

## APPALLING JOURNEY AND TYRANNIC CULTURE OF THE TRIBAL IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S

### *THE PAKISTANI BRIDE*

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### ABSTRACT

Bapsi Sidhwa, as a renowned Parsi writer, poignantly portrays the appalling journey and tyrannic culture of the tribal in the novel *The Pakistani Bride*. She is a leading diasporic writer of Pakistan and she reflects her personal experience through her novels. In the novel, *The Pakistani Bride* Sidhwa writes about the women of Lahore who are troubled by oppression in many ways. She depicts the theme of sexual violence and marginalization of women. Zaitoon, the protagonist of the novel *The Pakistani Bride* begins her traumatic journey and enter into the primitive world ruled by robbers and cruel tribal patriarchs. Women in the tribal region are treated as child bearing machines with no identity, freedom and dignity. They are treated as objects for sexual pleasure. Mushtaq the Major tells her about the brutal and savage nature of Kohistani people. After marriage she experiences the torture physically and psychologically. She decides to flee from the world of tribal people and thus undergoes pain, cold, hunger and endless agonies. she is also raped by a couple of beastly men and her struggle for survival ends when Mushtaq finds her half alive and half dead and takes her to the camp and informed the tribal people that she is raped and killed. Through this novel, Sidhwa exposes the exploitation and enslavement of women all over the world. Hence Sidhwa focuses Zaitoon as a representation of women battling against the patriarchal society

by exhibiting her invincible spirit. The present study analyses the struggle of the protagonist, Zaitoon to survive in the harsh and hostile environment. Zaitoon is a representative of women fighting against the patriarchal society. She tries to fight with the tribal culture and forces of conventional morality but at last destroyed by the power of men. She does exhibit her invincible spirit to fight against the patriarchy.

Keywords: Culture, Trauma, Journey, Marginalization, Identity, Patriarchy.

The oppression of women in the twenty first century is credibly more multi- faceted and improved than it has been historically. Acquiring equal rights for women is the intention of the enduring struggle of women and anti-sexual allies over the centuries, but the women undergo endless suppressions and oppressions of women until now. The women undergo oppression not only in society but also, they experience unequal relationship with men in the family. Since then, women have been oppressed in all forms of class society, including slavery, feudalism and capitalism.

*The Pakistani Bride* presents the appalling journey of heroine Zaitoon, who is sixteen years old; a Punjabi girl whose parents were killed during partition riots. In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa gives the image of Bride to explore the sufferings of women. It is a poignant tale of a married Bride who is raped, tortured and killed by her callous husband. Sidhwa's novels are known for the themes of marginalization, victimization, manipulation and feminist consciousness. Zaitoon, the protagonist of *The Pakistani Bride* begins her traumatic journey with her tribal father Qasim leaving the plains Lahore. She enters into a primitive world ruled by robbers and cruel tribal patriarchs. Zaitoon experiences the destructive nature of the Kohistani mountains. She enters into a tribal world where people are not bound by any laws.

Zaitoon's tribal husband name is Sakhi. Sakhi and his people live a hard and sturdy life in tribal region. Life in this tribal region is a mixture of brutish violence and oppression. Women in this tribal region are treated as child bearing machines with no identity, freedom and dignity. They are treated as mere objects of sexual pleasures. Sakhi taints the female body of Zaitoon after marriage, beats her mercilessly and treats her like a cow. Women were denied of their freedom and they were not given the liberty to open their mouth to oppose the will of their male partners. Sakhi is a man with jealous in his mind, According to Sidhwa in the novel *The Pakistani Bride*, "he (Sakhi) followed each movement with growing feelings of humiliation and jealousy".(148) Zaitoon crosses the bridge of the Indus as a part of her traumatic journey Mushtaq the Major warns her about the repressive nature of the tribal people, and also exposes the brutal and savage nature of the Kohistani people. After her marriage, Zaitoon herself experiences the brutal and savage behaviour of Sakhi.

According to the law and culture of the Kohistani region, once a man marries a woman, she cannot think of divorce. She has to live in the same family till her death. She has to know all the rules, traditions and rituals of the tribal people. Sidhwa portrays the terrible behaviour of Sakhi on the first night after marriage. Sakhi is the real owner of her property, he looked at her bride with lust and pride and a woman who had erotic body with thick lashes

and large black eyes. He tears her clothes and grabbed her delicate body in a murderous manner. Sidhwa says of Sakhi as, “he thought with proprietorial lust and pride, a woman with strangely thick lashes and large black eyes that had flashed in one look her entire sensuality”(159-160). All the dreams of Zaitoon are shattered because Sakhi doesn’t love Zaitoon but he treated her as an object for pleasure.

