. 7), Qasim’s sense of honour often provoked him to vicious actions like war far, abusing and promote other men in the family particularly in case the scrutiny turned to their female folk. At the age of fourteen he saw his wife Afshan washing herself at the stream. He wished to grab her and exerted physical force to crush her but when a stranger tried to mediate in the rumps between the two, “Qasim, red with fury, cried, ‘But she is my wife. Let’s go, she is my wife’” (p. 11). This code of respect on the one hand, objectified women while on the other, projected men as heroes who were acceptable to safeguard these faint creatures (women) through sexual force.

Zaitoon’s intelligence and her mercy to lessen the pain of others became evident when Qasim, in search of her parents, carried her drenched in hidrosis: “The girl had not said a word. Sensing his strain, she shifted her weight to ease him” (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 31). Her determined hope to find her parents continued till the end when she peered eagerly to all the faces she came across. However, they all turned out to be strangers. The bravery, faith and certitude with which Zaitoon agreed her new father and served him the best a daughter could, remained with her even in the moment of critical situation when her fate was decided for the second time; this time by her adoptive father. She accepted Qasim’s decision out of love and respect to him.

Here once again women could be seen under the constraints of the Pakistani society.

The society symbolized by Qasim and his tribe’s men tried to handle its influence on the comforting courage and belligerence of Zaitoon. Qasim had given his guarantee to his clan’s man Misri Khan to marry his daughter to his son who lived in Kohistan. Zaitoon, brought up in the vivacious and lively modern ways of life in the city of Lahore could not adjust in the hard and rough life style of the mountaineers. Although she was entranced by the glorified account of Kohistan landscape related to her by Qasim yet she wept and entreated her father not to marry her in a foreign land. All her sulking and whimpering confirmed in vain and for the wellbeing of her father’s love she became a prey in the name of honour. All this proved to be the beginning of her endurance which later strengthened her.

In spite of women's struggle and sovereignty which they have exhibited in their distinctive domains, they are still viewed existing on the border line, the marginal position in the society. Marginality is a state of existence between the two poles neither attaining complete surfeit nor complete deprivation. For bell hooks (2004) a "space of radical openness is a margin—a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a "safe" place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance" (p. 156). Women in *The Pakistani Bride* appeared to be located at the margins while the men acted in the centre, into the helms of the affairs. Keeping in view the binary obstruction, women were shown in subjugated positions that existed in the traumatized other spaces where they were neither totally accepted nor dropped by the society. Their appearance was necessary to preserve the manly hardihood, to increase men's ego while socially they were non-existent and restricted. But this marginal positionality encoded a culture of resilience "a sight one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (hooks, 2004, p. 157). Thus marginality is the very extent, a location which entails conversion. A state of alteration from where one steps forward, a state of becoming, from sublimation of the physically injured body into a state of nurtured self that resists, rebels and elevates the socio-emotionally disadvantaged individuals. It strengthens and nurtures the bereft; the oppressed colonized (female) bodies into something higher and psycho-emotionally splendid.

Thus, in *The Pakistani Bride*, represents the patriarchal society of Pakistan and women's position in particular society. Sidhwa was attracted by the young girl's courage to fight against the patriarchal norms. Her courage to vision her future away from the society's manmade requirement has delighted Sidhwa. The fatal story is tragic Sidhwa presents it with a speculative note of future prosperity. Sidhwa allows her heroine to run, to fight and to survive all odds laid down against her by. The critical study of Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*, has finally culminated with a wisdom into the position of womenfolk in the male dominant self-centred and undeveloped society.

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