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**EXPOSING THE PANGS OF WOMEN IN
 BAPSI SIDHWA'S *THE PAKISTANI BRIDE***

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Abstract:

*This article sheds lights on the plight and predicament of women as portrayed in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Pride*. The novelist being a Pakistani appears to have got through the knowledge of the tribal socio cultural conditions which create space for the marginalization of women. The character Zaitoon is portrayed as having lost her parents in her childhood and later being adopted by Qasim. The writer points a picture of tribal and tribulations and woes and worries of women. Bapsi Sidhwa's portrayal of tribal life style and condition of women is realistic and the novel delves deep into the life of tribes, particularly the condition of women, who are treated not as humans but as commodities.*

Key Words: *Emotional Storm, Sexual Harassment, Ill- Treatment, Rigid Social Norms.*

Gender-bias is a deep rooted system in the Pakistan tribal society. For generations, women encounter various violations on the basis of gender. Basically, the socio-cultural set up of Pakistan society renders a platform for gender inequity. Women face a lot of discrimination right from their birth to death. The patriarchal society considers women as worthless creatures whereas men are regarded as treasures. Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* sheds a light on the tribal society which is only obsessed with boy children and grows an enmity towards girl children. Due to the favoritism of the society, they undergo innumerable torments in every phase of their life. The Paper delineates how the lives of girl children in a male dominated society are susceptible to affliction and misery. The psyche of the biased Pakistan tribal society is brought to light. The study also exposes honor killing, child marriage, marital rape which is still practiced in the tribal areas. Girl children are subjected to experience a varied of partialities within their family circle. The disoriented feelings and emotions of girl children propel them to seek extinction from a torturous life.

Men are considered logical, rational and objective but women are supposed to be considered emotional, sensitive and subjective. It is really serious to analyze feminism in the present scenario. Many of the writers have mostly written women as inferior and weak. They see men are 'stronger sex'. But the real fact is women are bold enough to face all the problems in life. Women face more problems and difficulties than men. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel mainly portray women from the different sections of society. In her novels, Sidhwa gives treatment for the women characters for the problems they are facing their life. The researcher also explains Bapsi Sidhwa's women characters and their behavioral patterns.

Bapsi Sidhwa has been recognized as one of the most talented of twentieth century writers. This Pakistani Writer, who is the first recipient of the South Asian Excellence Awards for literature in 2008, always emphasizes her Zoroastrian roots in her works. She has written five novels namely *The Ice Candy Man, The Pakistani Bride, The Crow Eaters, An American Brat* and *Water*.

The Pakistani Bride, as a novel highlights the darker side of Pakistani tribal society and its

insensitive nature, often different from mainstream values and norms. Bapsi Sidhwa has focused on the universal problem of women victimization. This novel primarily presents stories of three brides- Zaitoon, Afshan and Carol.

Angst is a feeling of anxiety and frustration in which the object of fear cannot be described or pointed out. Women often feel angst about their state or condition. It is a transcendent emotion that denotes a constant struggle one has with the burdens and problems of life without knowing how and when the redemption would come. The plight of women in Pakistani tribal areas is miserable. This evokes in women the feeling of angst. Here the researcher explains that angst is not a negative emotion and states that, only because of such emotion women come out of their bonded lives and move towards liberation and freedom. Through the Women characters in the novel *The Pakistani Bride*, Afshan, Zaitoon, Carol and Saki's mother everyone realizes that all have suffered at the hands of the oppressive society in one way or other. The novel questions whether the role of Zaitoon as a representative of other women living under oppressive patriarchal systems in relation to cultural resistance should be restricted only to their role as wives and mothers. In such a world, woman's role is limited to reproduction regardless of her own desires and needs. As a Pakistani Parsi Woman and the experiences of women around her, Sidhwa perfectly understood the societal-cultural problems of women. She questions the system of sex-role stereotyping and oppressive of women in contemporary Pakistan society.

The Pakistani Bride is about Zaitoon, a young girl who lost her parents in her childhood and adopted by Qasim as his daughter. This story clearly depicts the unwritten rules of patriarchal society. Zaitoon as a daughter accepts the choice of her father as her husband, later she is forced to tolerate her husband's torture and finally she decides to break down the cultural barriers of the so called society and she tries to recreate her own identity.

When a male child is induced with the power of supremacy right from his birth, it is difficult to annihilate patriarchal flames. In Pakistani tribal areas, men are given the freedom of using women as an object to play with; the right claimed authority to beat. So, the honor of a man is judged by how well he can oppress his woman. Girls are used as commodities to transfer from one place to another in the name of marriage. Women are treated as commodities, which can be barded and traded by men. This is evident in case of Afshan, when she is married to a ten years old boy Qasim. The wedding ceremony takes place surprisingly because her father is not able to repay his borrowed amount he got from Qasim's father. Hence Afshan is traded as compensation of the loss and to cover up her father's failure. The important reason behind Afshan's marriage is due to poverty and it is also the result of rigid social norms and cultural beliefs. It is revealed through the description of Afshan's marriage: "Thrice she was asked if she would accept Qasim, the son of Arbab, as her husband and thrice an old aunt murmured 'yes' on her behalf" (8). Afshan becomes Qasim's wife as a deal made by her father. To clear his debt, Afshan's father has reduced her position to a commodity, but she accepts her position unquestioningly.

There are three different phases of women in this novel, as Sidhwa highlights the changing roles of women from various sections of Pakistan tribal society. The starting phase denotes the role of Afshan. This is a phase in which women are muted sufferers. They underwent all the sufferings silently, and they are happy in being slaves to men. Women are tied in the knots of family values and honor. The next phase is the suffering phase; Carol is an American, who comes to Pakistan after getting married to Farukh, an officer in Pakistani army. But the crossing of boundaries proves quite painful for her. She is subjected to abuse every day. Her husband's infidelity forces her to have relations with another man; for, fed up with her husband's jealous nature, she converts his nightmares into reality. Thus women of each class face problems in one way or another.

The final phase is the transition phase. Through Zaitoon, the central character, Sidhwa has portrayed the physical, mental and emotional predicaments of a girl. Zaitoon is not allowed to get higher education and is married to a man of her father's choice. After marriage, her rosy dreams of married life are

shattered under the feet of cruel reality. She has to lead the life of a slave in her husband's home, while Hamida, her mother-in-law also suffers as wife and mother .she is not respected even by her sons. Her son, sakhi, beats her badly, thus showing that even an aged mother cannot expect any love and regard from her own son whom she has given birth bearing much pain.

The point that Bapsi Sidhwa establishes with great clarity is that mere talks about the empowerment of women never affect human psychology where people fall prey to old stereotypes of women. Her novels are based on the study of the patriarchal society where men determine what role women should play, and that role is the stereotyped role of women, their role as sex objects. Throughout their lives, they try to please the male members of their family. Women are deliberately denied the right to education so that they may not become powerful and sensible enough to demand equality for them.

In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa uses the symbol of the eagle with broken wings for Zaitoon when she takes a step to escape from her marital prison. Zaitoon is raped by two tribal men and they keep her hostage for two hours. After regaining consciousness, she looks at herself. "Her shirt printed with faded lavender flowers and the torn shirt are the symbols of lost innocence, the molestation of this starved, raped and oppressed woman and become a powerful appeal against the oppression of women" (103).

Having a staunch faith in hope, Sidhwa does not end her novels on a depressing note. Hope is always there for a better time to come. Her novels inspire her women characters to strive positively for a bright future and assure them that a society can be created in which women can move holding their head high. Hence the researcher concludes the paper with a strong message that there is always hope even when the situation seems to be hopeless.

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