Zaitoon’s traumatic peregrination steps her into darkness and pathless wilderness with no hope of life. Sidhwa portrays the emptiness of Zaitoon’s soul as “brown mountains rose endlessly, followed far up and away by endless snow. Before them stretched centuries of an intractable wilderness, unpeopled and soundless”(154). Sakhi drags her mercilessly and beats her. Zaitoon experiences not only physical but also psychological abuse in the tribal region.

In *The Pakistani Bride* Sidhwa depicts that marriage is a medium to sell and purchase women. Sakhi pays money to Qasim to buy Zaitoon for sexual pleasures. Through the novel, *The Pakistani Bride* Sidhwa portrays that marriage is manipulated and exploited to oppress female bodies. Women lives in a cocoon sheltered by patriarchy and locked in their enclosures of ignorance and darkness. Women have no identities outside their home. Hence In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa points out, “what will she do with more reading and writing – boil and drink it?... No, Allah willing, she’ll get married and have children”(52). Sidhwa depicts a female world, which is ruled by men and they are treating the female body as a commodity and purchasable products for pleasure.

In Sofia Sanchez Grant’s *The Female Body* in Margaret Atwood’s *The Edible Woman* and *Lady Oracle*: Journal of International women’s studies examine about the man and woman relationship and he opines that, “female body is oppressed and conquered to display the courage and valour by men”( 78). Sidhwa clearly exposes that husband-and-wife relationship are destructive and marriage is a medium to enjoy sexual pleasures and colonize the female body. In Sidhwa’s *The Pakistani Bride*, she presents the destruction of female body as, “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is incidental, the inessential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute, and she is the other”( 4).

Women were oppressed by men and they are treated as others. Zaitoon is treated as other by her husband Sakhi. Sidhwa has challenged the myth, traditions and rituals of religion that allow men to colonize their female bodies. In Lisa Lau Ee – Jia’s . *Women’s Voices: The Presentation of women in the contemporary fiction of south Asian women*, women are treated as the „Other“: South Asian women of various regions, cultures and religions have been portrayed in their literature as being regarded, since time immemorial, as vessels of men, as part of their families as producers of heirs and descendants to varying degrees...The discrimination between men and women in India and rest of South Asia is generally marked, definite and largely non-negotiable.

In the Hindu hierarchy of women...biology is a woman’s destiny and...she is positioned as —the metaphysical nothingness of woman that is always a low caste (147). In

the novel, *The Pakistani Bride* Sakhi violently oppresses Zaitoon-physically, psychologically and sexually. The physical violence portrays his savage and brutish nature. In Foucault's "The Development of Sexuality" exclaims that "disciplinary powers may be, de-institutionalized", they are easily adapted into methods of control that can be used within families" (37). The theories of Foucault are depended on to explore the impact of violence on the mind and sensibility of women. Zaitoon decides to flee from the world of Sakhi as she is unable to bear the physical and psychological torture. In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa exposes the fact that "Zaitoon knew that in flight lay her only hope of survival" (186). Zaitoon has broken the tribal code of conduct. Zaitoon undergoes pain, hunger, cold and endless torture in her traumatic journey to the Indus. In her journey "a couple of bastards from Cheerkhil raped her"(223).

Zaitoon's struggle for survival ends when Mushtaq finds her half-dead and half-alive and takes her to his camp. Mushtaq the Major tells Sakhi and his clansmen that Zaitoon is dead. *The Pakistani Bride* depicts the colonization of female body in Pakistan society. In *The Pakistani Bride* Sidhwa comments "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"(226).The novel portrays a world of women trapped in the oppressive patriarchal structure. Miriam, Hamida and Zaitoon are the victims of tribal conventions. Through the novel *The Pakistani Bride* Sidhwa mainly focuses on the abuse of female bodies by the repressive tribal people.

Bapsi Sidhwa uses the effective symbol of bridge to depicts the cultural divide between the people of Lahore and tribal people who live in hills. Zaitoon undergoes physical and psychological torture. She is the victim of male domination and oppressive of patriarchal society. Thus, Zaitoon the protagonist of *The Pakistani Bride* is a representative of women fighting against the patriarchal society. She tries to fight with the forces of conventional morality and tribal culture but at last she is destroyed by the power of men. Her body is destroyed by the males but before death she does exhibit her invincible spirit to fight against the forces of patriarchy. She represents the triumph of mind over matter and spirit over flesh. She remains as a powerful force and motivation for women in the oppressive society to fight for their equal rights.

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