

Negotiating Patriarchy in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*: A Postcolonial Feminist Analysis

Talib Hussain¹, Hafiz Kamran Farooqi ^{*2} and Taimur Kayani³

Abstract

The paper analyzes female agency and resilience in *The Pakistani Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa, emphasizing the role of patriarchy and colonial legacies in constructing gendered oppression. While many Pakistani writers have examined the challenges faced by women in patriarchal systems, they often depict their struggles and resilience. Nevertheless, several works in Pakistani literature deviate from conventional tales. Bapsi Sidhwa, recognized for her unique literary style, depicts women as being independent and confident, providing an alternate viewpoint on female agency in Pakistani literature. The novel examines the ways that patriarchal systems and socio-political atmosphere suppress women's rights, reducing their agency and independence. Zaitoon, the protagonist, depicts the challenges faced by women in Pakistan's tribal areas, including institutional brutality, psychological suffering, subjugation, and marginalization. This study employs a qualitative approach to study, using textual analysis to investigate Sidhwa's narrative strategies in portraying gender oppression and resistance. Based on postcolonial feminist theory, the study examines how the narrative depicts socio-political constraints imposed on women and the avenues for resistance. The findings indicate that legal and patriarchal paradigms significantly restrict women's autonomy. Zaitoon's experiences exemplify wider trends of marginalization, as societal conventions and traditions promote gender-based discrimination. Sidhwa's narrative underscores female struggle, illustrating the intricacies of surviving within patriarchal contexts. This research enhances postcolonial feminist discourse by analyzing how literature criticizes systemic gender inequality, oppression and female subjugation. It broadens discussions on the interplay of patriarchy, colonial legacies, and socio-political disparities, providing insights into women's resistance within repressive systems.

Keywords: Bapsi Sidhwa, Colonialism, Female Agency, Oppression, Patriarchy, Postcolonial Feminism, Postcolonial Literature

¹⁻³ Department of English, GIFT University, Gujranwala – Pakistan

Introduction

During the second half of the 20th century, there was an important transformation in the status and representation of women, regardless of their ethnicity, race, nationality, or skin color. The change is just as applicable to South Asian females. While the experiences of women varied between cultures and continents, they certainly confronted several types of tyranny and subjugation. Women in many countries have suffered different types of injustice and persecution. The rise of feminist movements has resulted in a reduction of prejudice and neglect experienced by women in specifically marginalized communities.

In contrast, women were regarded as subordinates in the sub-continent, lived under the dominion of male family members. Pakistan, situated in South Asia, is part of the "Patriarchal Belt," where women's rights have historically been repressed (Caldwell, 1982). Moghadam (1993) depicts that women in these areas have significant constraints, including restricted access to healthcare, education, work, political engagement, and skill growth. They often need authorization to access local marketplaces or conduct independent transactions. The subcontinent, including present-day Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, along with Afghanistan, is characterized by deeply ingrained patriarchal traditions that persistently constrain women's agency.

The marginalization of Indigenous women into silent roles is a significant aspect of the patriarchal structure, especially within male-dominated societies. Silencing functions as a mechanism for asserting dominance over women. Silence signifies, as Almeida posits, "the historical subjugation of women within the dominant social structure termed patriarchy, wherein males wield power and consign women to a subordinate status" (2016, p. 23). The feminist academic Bell Hooks asserts that "patriarchy confers upon men a sense of superiority by silencing women and instructs them that their self-worth and identity are contingent upon their capacity to dominate others" (2023, p. 70).

South Asian women faced similar conditions, exacerbated by the intertwined influences of colonialism and patriarchy. They have been represented in Orientalist portrayals with clichéd characters and contexts. The major focus was on colonialism; nevertheless, women of color also faced oppression from patriarchy and their communities. Early postcolonial literature mostly overlooked or inadequately explored the notion of 'double colonialism.' Gayatri Spivak elucidated the concept

of 'double colonialism' encountered by women in colonized cultures, highlighting the importance of the oppressed. Spivak asserts that "the influence of biological differences on Indigenous women is more pronounced than on males" (1988, pp. 83–85). South Asian women, having been marginalized and oppressed, have suffered under the unfair dominion of colonialism and patriarchy, leading to persistent anguish and the lingering consequences of dual subjugation. Notwithstanding extensive media coverage of their challenges and requests for aid, the works of postcolonial authors have had a distinctly profound influence.

