

**Representation of Female Characters as Extension of Male Characters: A Feministic Analysis of Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride"**

**Umeesa Mazhar**

M.Phil Candidate

University of Sargodha, Women Campus, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

**Anila Jamil**

Lecturer in English Literature

University of Sargodha, Women Campus, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

**Mehwish Aslam**

M.Phil Candidate

University of Sargodha, Women Campus, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

---

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper is an attempt to explore the issues of female status in society by Sidhwa, in her novel "The Pakistani Bride" (1983). It discusses the dilemma of females being treated as extension of males with special reference to Pakistani society. It aims to expose how patriarchal societies suppress and subjugate females physically, emotionally and socially. Sidhwa has quite appropriately shown Pakistani gender-based class structure. She talks about marginalized and double colonized Pakistani women and presents them as victim of patriarchal culture who faces different national and domestic issues and is expected to suppress her individuality in order to be in harmony with society and culture.*

**KEYWORDS:** Feminism, Patriarchy, The Pakistani Bride, Sidhwa, suppression.

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

I have taken Sidhwa's novel "The Pakistani Bride" (1983) for feminist study in patriarchal context. And through qualitative research I will try to analyse the patriarchal culture which has not only dominated Pakistan but all over the world. Sidhwa is one of the best and internationally renowned novelists from the Indian subcontinent. Her novel, The Pakistani Bride (1983) deals with feministic perspective, gender discrimination and realist narrative. This novel includes themes of marriage honour and partition. In this novel Sidhwa has artistically portrayed an orphan girl named Zaitoon, the heroine of the novel, who is facing the cruel tribal society of Pakistan, where she has been married. Zaitoon is going to be married into a feudal Pakistani community, but she tries to escape from these in order to have an independent life. Sidhwa attempts to disclose that how in patriarchal cultures and societies women have to face different problems in their lives and how they have to suppress their desires, longings and emotions in order to seek an accommodative place at their homes specifically as well as in society generally. They have no right to live a life of their own.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Sidhwa is considered one of the most renowned novelists of English in Indian sub-continent. Her novels bring attention to the stories of female's suffering and courage. Sidhwa's novels focus on women's situation in India and Pakistan, and she has the ability to paint a canvass with wit. Khan (as cited in Ross, 1991) states that her novel "The Pakistani Bride" is a challenge to the patriarchal culture and values of Indian Pakistani society. She further describes the novel as an attempt to separate the female self that is marginalized within the system.

Desai (as cited in Sidhwa, 1989) explains that no doubt her novels are different from one another but share in common a passion for history and truth telling. Paranjape, an Indian critic, has the view that entire code of honor of the tribe rests on the nations of sexual superiority and possessiveness.

Sanchez (2008) explains that the female body as a site of oppression has always been the means by which patriarchy maintains control over females. She also views that no woman can claim of to control has own body...It is for women the key to liberty. Spivak describes the women of subcontinent as subalterns because of their silent majority. She also views that due to colonialism this aspect of women in India had become stronger (as cited in Morton, 2000). Suleri (1998) views that woman bodies were colonized in two ways, first by the British and then by the men of Indo-Pak subcontinent.

## **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper is based upon the feministic critical analysis of Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride" with patriarchal view which has been a dominant issue throughout the world in all ages and in all fields of life as well as in literary representations. Mellette (1969) describes patriarchy as the use of word to refer to male domination and power over women.

Mitchell (1974) also argues that patriarchy is a kinship system in which men exchange women. The female has always been a possession of males as secondary creature. They have always been treated as extensions of their males and as inferior creatures.

Elsentein explains the term "capitalistic patriarchy" as descriptive of the mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between capitalist class structures and hierarchical sexual structuring.

