



Bapsi Sidhwa's thought in the bride: Cultural difference between urban and tribal life

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Abstract

This work is an analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Bride: Cultural difference between urban and tribal life*. 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. Sidhwa in the *Bride* (entitled the Pakistani Bride in America) writes about the harsh realities faced by people in the Karakoram mountains, she combines her feminist concern with a compulsion to explain culture of Pakistan to audience unfamiliar with that culture. It is this combination that gives the novel its structural weakness but also its perceptive insight.

Keywords: Bapsi Sidhwa's, feministic, bride, cultural, life

Introduction

The Bride (1938), Sidhwa's first and major works was conceived while she was vacationing in Pakistan. She was touched when she heard a true story about a girl, who was exploited and brutally ill treated. Sidhwa penned down the story of a young girl. Who walked out of an arranged marriage but she was hunted down and killed in the name of a man's honour. Sidhwa husband Gustad Kermani was a sophisticated businessman but she divorced him after five years. She got the custody of her daughter and her husband got her son's custody. He came to her when he was sixteen. Sidhwa married Noshir, the second time and became a busy house wife. Lahore was flooded by thousand of wars refugees. They suffered rape and torture. Women were not accepted into home after suffering in shame. Rehabilitation camps were set up for the likes of them. Sidhwa was fascinated by the term 'fallen women' for the women who lived there. She realized from an early age that, "victory is celebrated, on a woman's body', vengeance is taken on a woman's body. 'that' very much the way things are particularly in my part of the world.

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 live a life of their own.

Sidhwa deftly carves out events, when a man like Quasim gets initiated into the Lahore culture. Lahore has its own culture of the Great Mughul Emperors of people of all religions and communities, of the British ruler and courtesans of Hira Mandi. She highlights political ideologies and intrigues by politicians in Pakistan and she shows the contrast in the simple lives of Quasim, Nikka and Miriam. Quasim is literate but wants Zaitoon to be educated. One day, an important looking visitor meets Nikka. His name is Chaudhary and he negotiates with Nikka for a large sum of money to kill a man. Nikka discusses the issue with Quasim and suffers from guilt pangs even at the very thought of harming someone, who has done him no harm. Quasim feels that for five thousand rupees he should not think twice about it and offers to help him. It takes quite some times for Nikka to identify his victim. Quasim in the mean while, visited Hira Mandi to ease his tension. He was applied at the way the crude man tried to harass the dancing girl. He went into another building and learnt that the common were there but the guard did not let him go upstairs. He learnt that masters were drinking. He was scandalized that the Muslims were drinking. He went home and informed Nikka, who told him he would manage the killing in his own way and the deeds were done by him without batting an eyelid.

Review of literature

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.

Methodology

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.

Discussion analysis

Sidhwa was moved by all this and this realization inspired her to an activist and fight for the cause of women's right. But she was caught up in the upbringing of her kids and family affairs. She wrote secretly but she chose English for global exposure, though she was well versed in four languages. Sidhwa was one of the first authors to publish a novel in English in Pakistan. She published *The Bride in Pakistan*. Her novel was critically acclaimed and she wrote in an eloquent and forceful manner. Her style is unique and has portrayed human warmth in the midst of savagely horrible circumstances. Sidhwa was bestowed with the Pakistan National Honour of the Patras Bokhri award for *The Bride* in 1985. She travelled frequently to Pakistan as a women's right activist. She helped women to be aware of their rights and also laid stress in organizing public protest. Since she is an acclaimed writer, she made public statements in the Pakistani media aimed against the repression meted out to women and minority communities. Sidhwa has worked as voluntary secretary in the destitute women and children's home for a year and was member of the advisory committee to Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto on Women's Development.