Postcolonial literature is abundant in both form and subject, deriving substantial relevance from writers and scholars specializing in postcolonial studies with a focus on feminist perspectives. Their works have reshaped the literary landscape through innovative stories that explore regional cultural peripheries and socio-political contexts. Their representation mostly encompasses the colonial or postcolonial realities faced by people from a South Asian viewpoint.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a South Asian author whose writings realistically portray the lives of Pakistani people, notably in the suburban regions of Lahore and the tribal territories of Kohistan. She saw colonialism as the fundamental cause of disruption, fracture, and anarchy within the Lahore community, thus becoming a perpetrator of injustice and violence against South Asian women. In the Pakistani Bride, the female characters struggle against patriarchal hierarchy, oppression and violence as they struggle with the traditional attitude of the dominant society.

Sidhwa uses strong female protagonists in her narratives to challenge and alter patriarchal systemic violence. These women demonstrate perseverance as they navigate the intricacies of cultural displacement resulting from the colonial past. They acclimatize to new situations while endeavouring to retain their cultural heritage. In this process, people contend for their agency and empowerment among the social and political obstacles of the postcolonial context. The convergence of gender, class or even race influences their identities, exposing the complexities of their lives. The repercussions of the colonial past reverberate in their interactions, influencing familial dynamics, romantic connections, and communal affiliations (Helgesson 15–19). This underscores the profound impact of colonial history on women. Despite enduring suffering and hardships from the colonial past, these females show emotional resilience, highlighting the enduring psychological impact of historical injustices.

Women, silence, and patriarchy are intrinsically linked, since women often remain voiceless in postcolonial societies where males exercise undue authority and control, hence excluding women from prominent positions of influence (Ritzer and Ryan 188). In a patriarchal culture, males are predominantly seen as decision-makers and leaders within the family, whilst women are expected to be dependent and assigned to domestic duties. Feminist viewpoints, especially feminist theory, seek to establish correlations between the power dynamics of colonized and colonizing nations and those between men and women under patriarchal frameworks (Hooks, 2023, p. 25). In both scenarios, power systems operate to favor the voice of the dominant group, while the viewpoints and experiences of the marginalized are disregarded and dismissed. Bell Hooks contends that patriarchal systems silence women's voices, hindering their recognition and acknowledgement both inside the household and in society (2023, p. 12).

Postcolonial and feminist theories aim to elevate previously silenced voices and foster a societal environment that recognizes and amplifies the marginalized experiences of all individuals, irrespective of their socioeconomic rank, colonial background, or gender. Postcolonial feminist analysis is a framework that investigates the interplay of colonialism, race, and gender, highlighting women's struggles within the margins of colonial history (Mohanty, 1988, p. 33). The postcolonial feminist approach examines the impact of colonial discourse on people, particularly women, and how women have resisted throughout both colonial and postcolonial periods (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 5).

Farooqi and Kayani explore female agency in post-independence Zanzibar as shown in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*, emphasizing the characters Asha, Bi Sara, and Bi Maryam. It examines how these women negotiate through oppression, marginalization, and the constrictive norms of society. By employing resilience and the strategic application of silence, they confront prevailing power structures and affirm their autonomy. The analysis underscores their challenges, accentuating silence as a potent instrument of defiance and endurance within a patriarchal society (2024, p. 69). Similarly, Pakistani selected fiction *The Weary Generation* analyzes how it subverts conventional feminine stereotypes by portraying Azra as autonomous and confident. It underscores her rebellion against patriarchal conventions, redefining concepts of female liberty. The novel, influenced by Western beliefs, presents a progressive perspective on gender roles in Pakistani literature (Kayani & Farooqi, 2017, p. 65). Consequently, postcolonial feminist

analysis serves as a connection where feminist and postcolonial theories converge, scrutinizing the mechanisms of objectification and oppression within society and their impact on the lives of women in the margins of colonial and postcolonial contexts.

The study examines the growth of South Asian female characters, specifically the conventional subservient roles of indigenous women in postcolonial contexts, and highlights the importance of feminist movements in contesting dominant narratives and promoting women's rights. The paper explores how colonizers oppress and subjugate female characters in the selected novel, using insights from Mohanty's *Feminism without Borders*. Similarly, Roshan Amber Ali, drawing influence from Chandra Mohanty, analyzes how South Asian diaspora poetry decolonizes concepts of race and gender. The study interrogates Western feminist generalizations and colonial narratives via the themes of oppression, identity, and autobiography (2022, p. 5). As researchers, we emphasize the resistance, resilience, and challenges encountered by female characters, underscoring their role in navigating patriarchy and contesting oppressive colonial narratives.