### **Analysis:**

Sidhwa in this novel provides alternative image of the confident women as compared to a domineering patriarchal discourage of Pakistan literature. Her novel represents the oppression of women in Pakistan society by describing the story of a four-year-old girl who matures into women. This portrayal of woman creates an image for the awareness about history and patriarchal culture. A feminist historiographer takes historiography as a whole and rejects the concept of women as something to be framed by a context in order to think of gender differences as both structuring and structured by the wide set of social relations. Women are presented in Sidhwa's novels as strong characters. "The Pakistani Bride" (1983) is a novel which throws light on the themes of marriage,

honor partition and position of women in Pakistani society. It is a true story which is fictionalized by Sidhwa. She has artistically portrayed the character of an orphan girl, namely Zaitoon that reader cannot turn a blind eye from torture scenes and pains. The story revolves around a girl who is taken by a tribal to the mountains. She is married to a tribal man, namely Saki but she manages to run away within a month of her marriage. She actually wants to go back to her plains so she is wondering in Karakoram Mountains for fourteen days. Her runaway from house is an insult for her husband. Saki, her husband keeps searching on her and after finding her near a bridge over river Indus throws her into the river.

Sidhwa presents the traumatic and blurred picture of women in her novel "The Pakistan Bride" (1983). She herself explains in an interview why she decided to write a novel about this incident. Zaitoon, an orphan child is adopted by a tribesman. She was a daughter of Sikander and Zohra, who were killed during 1947 partition of the subcontinent. And then Qasim adopts Zaitoon, and a family is reconstituted. Zaitoon is a Punjabi child and Qasim is tribal, this is an unlikely combination of two cultures, of the brown and the fair and the urban and the tribal. As a child of partition four years old Zaitoon grows up in Qila Gujjar Singh, Lahore. Zaitoon's marriage is fixed by Qasim at the age of sixteen with Saki, who was the son of his cousin of Misri Khan. Zaitoon and other members of family try to convince Qasim that it will be a wrong decision because there is a great difference between Punjabi and Kohistani cultures. As women are not treated as individuals, they are not allowed to make decision of their own life in patriarchal culture. So Zaitoon's unwillingness is totally ignored.

As in the beginning of the novel, we get an impression of women's treatment as a commodity of transaction from the conversion of Qasim and his father. For paying her debts to a neighboring Resham Khan promised his daughter (P.7). Marriage for them is a transaction of a body not based on mutual understanding. The oppression of women in this patriarchal society is shown through three couples, Afshan and Qasim, Zaitoon and Saki, and Carol and Farukh. Women's personal freedom and body is suppressed by the institution of marriage. At the time of Afshan and Qasim's marriage, She was not ready to accept him as a husband verbally rather an old aunt: "Thrice she was asked if they would accept Qasim....as her husband and thrice an old aunt murmured 'yes' on her behalf"(P.8). And when zaitoon was grown ten years Murriam has the view that "she will be safe only at her mother's-in-law's..... A girl is never too young to marry" (P.53). Murriam is also a product of male-chauvinistic society so the words like these are not awkward from her mouth. She is also brought up in a male dominated society so she cannot deviate and aberrant from the norms and values of society. Patriarchal effect on her ideology can be judged what she will do with more reading and writing- boil and drinks... No Allah willing, she will get married and her children (P.52).

Through this loyal institution of marriage, Zaitoon is forced to marry a person, whom she does not know. Actually women are treated as territory of men. These relationships are like colonizer and colonized type. As male extend their powers over women as a colonizer and imperial offensive to use and abuse this occupied territory. In forced situation a marriage become a help for a women. As Qasim forces her daughter to get married a tribesman only because he has given his words. Murriam tries to make him understand that there is great difference between two cultures and codes, and Zaitoon would be unable to adjust in that setup. After listening her Qasim behaves furiously and says to show his proprietorial rights "She is my daughter" and I have given my word

“The word of Kohistani” (P.94). On the other side Zaitoon also become victim of her own submissiveness and innocence. She refuses Murriam and Ashiq, when they convince her to refuse Qasim for this marriage by saying “It is my father’s wish I must go with him” (P.144). She knows that her refusal will be a war against divinity because she is brought up in authoritative and despotic patriarchal set up. Women in this patriarchal set up are treated as commodity of male gratification. During her stay in the hills at the very first night, she had an unpleasant dream about the land of tribe and she cried frightened Abba, take me to the plains. If I must marry. I will die rather than live here. The major aspect of patriarchal culture is displayed here but the style of Qasim to deal zaitoon. He threatens her rather than console her as a father. He was not showing any parental love and affection to her due to his promise to a tribal and makes zaitoon frightened of dire consequences. Qasim’s expression “I’ve given my word, on it depends my honor. It is dearer to me than life. If you will be smirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands shows his proprietorial attitude, which mean that he can kill her but would not like to give place her opinion. As we know that in patriarchal culture female has no right to show their wills against male. Male decides patterns of her life and she has to follow it willingly or unwillingly.

