

## The Pakistani Bride: Pain of A Woman

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Krishna Says in the Chapter 10 stanza 34 of the Srimad Bhagwat Geeta 'I am in the women as Kirtih Srir Vak Ca narinam smriti megha dhrtih k shama (Srimad Bhagwat Geeta Ch.10 Stanza 34). The lines reveal the strength of the woman in the same way as chaturvedi Badrinath opines " Like a river, woman is the flow of life, and the flow is feminine" (1)

The truth of a particular woman in a particular situation is not actually what it conveys rather it becomes the spontaneous flow which explores the great reality of woman's life. Bapsi Sidhwa's 'The Pakistani Bride' explores the same fact. This novel is based on an actual incident of a Pakistani girl. Bapsi Sidhwa and her husband Noshir had been invited to a remote army camp in the Karakoram Mountains. There she came to know that a young Punjabi girl had run away from her tribal husband. But on finding her, her husband killed her on the spot as he could not bear the incident of losing his honor. This story inspired Bapsi Sidhwa to narrate the whole

incident through her artistic and practical approach.

Woman subjugation affects the lives of millions of woman worldwide. It involves so many cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of woman to participate fully in society with her fundamental human rights. Though in reality the girl who inspired Bapsi Sidhwa to write such a great novel was murdered but in her book Bapsi allows her heroine to run to fight and to survive.

The novel is a story of the kohistani community as well as the Pakistani society. In kohistani tribal world, a woman is treated as a commodity. For them, the suffocating manhood is more important than the pious feelings of a woman. Woman have no place in decision making and process of her family. This novel is mainly a story of two brides zaitoon and carol. But in this paper I want to focus only on the life of zaitoon and a short account of another bride Afshan.

Afshan is such a character who is introduced by the novelist to reconcile herself with the

fact that the binding force between a man and a woman is not pure love, but the satisfaction of lust. In the words of Kamala Das:

“ Nothing More alive than  
the Skin’s Lazy Hungers  
Who can help us  
Who have lived so long and have failed in  
love.....(Kamala Das)”

Afshan is given in marriage in order to repay the loan her father took from the boy’s father Arbab. Qasim is a boy of ten and Afshan is just fifteen. Afshan’s father Resham Khan repays the loan in terms of his daughter Afshan. This is the way of transaction, transaction of bodies. Even when Afshan is asked about her consent to marriage, she remains quiet. Bapsi writes:

“.....Her head bowed beneath a voluminous red veil, she wept softly as be fitted a bride.

Thrice she was asked, if she would accept Qasim as her husband and thrice an old aunt murmured ‘yes’ on her behalf (8)”.

This transaction explores the position of a woman as nothing more than a bargaining of

commodity. She is accepted by the boy’s family because

“ 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)

In the story when we come to know that Qasim’s father himself wants to marry the girl, we realize the depth of injustice towards woman, in such a society. She is forcibly sent to a new environment, which she has to call the ‘home’.

On his wedding night, Qasim is shocked to see his mature looking bride and he leaves the room. But Afshan lifts him to her bed. She tries to overcome the deal of transaction. The feminine sensibility is revealed here in terms of her diverse roles as a wife, daughter, sister and mother. Husband and wife have equal rights and duties but man has a tendency to manipulate for his good will or benefit so as to overpower and subjugate woman.

On the other side, zaitoon is another character who reveals the sensitivity to the

subject that Bapsi Sidhwa has chosen to write on.

There is an overhanging sense of defeat and frustration expressed through the moving accounts of the protagonist of *The Pakistani Bride*. Zaitoon lost her parents at the time of pertition. Qasim adopts her as his own child. He gives her all the facilities, he can. An orphan child, Zaitoon turns into a cultured girl. Qasim promised Misri Khan his cousin to give zaitoon in marriage to his son sakhi. Through this marriage, writer wants to depict the basic difference between the tribal prople and the people living in Lahore on plains.

Zaitoon is sent to school. But when she becomes pubescent, she is stopped. Bapsi Sidhwa has portrated the reality of a woman's life. How she is in chains at every step of her life. She, who gives birth to the society is restricted and tortured by the same one.

If a girl becomes pubescent, she losses all her rights to cross the boundary wall of her house. As she turns into a woman and a woman gets only restrictions. In the words of H.M.Parshley,

“All agree in recognizing the fact that female exit in the human species today as always they make up about one half of humanity and we are told that feminity is in danger; we are exhorted, to be women, remain women and become women....”

