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## “The Pakistani Bride- Voice of an unheard gender”

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**Abstract:** Bapsi Sidhwa an ambassador of Pakistan Literature is not only a story teller but an artist who has very enigmatically related the plight and exploitation of women in the patriarchal society. Marginalisation is the powerlessness and exclusion experienced by a group, resulting from an inequality of control of resources and power structures within society. Feminism argues that women are marginalised due to the patriarchal structure of society. Woman is marginalised defined only by her difference from male norms and values in every country and culture. The existence of woman living in Pakistan society in one hand is valorized as the symbol of piety, purity, love and honour. But on the other hand her body is defiled, and tortured in the name of morality, religion and tradition. Pakistani-Anglophone women novelist Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* depicts the heart rending life story of a sixteen years old young girl Zaitoon from childhood until she escapes her ill matched marriage. The novel depicts the contrast between the outside male world and the inside female world focussing on the theme of female sexuality, their struggles and challenges in the orthodox society. The novel explores some social issues as marriage, sexual commodification and victimization of women in Pakistan's society. The plot of the novel highlights the biased and gender discriminating attitudes towards female sexuality. Sidhwa wants the readers to watch the misery torture and suffering that Zaitoon undergoes as she has broken the tribal, barbaric and authoritative code of conduct. The essence of this paper is to draw the attention of readers and lovers of literature to the bleak situation that women face in society.

**Keywords:** Victimization, Commodification, Suppressed, Pakistani bride, Marginalization

### I. INTRODUCTION

Women are the marginalised section the society. But they cannot remain voiceless for long, they have to speak and find an outlet for their tears and fears, anguish and anger, thus, register their existence. The voices resisting exploitation are fully aware of their own strength and dignity. The age-old existence of

oppression, despair, and suffering is common in the lives of marginalized classes across countries and continents. In Pakistan the relationship of the country with its women is rooted in a patriarchal feudal system feeding the country since before it was born. It's an archaic system that has produced the men who run the country negotiate domestic and foreign policy and penned sexist laws that made it easier for women to slide through the cracks. The words surrounding Pakistan- war, terrorism,

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extremism, which drawn out the plight of the million women who truly need a voice. Bapsi Sidhwa is Pakistan's leading diasporic writer. She has produced four novels in English that reflect her personal experience of the Indian subcontinent's partition, abuse against women, immigration to the US and membership of the Parsi community. She was born on August 11, 1938 in Karachi and witnessed the bloody partition of the Indian subcontinent as a young child in 1947, in which 7 million Muslims and 5 million Hindus were uprooted in the largest, most terrible exchange of population that history has known. Sidhwa is an award winning Pakistani novelist striving above all to bring women's issues of the Indian subcontinent into public discussion. She likes herself to be described as a Punjabi-Pakistani-Parsi woman. All her novels are about her perceptions of life, to her each book is a cathartic release. The Pakistani Bride is a story of women in marriage, women and sexuality. Interestingly, during the journey of life, Sidhwa portrays Zaitoon has to face a lot of problems which lead her to have anxiety. Sigmund Freud suggests that anxiety is an obstacle of personality development and defence mechanisms are psychological devices used to cope with anxiety. Sidhwa finally creates her protagonist to employ defence mechanisms to cope with her undesirable feelings.

### **Major Thrust**

The need for women empowerment in society is critical because women are exploited,

humiliated, oppressed, and violated by their male partners. In order to protect girls and women from mental and sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence in a male-dominated society, we must prioritise women empowerment. In our society, they should be treated with dignity and support. The study recommends that we raise the status of women in our society. Atwood raises her voice in support of women, pledging her full support and courage in the fight for gender equality in society. Women and girls should receive proper education and guidance for their future careers so that they can work in society and earn money, allowing them to become economically self-sufficient. Only by providing them with proper guidance and support will we be able to create a society in which men and women are treated equally as citizens. When they get a job, they will become economically self-sufficient and no longer need to rely on their male counterparts for financial support. The current study aims to liberate women so that they can make life decisions without consulting anyone. Women can make their own life decisions without asking anyone's permission, and we should emphasises the importance of giving women empowerment and the fact that they should not be asked to make their own life decisions. As a result, after experiencing frustration, all of the women protagonists must make a firm and unbelievable decision in their lives. They try to conceal their true identity in society and flee to the real world because they