As Qasim considers himself as a landlord who is in position to decide her fate. The expression of a conquered land in the novel is not only displayed through the marriage institution but also from every field of life. For example, Zaitoon is not only deprived from her right of marriage but also treated as commodity of gratifying her husband’s animal instinct. She has to face an experience of exploitation at the very first day of her life. Sakhi, who is her husband looks like a beast from her behavior to his wife, Saki surveyed his diffident bride with mounting excitement. Here was a woman all his own, he thought with proprietorial lust and pride” (P.159). “He tore the ghoongat from her head and holding her arms in a cruel grip he panted inarticulate hatred into her face... He tugged at the cord of her shalwar and the silk fell to her ankles. Before she could raise her trousers Sakhi flung her back... she screamed and screamed. “Abba, save me”. She shrieked. Why did not Qasim come or any of the others? (p.160). It was a great shock for zaitoon when her father was going back, leaving her alone to face the cruelties of male-dominated society where her husband is a king, a person who does not know the meaning of love and sympathy. Sakhi believes on power through which he is trying to make her wife a domestic pet. He torchers her physically, psychologically and emotionally. He threatens her physically by striking her on her thighs, on her head and shouts you are my woman! I’ll teach you to obey me! Sakhi is totally unaware of woman’s feelings. When zaitoon waves her hand on far-off vehicle, He drags her, and says “you whore, he hissed... He cleared his throat and spat full in her face. You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs... you wanted him to stop and fuck you, didn’t you (p.185) “I will kill you, you lying slut” (p.186).

Due to this physical and psychological torture, she has made her mind to react against this authoritative code of conduct. “She knows that in flight lay her only hope of survival (p.186). With this desire in this barbaric culture, Zaitoon has to face different problems. Zaintoon’s struggle for emancipation from male oppression goes through misery, torture and her rape by a couple of beasts. On her way of struggle, Mushtaq finds her half dead and informed Sakhi and his clansmen that she is dead. On this news, “Missri Khan’s massive shoulders straightened. He thrust his chest forward and his head rose high. It was as if a breeze had cleared the poisonous air suffocating them and has wafted an intolerable burden from their shoulders (P.224).

## CONCLUSION

In this novel “The Pakistani Bride” (1983) Zaitoon, symbolizes human spirit which struggles and exists with integrity. Because she raises her voice against male dominated society and its oppression. She tries to stop this domestic violence by acting against slapping hand of Sakhi. She tries to fight a society in which a man is judged by controlling a woman. For men it does not matter either a woman belong to Western society or Pakistani society, she is just a woman as zaitoon and carol in this novel. But zaitoon shows bravery and courage which “endorses a challenge to the structure of patriarchy” (Ross, 1991). Her efforts to run from tribal areas and his cruel husband Sakhi are a victory against male characters who consider female as their extension.

## REFERENCES

- Dhawan, R.K. (Ed.) (1987). *Commonwealth Fiction*. New Delhi: Classi.
- Elsenstein, Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism
- MilleTT, Kate (1969) *sexual politics* New York: Doubleday.
- Mitchell Juliet London: Allen Lane
- Sanagari, K. and Vaid, Sudesh (Eds.) (1990). *Recasting Women-----Essays in Indian Colonial History*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Ross, R.L. (1991). *International Literature in English: Essays on Major Writers*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Sidhwa, B. (1984). *The Bride*. London & Sydney: Macdonald & Co Ltd.
- Sidhwa, B. (1989). *Ice-Candy Man*. Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?": *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Nelson, Cary & Grossberg Lawrence. University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Suleri, Sara. *Meatless Days*. Chicago: Chicago, 1989.