The paper examines the factors that lead to the objectification and dual subjugation of female characters in *The Pakistani Bride*. It analyses the influence of patriarchal norms, cultural expectations, and institutional disparities on women's experiences, perpetuating their enslavement. The study examines the impact of socio-political and cultural factors on the definition and redefinition of female characters in the literature. It examines the influence of traditional practices, power dynamics, and historical settings on their agency, resistance and identities. The research seeks to elucidate the intricacies of gendered oppression and how women negotiate within constrictive social structures via the analysis of these interrelated issues.

Postcolonial Feminism: Resisting Marginalization and Reclaiming Narratives

Bapsi Sidhwa's writings are acclaimed for their thorough exploration of gender issues, particularly in the context of South Asian civilization. Her work often articulates the reality and challenges women encounter in traditional settings, emphasizing their resilience and struggles. Sidhwa critiques the societal norms that restrict the roles and opportunities accessible to women through the application of feminist ideas. In *"The Pakistani Bride"*, she examines the confining marital customs

and the little autonomy afforded to women. Her portrayal of strong female characters, exemplified by Lenny in *Cracking India* (1988), underscores their journeys towards independence and self-discovery. These heroes confront patriarchal conventions and assert their uniqueness while maneuvering through challenging socio-political contexts. Her work serves as a significant examination of gender dynamics and female emancipation due to her nuanced depiction of women's experiences, which underscores the prevalent gender inequalities in her societal context while contributing to broader feminist discourse.

Bapsi Sidhwa's literary works extensively examine postcolonial issues, particularly in her novel *Ice-Candy-Man*. This work skillfully depicts the human toll of India's 1947 Partition, scrutinizing the significant challenges and personal tragedies individuals faced amid political turmoil. Her narrative not only recounts events but also critically analyses the enduring impacts of colonialism and the challenges of identity formation in postcolonial South Asia. She elucidates the psychological scars and political and societal divisions created by Partition via the recollections of her characters, clarifying how historical events impact various cultures and interpersonal dynamics. Her subtle perspective helps us comprehend postcolonial cultures' efforts for rehabilitation and restoration while also capturing the anguish and resiliency of those impacted. Thus, her writing serves as an important literary monument to the toll that colonialism and Partition took on local people as well as their continuing impacts (Kumar, 2016, p. 59).

Studies on Bapsi Sidhwa's Narrative

The study highlights the lives of tribal areas in Pakistani society, and how Pashtun brides are portrayed in *The Pakistani Bride*. This research undertakes a thorough examination of how Sidhwa presents brides as people negotiating the intricacies of patriarchal norms and social conventions, in addition to being objects for enjoyment and symbolic of hardship. The study examines the various roles and difficulties that women encounter in Pashtun society through the perspectives of individuals like Zaitoon, Carol, and Nikka. It emphasizes the women's restricted agency and strategies for coping with their situations (Ilyas et al., 2023, p. 32).

Existentialist feminism can be seen in *The Pakistani Bride*, where it shows how gender stereotypes and social conventions limit women's independence and agency by critically analyzing the concepts of autonomy for women and violence at home

within the Pakistani community. Sidhwa's story provides a framework for analyzing existentialist feminist theory, which holds that women are frequently oppressed and turned into targets of male satisfaction in societies, lacking agency and being vulnerable to structural injustice. The purpose of the study is to highlight instances in which men take advantage of the institution of marriage to maintain gender inequality, especially in Pakistan's tribal areas, where women have a difficult time claiming autonomy and individuality (Farhan et al., 2022, p. 67).

Another study depicts the marginalization of female characters in the selected novel. It portrays how women's problems and oppression are portrayed in Pakistani society, which is patriarchal. According to an actual event, Sidhwa's tale chronicles the terrible life of Children who are orphans, Zaitoon, who falls prey to male control both before and after her forced marriage. The story powerfully depicts the social conventions that turn women into objects of male desire and control, sustaining cycles of violence and marginalization, through Zaitoon's horrific experiences. The personas of Zaitoon, Carol, and Hamida highlight the larger themes of gender inequality and patriarchal power systems while representing various aspects of women's struggles, such as social discrimination and familial obligations (Malhotra, 2019).

Another previous study depicts the marginalization and exploitation of women in a patriarchal Pakistani society by using feminism as a lens. The story by Sidhwa effectively captures the difficult circumstances that Zaitoon and other women must endure in tribal societies where male-dominated norms and social traditions are the standard. The study examines the textual subtleties using Fairclough's 3-Dimensional Model (FTDM) as a framework to show how these stereotypical gender roles appear socially, physically, and personally (Safdar, 2024).