Sidhwa has added a new dimension to the Quasim's character. A man's inherent wish to make his dreams come true even at the cost of his child's happiness. She has gone into great detail in her novel. Though Quasim and Nikka have been inseparable, at this point of time the differences crop up, Miriam tries to dissuade Zaitoon from marrying the tribal. She even tells her she would get her married to a Punjabi. She tells her to tell Quasim that she would not marry the tribal man and even to help her but Zaitoon is romantic and want to go to the land of her forefather. Miriam gave her a gold necklace, bangles and a red wedding outfit. Both clung to each other and cried. Before she boarded the train, Nikka blessed the girl and said, "God be with you, child, he said tenderly. Remember you are our child as well. If you're not happy, come straight back to us. God be with you". As they drove up to the mountain in the truck, Quasim told his daughter that life was different in the hills. But Zaitoon is in a shock.

Sidhwa has highlighted the effect of partition in *The Bride*. People had to relocate by crossing over from one continent to the other. Sidhwa has poignantly portrayed the misery caused by the holocaust of partition. She has laid bare the traditions of the people of Kohistan and shown how in spite of global changes, the kohisani's have remained in the same position they were since the beginning. A bridge has been built to connect to Kohistan in spite of outsider's entry; the Kohistanis' have not changed their identities or way of life. The army guards the bridge. Instead of being a cohesive factor, the bridge is a symbol of division. The Kohistanis and the army has their hostilities. Carol an American marries Farukh and meets Major Mushtaq in an army camp while vacationing.

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 transection 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 Sakhi, 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 Qaism 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.

Sidhwa in the bride tackles the conflict between a character's location and identity. Women are required to follow the rules that keep on changing to suit men's needs. Men controls their women whether they are husbands or fathers and Quasim controls Zaitoon feels that she is from hills and dream about going there sometime. She is romantic and fantasises about the hill which Quasim has, time and again, told her about. Zaitoon joined other women in preparation for weddings that carried on for months. In the zenana, ceremonies were performed. Women cut and sewed clothes for the bride to be. Various perfumes were tried out for the actual one to be used on the final day. Music was very important and dholakas were beaten on either ends while ribald song were sung by the women and girls. Zaitoon was a part of the crowd who sang. Once their mood was lifted the girls danced and Zaitoon danced at the requests of others. Everyone applauded and appreciated her attempts at entertaining with gay abandon. Zaitoon was energetic and music was in her blood. Once the marriage was over the women, who were too tried to dress in their sunday best, wore burquas on top of them home wear. Quasim did not like Zaitoon wearing a burka and told her not to wear one under any circumstances. So she wore a shawl while visiting her friend. She liked to try on Miriam's burka for effect and would walk past Quasim. Just for the fun of it though Zaitoon had many riend. She was somewhat aloof at times since she always felt she was unlike them. Quasim had coloured her dreams about the hills and always felt she belonged there inher nativelyland. She considered the hills as her actual home and would question her father often and ask him when he would take her there. Zaitoon danced and sang at her best friend nusrat's weeding. She made beautiful hennaed designs on Nusrat's feet and was actively involved in dressing her up for the wedding. Zaitoon was caring and understanding. She was a true friend, Zaitoon came to the

stark realization that her friend was leaving for her husband's home and she was unhappy to lose the companionship of such a good friend. She cried and was miserable the whole night. She was sixteen and so tender and full of love and she could bear the separation at all.

Conclusion

The Bridge portrays a marginalized ethnic group of Pakistan. Sidhwa has gone into great details about the alienation of the protagonist, Zaitoon during the partition and after it. She has been adopted by Quasim and has been brought up by his friend, Nikka Pehhwan and his wife, Miriam. She is a pampered child and a very vivacious one at that. She is full of life and takes part in weddings and gatherings in the neighborhood with great gusto. Woman as per Sidhwa are mere bargaining commodities and Quasim has been shown to wed Afshan, a girl much older to him. He was only ten and Afshan suffered alienation at the marital front be causes her little husband was too young to delve into the intricacies of martial bliss. She had been bartered by her father in lieu of a debt he owned to Quasim's father. She is forcibly separated from her family and dislocated from her family and thrust into an absolutely new environment. Which is supposed to be her new home and has no choice what so ever but to like it or hump it. She has to change her role as a wife and is more a maternal figure to her husband.

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