Woman is an essential unit of society. But she can never attain other than the image given to her that she is a thing to be decorated in her own house. Bapsi Sidhwa narrates how discrimination against women is practiced inside their own houses. Qasim arranges the marriage of Zaitoon to the tribal man, Sakhi, a savage and brutish man. As Bapsi writes “They are sevages, Brutish, uncouth and ignorant/ most of them are bandits; they don't know how to treat woman” (*The Pakistani Bride* 93-94)

But woman isnot supposed to play any role in decision making, zaitoon goes to the hilly region. She was not aware that she has come there to stake her own life. Qasim says- “ In a country where lightness of complexion was a mark of beauty, her own deep brown skin dismayed her.....”

Sometimes, too much possession of parents results in the suffocating development of child's personality. Kamala Das has written

about such a possessive role of parents in ‘My-Story’.

“....considered us mere puppets, moving our limbs according to the tugs they gave us. They didn’t stop for a moment to think that we had personalities that were developing independently (34).”

In the same way Qasim spoils the life of his daughter through the bond of marriage. We can also say that she has no voice of her own. But in the end of the novel, her triumph of mind becomes her voice and she gets success to overcome her struggle.

After marriage zaitoon realizes the brutal behavior of her husband. He doesn’t treat zaitoon in normal way. Even zaitoon’s waving at the army people resulted in to a lot of problems. Her husband after marriage becomes furious and a wild animal by recalling the same scene of waving hands by zaitoon.

“You whore.....You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs...” Gripping her with one hand he waved the other in a lewd caricature of the gue’s brief gesture ‘waving at that shit eating swine. You wanted him to stop and fuck you, didn,t you! (185)”.

These lines show that zaitoon was enjoying a living death. The indifferent attitude of her husband becomes the cause of fiercely feminine sensibility in zaitoon. Zaitoon’s lack of knowledge about her sexuality is clearly appreciated by her husband as he considered it a sign of virgin bride and a characteristic of a modest woman. The identity of zaitoon is crushed by her own father by marrying her with a brute. A kohistani always keeps his words. And Qasim is doing the same. His word is more important than the girl’s feelings & life. Qasim attitude shows the indifferent attitude of men towards women. According to Simone de Beauvoir,

“ A woman is free and autonomous being. Like all creatures finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other”

It is a hard fact that there is a give and take relationship between a man and a woman. Both have their own relevance or existence in the society. We can’t ignore one on the basis of other.

The bride to be of the Hiliman means a difficult and insecure condition. Even before the marriage Sakhi is jealous of Ashiq who

helps Zaitoon to scramble down the cliff. She enters in her life of wilderness. Zaitoon's life becomes a struggle of a woman against man and nature.

“Her mind revolt at the certainty that to share their lives she would have to become like them “ (The Pakistani Bride)

For Sakhi, his honour is more important than the life of a human being. A husband himself becomes a hurdle for a wife. She urges her father to take her back. “I will die rather than live here” (157)

Zaitoon is a symbol of struggle against oppression in order to survive she is a sign of spiritual strength who knows to live with hurdles and fights to overcome. Bapsi Sidhwa's woman character relish the triumph of mind. The novel celebrates the strength of the spirit of a woman.

The incident of Sakhi hitting the animal even beating his own mother in all such incidents. It is a man against a woman, not a mother or a child. The tribal men kill their women for dishonor caused to them but do not hesitate to rape a woman whenever they get a chance. A woman is not treated as an individual in the Kohistani tribal area. Even to rape a girl is not considered a sin by them.

Shashi Deshpande says:- Rape is for me the grossest violation of trust between people. Whether it is someone in the family or your husband or any other man who commits a rape, it destroys the trust between men and woman. It is also the greater violence because it is not only the woman's body but it is her mind and feeling of her right to have a control on her body which is gone (qtd. In Pallavi 126-127).

Here the same situation is faced by Zaitoon. As it is not only her body but her mind, feelings, her emotions, everything is lost. Even in her desperation she urges her father to take her back with him for she feels that “I will die rather than live here” her body tape records the contents of her daily experiences. A husband is always considered as having a lust for sex but a wife always desires for love, only true love.

Bapsi seems to be observed with the fact that the women are merely playthings in the unfilling hands of the male. A woman comes to her husband not only to satisfy his 'monstrous ego' but to demand love & deep understanding from his side. And this quest for emotional rapport and meaningless relationship always become a burden for a woman.



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## Reference

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