Another instance of the mistreatment of female characters is seen in the handling of women within patriarchal contexts. Sidhwa presents two unique narratives of female experiences: that of Zaitoon, a bride from Pakistan, and Carol, an American who has married into a Pakistani family. The research highlights how the term "The Bride" conceals a deeper irony about women's submissive status and limitations imposed by patriarchal norms, despite its apparent implication of happiness. The narrative of Zaitoon exemplifies this, as she endures injustice and violence in her marriage to Sakhi, prompting her to revolt and finally escape her oppressive

environment. Similarly, Carol transcends patriarchal limitations and marries in Pakistan, since she rejects societal expectations (Ahmad & Cheema, 2024, p. 35). Another research examines gender-related problems and the balance of power in a sophisticated manner in *The Pakistani Bride*. It critically analyses the novel's depiction of women's marginalization and exploitation in Pakistan's tribes' male-dominated culture. This study employs a rigorous method of textual analysis, drawing on Fairclough's discourse examination methodology as well as Lazar's feminist critical assessment of discourse to reveal the underlying hierarchy of power and disparities among genders portrayed in the tale. The analysis demonstrates how societal norms and discourses sustain and strengthen how women are confronted with male dominance and marginalization (Shah Faisal Ullah et al., 2021, p. 69).

Farooqi and Kayani examine the portrayal of female agency in post-independence Zanzibar as shown in *By the Sea*. Centering on the female characters Bi Maryam, Asha, and Bi Sara, the analysis investigates their responses to oppression and marginalization. Their study elucidates how these female characters maneuver through power dynamics, challenge their subordinate social standing, and use silence as a tactical form of resistance. This research enhances comprehension of the resilience and agency of disadvantaged women in colonial contexts by exploring their experiences. They emphasize silence as a mechanism for resistance and resilience, contesting prevailing narratives and promoting women's rights in postcolonial settings (2024, p. 76).

While several studies have used Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders* to analyze the persecution of women in postcolonial literature, studies on Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* are yet unexplored. Previous studies on Sidhwa's oeuvre have mostly concentrated on issues of female oppression, cultural dislocation, and feminist defiance. Nevertheless, these approaches often neglect the interplay of patriarchy and colonialism in influencing women's agency in South Asian literature. This research investigates how *The Pakistani Bride* depicts female strength and resistance within repressive socio-political frameworks, providing a nuanced viewpoint on gendered oppression that is inadequately examined in current literature.

Methodology

This paper employs a postcolonial feminist paradigm to examine *The Pakistani Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa, investigating the interaction between patriarchy and colonialism in the context of women's oppression and resistance. Utilizing Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, the study analyzes the novel's depiction of female resilience in oppressive socio-cultural contexts. The research rigorously examines language, imagery, and narrative techniques that illustrate gendered oppression, emphasizing how female protagonists maneuver within societal restrictions. This study employs a systematic methodology using qualitative textual analysis. A thorough analysis of *The Pakistani Bride* is performed to discern persistent themes of marginalization and agency. Keywords, phrases, and excerpts depicting gendered oppression and resistance are analyzed to uncover fundamental power dynamics. The results are contextualized within established literary criticism, interacting with previous research on Bapsi Sidhwa's oeuvre and the wider South Asian feminist debate.

Mohanty's framework is especially pertinent since it challenges the influence of colonial history and patriarchal forces on women's lived experiences, matching with *The Pakistani Bride*'s portrayal of limited female autonomy. This method facilitates a sophisticated comprehension of how Sidhwa's story challenges dominant systems. Secondary materials, such as feminist research journals, non-fiction texts, and South Asian literary studies, enhance the analysis by providing insights into gender, racism, and postcolonial oppression. This study aims to enhance postcolonial feminist writing by addressing research deficiencies in South Asian literature's interaction with de-colonial feminist viewpoints.

Theoretical Framework

Mohanty's Perspective on Women's Marginalization in Pakistani Tribal Areas

In this paper, we use Chandra Talpade Mohanty's concepts regarding double oppression and exploitation in postcolonial literature, especially in her seminal work *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003), to offer a critical framework for examining the marginalization of women in postcolonial contexts, particularly in the tribal regions of Pakistan. She assaults

Western feminist rhetoric for often depicting Third World women as a monolithic, subjugated population devoid of agency and resistance. She contends that oppression and exploitation should be comprehended within certain socio-political, cultural and historical frameworks (2003, p. 79).