are subjected to exploitation and humiliation there. Characters survive in their bad situations and try to get out of them, but when they are unable to get out of them, they decide to make a life-changing decision and stop caring about their male partners or society. They distance themselves from society and try to escape the reality of their lives by living in a fantasy world where no one can stop them from doing whatever they want in their personal lives. 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. Bapsi Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride, has finally culminated with wisdom into the position of womenfolk in the male dominant self-centred and undeveloped society. 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 (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. Bapsi Sidhwa published The Pakistani Bride to depict the sale of female body. She was extremely upset to find the deteriorating situation of women in Pakistan. Once she went to the tribal region with her husband, she was told about a woman who was sold and later on raped and killed. She decided to write a novel on the story depicting the social evil of selling women in tribal area. Sidhwa published her novel The Pakistani Bride dealing with the theme of trading of women in the patriarchal society of Pakistan. The novel became a classical hit as the readers in India and Pakistan acclaimed her as a real feminist of modern times. Sidhwa brought the plight of women as her major theme narrated events how women are regarded as consumer goods by men

in society. The sacred institution of marriage is abused by men. Marriage is used as a strategy to gain prosperity and economic stability in society. Marriage is considered as a business transaction and the consent of girls is not taken in settling marriages. Foucault in his *History of Sexuality* investigated that people who are powerful misuses power to coerce others who are powerless. The *Pakistani Bride* is about of the role of women in marriage. The entire plot of the novel is focused on women and sexuality. The metaphor of —Bride is the nucleus around which the story revolves. All the episodes of the novel are linked with the image of female body and 63 the metaphor of —Bride. The image of bride symbolizes the power of men to control the body of women and her sexuality. Brides are purchased in the open market to promote the welfare of the family. The cultural transaction of marriage is on the line of traditional slave trade in the opening scene of the novel. Sidhwa describes the settlement of a feud through marriage transaction. Resham Khan is a defaulter of Qasim's father. He fails to return the loan on time. Resham Khan gives his daughter to Qasim's father to waive off the debt. His daughter Afshan is a beautiful young girl; he uses her as a valuable cheque to pay off the loan. Qasim is extremely happy to get the cheque in the form of beautiful Afshan. In this scene body becomes a medium of business settlement. Qasim is a shrewd money lender, who knows that Afshan is a real diamond with good market price; she is virginal and young

with healthy body. He expresses his ecstasy thus to Qasim: —Resham Khan has promised us his daughter! The sturdy, middle-aged tribesman knew just how generous the offer was. Any girl-and he had made sure that this one was able-bodied-was worth more than the loan due(7). Bapsi Sidhwa narrates another heart rending episode to expose the social evil of selling girls in tribal region. Qasim sells his daughter Zaitoon for five hundred rupees to a tribal Sakhi in spite of the opposition of Mariam. Zaitoon is a Panjabi girl who is educated and well bred. Qasim sells his daughter for his word of honour that he gave to Sakhi. Mariam warns him of the dire consequences as Zaitoon wouldn't be happy in a lonely land and with strange people but Qasim is adamant since he has taken money. In business world the word of promise cannot be taken back. He sells his daughter yelling that: She is my daughter and I have given my word! The word of a Kohistani (94). Zaitoon's marriage with Sakhi forms the pillar of the novel. The plight of Zaitoon is inexpressible; she is treated as a saleable item used for the sexual pleasures of Sakhi. On the very first day of her marriage she is maltreated; pushed against the wall and like an animal Sakhi pounces on the body of Zaitoon. Sakhi is overwhelmed by the beauty and charm of Zaitoon as he expresses his pride to possess her. Sakhi is excited to use her body for sexual pleasures and considered her as —proprietary lust and pride(159).

## Conclusion

Bapsi Sidhwa is a renowned writer who strives to solve the problems that women face in society. Women's writings are regarded as a powerful medium in the twenty-first century, changing women's social lives. The main focus is on the commodification of female body as money culture allures women to sell their bodies. The paper explores all the issues concerning women; their sexual oppression and their commodification. Objectification of women is common in Asian societies as women are denied the fundamental rights and are dominated by men who are powerful in terms of money and physical strength.

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