In postcolonial literature, Mohanty's viewpoint elucidates how female characters endure several dimensions of oppression, stemming both from colonial legacies and indigenous patriarchal systems. She emphasizes how colonization perpetuated gendered oppression by adopting foreign economic, legal and social institutions that further marginalized Indigenous women. Furthermore, she underscores that patriarchy functions variably across cultures and historical contexts, necessitating a nuanced comprehension rather than a universal perspective.

Mohanty examines the interconnectedness of gender, class, racism, and imperialism, demonstrating how economic exploitation is fundamental to women's subjugation. She challenges capitalism and neocolonial frameworks for sustaining gender inequities, as shown in postcolonial literature where women often endure economic dispossession and cultural limitations. In the setting of novels such as *The Pakistani Bride*, Mohanty's theories facilitate a discussion of how female characters are objectified and subjected to twofold oppression—initially by patriarchal norms and subsequently by broader socio-political factors that constrain their mobility and agency. Her work necessitates a reevaluation of feminist solidarity that transcends Western-centric viewpoints and prioritizes the lived experiences and resistance techniques of women in postcolonial contexts.

Feminism without Borders starts with Mohanty's primary scholarship on Western feminism and closes in a reconsideration of that critique, considering her developing views on gender's influence within the class, racism, and national frameworks of globalization. In these parts, she analyzes the experiences of female laborers in several global sectors, including the US, UK and feminist discussions on experience and identity, prevailing narratives of multiculturalism and citizenship, and the corporatization of North American academics. She critically analyzes notions like "home," "sisterhood," "experience," and "community" to propose a borderless feminism that is intricately connected to the intricacies of a global context (2003, p. 164).

Mohanty highlights significant issues in women's studies, specifically broadening the curriculum internationally and promoting student involvement. Although feminist curricula have improved in integrating race, class, and sexuality, they often continue to focus mostly on Western settings. Moreover, some instructors see a reduction in student involvement relative to the late 1960s and 1970s, a period marked by the emergence of women's studies. She promotes a Feminist Solidarity/Comparative Feminist Studies pedagogy that links local and global concerns, challenges prevailing power systems, and transcends the constraints of previous methodologies.

Mohanty attempts to challenge prevailing paradigms of broadening women's studies, dismissing the Feminist-as-Tourist perspective as superficial and Eurocentric, which reduces Third World women to mere victims of foreign oppression. Similarly, she critiques the Feminist-as-Explorer paradigm, grounded on area studies, for its insufficient "separate but equal" framework influenced by cultural relativism. Conversely, she advocates for a comparative model that analyzes relationships and differences among women in both global and local contexts. Although additional concrete examples would augment its applicability, her vision remains compelling. She advocates for a methodology rooted in "relations of mutuality, co-responsibility, and common interests" (2003, p. 242)), promoting female solidarity and motivating activity outside the academic sphere (2003, p. 243). Society has significantly contributed to the normalization of sati, reinforcing women's reliance on males. Following the husband's death, the widow is deprived of autonomy and is expected to accompany him on the funeral pyre to complete a cyclical rite. Intellectual endeavors are often influenced by personal experiences, but they are not synonymous with them. My participation in a radical assembly of Third World and women of color researchers at the Common Differences conference validated the feasibility of an anti-racist, anti-capitalist feminist movement both inside and outside academia. Nonetheless, my relocation to Ithaca and a part-time position at an exclusively white Women's Studies department revealed the social paradoxes inherent in the discipline. As I progressively established the anti-racist, global feminist society I envisioned, it remained on the periphery of official recognition (2003, p. 249).

Colonial and Patriarchal Oppression in The Pakistani Bride: A Postcolonial Feminist Analysis

The *Pakistani Bride* portrays female characters as subjugated and marginalized within the framework of Pakistan. The narrative examines familial conflicts among the Indigenous population of Pakistan, illustrating the simultaneous oppression and marginalization experienced by female characters from both colonizers and their own culture. These women are seen doing traditional domestic responsibilities such as childcare, food preparation, and hosting guests, illustrating their dependence and social status. Sidhwa, a native of Pakistan, adeptly illustrates the difficulties encountered by these women. His extensive understanding of society enables him to portray the struggles of female characters, highlighting their resilience and capacity to endure adversity. In "The Pakistani Bride", Sidhwa elucidates the complex realities of women in Zanzibar, emphasizing their tenacity and resolve in the face of systemic injustice.

The novel intertwines the lives of its protagonists within a strongly patriarchal and tribal community, examining issues of gender oppression, honour, and survival. The story starts with Qasim, a tribal man who saves an orphaned girl, Zaitoon, throughout the Partition and nurtures her in Lahore, only too subsequently compel her into a repressive marriage in his ancestral Kohistani hamlet. Zaitoon's sufferings from youthful innocence to the harsh reality of tribal traditions underscore the oppressive nature of patriarchy, as she endures continuous abuse from her husband and is compelled to escape, jeopardizing her life in the perilous highlands. The parallel story of Carol, an American woman encountering a distinct but similarly oppressive kind of gender-based subjugation in Pakistan, supports the novel's condemnation of social conventions that diminish the worth of women. Zaitoon's dramatic escape, ending in her violent attack and subsequent military rescue, highlights the profound vulnerability of women in authoritarian contexts, while also underscoring their resilience under institutional brutality.

The novel tries to highlight the impact of patriarchal society on the female gender and how it treats females. Even in the case of Qasim and Afshan, Qasim is quite young compared to Afshan, but he treats her like a maid, even though she is his wife and quite older than him. As he was not an adult at that age, still being naughty and disobedient to her mother and wife, and they wanted to beat him, but he shouted at his wife that she was his wife. Being a wife in a patriarchal society means the property of the husband, and that is the bitter reality.

With this matter, the story of the first generation ended, and after that, the second period started, the age of after-partition, the age of Zaitoon, the adopted daughter of Qasim and Sakhi. While they left India for Pakistan, on the way to Pakistan, Zaitoon lost her father, and he met Qasim, and he adopted her as his daughter. And by the start of her age when she was a child, when he entered Pakistan, she listened to someone, who said, “Munni, you are like the smooth, dark olive, the Zaitoon, that grows near our hills ... The name suits you ... I shall call you Zaitoon” (Sidhwa, 2008, p. 32).

When the discussion of patriarchal society comes into the stage, it can be seen that girls and women are often marginalized and considered inferior because of gender, and this is the main taboo of patriarchal societies that they do not allow girls to pursue further studies when they meet to their adulthood. This is the very same thing that happened with Zaitoon, and she was forced to quit school and started to visit religious houses. As Sidhwa argues, “She insisted Zaitoon stop going to school, and he agreed. From her, Zaitoon learned to cook, sew, shop, and keep her room tidy, and Miriam, who spent half her day visiting neighbors, took Zaitoon with her” (2008, p. 52). Sidhwa tries to draw a line between the patriarchal society and their behaviour with the female gender in how they control the women, even the decisions of their lives, which they (males) make by themselves. Here, Qasim decided the future of Zaitoon and how she would be in her future, and he stopped her from going to school. However, Qasim made the decision, and he was in all, it was Miriam who insisted that he not go to school. Instead, she went to school, and she started to go to the neighbor’s house to learn to cook and sew, or she remained in the house.

Carol just came from California and is living in the army camp with her husband, Farrukh, who is just exploring some places as a visitor. She is also considered a body and a tool. Farrukh behaves something if she has no feelings and says whatever he wants to humiliate her. “You’re lying. You enjoyed it. Every bit of it. Most likely you encouraged him. You welcomed him. You devoured him. You opened your arms wide thrusting out your pink tits!” (2008, p. 95).

He insulted and doubted her being disloyal to him and having a good time with the different men in the camp, and she enjoyed it when they touched her. He had a lot of her, and even he beat her somehow. This is how he treated a well-educated, civilized, and updated girl, and she could not do anything. Sidhwa said that girls are

often discriminated against, whether they are educated or not, but still, it matters in what type of society they are living in, whether they are living in a patriarchal society or a feminist one. In this context, Carol exemplifies a contemporary woman inside a progressive society. Nonetheless, the culture where she resides is neither contemporary nor feminist, resulting in her misery.

On the other hand, Zaitoon could stop herself as well as her father by her denial to her father or by telling details to Major Sahib, but she did not because she did not want her father to be helpless and ashamed. It is the worst thing and technique in patriarchal societies that they emotionally blackmail their children, especially their daughters, to make them agree to their wishes. This is the very same thing Qasim used on Zaitoon, and she felt depressed and helpless. And Sidhwa highlights it clearly, "Zaitoon," he said, "Zaitoon, why d'you say that? Am I, not your father? Haven't I loved you dearly? I had three children, once. But now you're all I have in the world. Munni, please stop crying. Am I not dear to you?" (2008, p. 120).

It can be seen that Zaitoon is degraded, and when she tries to save her mother-in-law, Hamida, from Sakhi, he shouts at her by saying that she is his wife. The way he said, "You are my woman," is that she is her property, and he has every right to do whatever he wants to do. She cannot cut him off; whatever he is doing, he considers himself one of all. Moreover, he said that he would teach her how would obey him. On this behaviour and the way he shouted, Zaitoon was scared, and she stumbled and then fell behind. This was the reaction and sign of how they behaved and treated the woman of their society.

What is the main concern of a woman or girl when she is humiliated again and again for being a woman and wife? Treated like a property and toy. In such type of situation, they tried to flee to save themselves from the brutalities of the male gender. So, they do the same and flee from such a bar-less prison. The very same approach can be seen in the following lines, "I knew that bitch would run away" (2008, p. 157). He had known it, and he had taken no measures to prevent it. He had invited the disgrace that now affected his entire clan. "I should have killed her by the river!" (2008, p. 157).

The aggressive nature of Sakhi can be seen in how he behaves and tells them about his intentions of killing his wife. He told them that he already doubted that she would run away, but even though he knew all that, he still did not do anything to

stop her, even though he had invited such an act and even appreciated her doing that, because as he knew already. He had not taken any measures to prevent her from fleeing. It means he appreciated her doing that. And now, of such acts of Sakhi, the whole clan would suffer a situation they did not even consider, and that's their fate.

In a patriarchal society, when a girl flees and wants to have her own life on her own, she is supposed to face many challenges, and those challenges are her tests of whether she can face them or not. Even she knows that at such an act, the society she belongs she will have only death if someone from her clan finds her. So that's a very painful and dreadful reality, and all the girls know, especially in societies of radical patriarchal societies, such as Kohistan tribes. The given line is an instance of such a situation, feelings, and emotions. "A little later, she sat up to find her thighs still shaking" (2008, p. 159).

The men who raped her kept her hostage for two hours, and after that, she managed to flee from there; she was screaming in pain. She was weeping about what had happened to her while she was putting her legs through her shalwar. She did not see her legs for days when she was on that journey. She was full of grief. She was full of blood and red stains on her shalwar, and she was trying to cover those stains with her shirt. Those men tore her clothes, and now she was almost naked. She was trying to get out of there by any means.

As Sidhwa highlights in the given lines, "From infancy, responsibility was forced upon him, and at ten, he was a man, conscious of the rigorous code of honour by which his tribe lived" (2008, p. 14). In these lines, Sidhwa tries to draw a line between the people of the plains and the tribal how they become so stone-hearted and feeling less that they consider their women like their property. Even though they don't have feelings and emotions, they treat women like machines, even though they don't realize that they are not on the right way.

Moreover, tribes are the people who consider their women their property; they don't consider them their wives but property and toys, which can only be performed according to their will. What if they don't agree and believe their order? What if they act according to their own will, the will which they have suppressed for a long time? It would be a riot, according to them, but the women who are brought up in that context are fit; they know that these are the traditions and norms.

On the other hand, the woman who belongs to the plains would not be happy not satisfied with their custom and traditions; she would consider herself imprisoned, and she would try to free herself. The very same case is discussed in the context of Sakhi and Zaitoon. Even Major mentioned to Qasim that the lives of the tribal are difficult, which is discussed by Bapsi Sidhwa in the given lines, "Do you think she will be happy with the tribal?" he asked, trying to conceal his compassion. "It's a hard life for your people" (2008, p. 118).

Sidhwa tries to tell the truth about the tribe, that the life of the tribe is very difficult. The way they live, the way they behave, the way they eat, the way they talk, etc., are all very different and strange, so no one can easily adjust to them. This is a very important concern that Major Sahib tries to highlight. He wants to tell Qasim that she would not be able to adapt to that type of environment. Further, he mentioned that the life of the people of Qasim means that tribal life is very hard, and it will not be possible for Zaitoon to adjust to them.

Conclusion

The paper analyses the representation of female characters in *The Pakistani Bride*, highlighting their oppression and suffering inside a Pakistani patriarchal culture. The story, especially through Zaitoon's character, reveals the entrenched subjugation women face. Zaitoon's forced marriage with Sakhi exemplifies the harsh truths of gender-based violence and domination, as she endures incessant verbal, physical, and psychological mistreatment. Her progression from naivety to captivity underscores the convergence of gender and racial prejudice, as she faces mistreatment not just for her gender but also for her ethnic heritage. The tale highlights how patriarchal systems govern all facets of women's lives, forcing them to comply under the fear of dire repercussions. The story critiques social conventions that sustain violence and subordination of women via Zaitoon's traumatic experiences, exposing the oppressive nature of traditional honour rules. The research further examines the issue of resistance, demonstrating how women such as Zaitoon endeavour to regain their autonomy in the face of significant persecution. The narrative juxtaposes Zaitoon's struggle with Carol's experiences as an outsider confronting female prejudice in a distinct but similar manner, so underscoring the universality of patriarchal limitations. Zaitoon's tenacity and unwillingness to yield, even during severe adversity, underscore a profound resilience, providing a compelling remark on the endurance of women in

authoritarian countries. This analysis illuminates the injustices experienced by women in *The Pakistani Bride* while also enriching wider dialogues on gender inequality, resistance, and the need for change within entrenched patriarchal structures.

The paper aims to contribute to the continuing discussion about the empowerment of South Asian women and their continuous struggle against double oppression. It promotes a more equitable and fair society. This interpretation of *The Pakistani Bride* supports larger postcolonial and feminist efforts aimed at dismantling repressive systems and promoting women's rights and autonomy in the pursuit of a fairer and equitable society. It urges researchers, politicians, and activists to persist in tackling the distinct issues encountered by South Asian women, guaranteeing that their views are both acknowledged and respected. In doing so, we advance towards a future where all people, irrespective of gender or origin, may fully engage in and contribute to the shared human experience. The chosen fiction is suggested for future academics to ascertain the influence of Western beliefs on femininity, sexuality, and gender within the Pakistani environment.

References

- Ahmad, M. S., & Cheema, B. A. (2024). Dislocation and Silence: A Quest to Break Transgenerational Patriarchal Chain in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*. *Intersections* (Australia), 2024-November (51), 61–73. <https://doi.org/10.25911/BIWC-9V30>
- Ali, R. A. (2022). Decolonizing Race and Gender? A Study of Selected South Asian Diasporic Poetry. National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (1995). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ywcct/mbto09>
- Caldwell, J. (1982). *Theory of Fertility Decline*. Springer.
- Farhan, M., Yasmin, S., Sumra, S., & Mujahid, T. (2022). From "Other" to "Self": A Pakistani Female's Existential Quest in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*. *Journal of Languages, Culture and Civilization*, 4(3), 303–317.
- Hooks, B. (2023). Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression. *Feminisms*, 22–26. <https://doi.org/10.1093/os0/9780192892706.003.0004>
- Ilyas, M., Ali, S., Khaliq, M. F., & Khan, H. (2023). Bridal Burdens in Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride". *Arbor*, 10(2), 151–163.
- Kamran Farooqi, & Dr. Taimur Kayani. (2024). Exploring Female Agency in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea: A Postcolonial Feminist Analysis*. *Journal of Contemporary Poetics*, 7(2), 69–83. <https://doi.org/10.54487/jcp.v7i2.3401>
- Kayani, T., & Farooqi, K. (2017). Subversion of Traditional Feminine Stereotypes in Selected Pakistani Fiction. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 1(II), 65–76. [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2017\(1-ii\)06](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2017(1-ii)06)
- Kumar, P. V. R. (2016). *The Pakistani Bride by Bapsi Sidhwa - Women as Beasts of Burden and Instruments for Enjoyment*. *International Journal of English Language, Literature*, Vol. 3(April), 5. <http://www.ijelr.in>
- Malhotra, S. (2019). Tracing the Forms of Violence Against Gender in Patriarchal Society: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*. *International Journal of Creative and Innovative Research in All Studies (IJCIRAS)*, 2(1), 75–76. <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/17563/1/fchaudharyfinalthesis>.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1988). Mohanty under western eyes feminist scholarship and discourses 1988.pdf. *Feminist Review*, 30(1), 51–80.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press.
- Safdar, S. (2024). Sundas Safdar.
- Shah Faisal Ullah, Dr. Ihsan Ullah Khan, & Dr. Abdul Karim Khan. (2021). Power and Gender Issues in Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride: A Critical Discourse Analysis*. *Sjesr*, 4(1), 240–246. [https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol4-iss1-2021\(240-246\)](https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol4-iss1-2021(240-246))
- Sidhwa, B. (2008). *The Pakistani Bride*. Milkweed Editions.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271–313). http://www.mcgill.ca/files/crlaw-discourse/Can_the_subaltern_speak.pdf
- Valentine M. Moghadam. (1993). *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Article Information:

<i>Received</i>	7-Sept-2024
<i>Revised</i>	12-Nov-2024
<i>Accepted</i>	19-Nov-2024
<i>Published</i>	15-Dec-2024

Declarations:

Authors' Contribution:

- All authors **Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions. Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript**
- The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed

- **Conflict of Interest:** NIL

- **Funding Sources:** NIL

Correspondence:

Hafiz Kamran Farooqi

kamranfarooqio@gmail.com