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Representation of Gendered Female Body in Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*

Abstract

This paper critically examines Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* (1990) to discuss the patriarchal culture in Pakistan. My study reveals the use of legislation, culture and religion as powerful tools to establish the patriarchal control over the bodies and the lives of South Asian women. By applying the methodology of close textual analysis, I discuss gender ideology as a social construct in the socio-political context of Pakistan. In the backdrop of Zia-ul-Haq's military regime (1977-88), its policies and legislation in Pakistan, my study reflects on *The Pakistani Bride* through the concepts of 'Gender Trouble' (Sinha, 2003), 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' (Kandiyoti, 1988), and 'Gender and Power' (Connell, 1987). My research focuses on the socio-religious positioning of Pakistani women to discuss how the mapping and positioning of women bodies reflect the idea of nation-building by exploring the violent and subtle ways in which patriarchal culture and legislation during Zia's regime impact Pakistani women and marginalize their positing in society.

Key words: hegemonic control, military regime, patriarchy, socio-political context, women bodies

1. Introduction

Women of different times and spaces are destined to live within a set of patriarchal values. These patriarchal norms powerfully transcend time, space and culture. South Asian women have a long history of exploitation, discrimination and hindrances in their progress, mostly because of patriarchal norms. There is a system of "social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990, p. 20). These women most of the times remain absent as an individual from the discourses such as literal, cultural and artistic; as well as from the major socio-cultural narratives. These women have been silenced; their identities are constructed through others, predominantly by men, in the popular imagination. For instance, South Asian literature written by male authors does not provide an insider's view of these women's bodies, experiences, and their subjectivities. Such a normative and rigid view has been challenged by the more intimate perspective of female writers focusing more on the life experiences lived by women. In this regard, Sara Suleri writes in *Meatless Days*:

... some vestigial remoteness obliges me to explain that my reference is to a place where a concept of woman was not really a part of an available vocabulary: we were too busy for that, just living, and conducting precise negotiations with what it meant to be a sister or a child or a wife or a mother or a servant. . . . We naturally thought ourselves as women, but only in some perfunctory biological way that we happened on perchance. Or else it was a hugely practical joke, we thought, hidden somewhere among our clothes. . . . Against all my own odds I know what I must say . . . there are no women in the third world. (Suleri, 1989, p.1)

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Culture is a set of shared human values, religious beliefs, customs, norms, knowledge and experiences, that bind together members of a particular community. As culture moulds the actions, behaviour and attitude of society, Pakistan, a developing country of the Third World and a former colony to the British, is known for its Islamic culture, as the Islamic Republic for its majority Muslim population. This set of identities makes the identity of Pakistani women even more complex. They are stereotyped as the victim of patriarchy and religious fundamentalism. It is not surprising then that the Pakistani Muslim women are most popularly represented as individuals who are victims of oppression and powerlessness, burdened by both religion and patriarchy (Ahmad, 2010).

Women in Pakistan are not considered a monolithic category, they are grouped according to their status, religion, education, ethnicity, caste, geography, and language. This constructs a persona that is "subordinate, powerful, marginal, central or otherwise, vis-à-vis particular social and power networks" (Mohanty, 1988). Pakistani society is a blend of urban, tribal, feudal and modern cultures; that is why Pakistani women may find themselves in a tribal, feudal or urban environment. These may be qualified and independent urban women or submissive peasants toiling alongside their menfolk in a tribal or feudal society; they may be authoritative or submissive. Ironically this marginality connects Pakistani women together despite their differences of class, ethnicity, caste, religion, educational background, geography or language. Marginalization becomes the common ground of connection among the vast population of women in Pakistan.

Hence the Pakistani woman is a diverse personality who cannot be sufficiently described through a single stereotypical image. Pakistani women are grouped in clusters of similarity in a disparate reality. (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1989) Things become more complicated when these women's bodies are symbolized as cultural capital and are used to forfeit the fights between the modernists and the fundamentalists, religion and state, nationalist and western, progressive and traditionalist, and even in-state/religious and feminist forces.

1.1 *The Pakistani Bride*

I have considered Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* for my research because it deals with Pakistani women and their identities, representing three central female characters from different backgrounds. The novel also exposes patriarchal culture and religion in Pakistan as tools to establish the male hegemony to control women. Ross (1996) suggests that this novel exposes the patriarchy and traditional values related to male-female relationships. He writes that *The Pakistani Bride* is about a patriarchal culture where women have little control over their fates, and by tradition, their life decisions are taken by the male members of their families. The novel episodically narrates the story of three brides – Afshan, Zaitoon and Carol. Of these three, Zaitoon's story is based on a real-life incident; her report depicts Zaitoon's struggle to survive in her tribe. Zaitoon's fight for her rights and her eventual escape from the savage tribal society of Kohistan is the core of this narrative. Qasim brings her up in Lahore. He arranges her marriage on his own will, and this is the first identity crisis that occurs to her as her future husband is a tribesman. The difference between the urban and tribal life gives Zaitoon a shock. Hence this marriage is doomed to fail right from the beginning.

The story of the novel comprises of the three worlds. The first contains the portrait of the tribal society in Kohistan. Qasim, a ten-year-old boy, is introduced as the central character, the one who is given a 'heavy muzzle-loaded' gun as a toy by his father (Sidhwa, 1990). The gun becomes the symbol of manhood for him. His father has arranged his marriage, which is child marriage. A tribesmate has failed to repay a debt and therefore has bargained his daughter instead. He is delighted with the weapon, more than the thought of marriage. It shows that society imposes and regulates gender roles by assigning men the superior position. Qasim's bride is also shocked to see that she is married to a child. The second section begins with Qasim's search for work in the Punjab plains, where he is caught up in the madness of partition. Amongst all the chaos, he rescues a young girl whose parents are murdered. He names her Zaitoon after his dead daughter. She is welcomed by the entire neighbourhood. Her happiness, however, comes to a halt when she is told that she is promised marriage to the son of Qasim's cousin. Qasim leaves her in her new, inhospitable home, although she weeps and begs to be taken away, only to be told, "I've given my word . . . On it depends, my honour. It is dearer to me than life. (Sidhwa, 1990)

The third section is Carol's world, the character of an American woman who has married a Pakistani army man. She is an outsider, and her perspective of Pakistani society is provided when she comes with her husband to Pakistan to visit the Karakoram Mountains. Her view of this place and of the military personnel she encounters there

is indeed romantic— but she too learns the place a woman has in such a society: craved sexually but in every other way despised and regarded as an inferior being. At last, she decides to go back as she refuses to suffer for the rest of her life.

1.2. Research Objectives

The objectives of my research are:

- 1) To study how the positioning or mapping of women bodies in Pakistani society correlates to the nation-state ideology
- 2) To explore how the mapping of women bodies in the Pakistani state has undergone a shift during Zia's martial law
- 3) To examine how Sidhwa represents the objectification of Pakistani women during Zia's regime

1.3. Research Questions

The research questions of my study are as follows:

- 1) How does the nation-state ideology and state-legislation affect the position of women in the Pakistani society?
- 2) How far do Zia's legislative measures frame the oppression against women in Pakistan?
- 3) How does the political order (en)gender the women's bodies, and how is it represented in Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*?

1.4. Problem Statement

My paper exposes the patriarchy's use of legislative, cultural and religious tools to exercise its control over women bodies and their lives in Pakistan. Hence my focus is on the mapping and positioning of women bodies through legislation during Zia-ul-Haq's regime. Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* serves as my primary source for data analysis as it brings forth the treatment of women characters in the patriarchal Pakistani society.

1.5. Research Methodology

My study is qualitative research, and by using the technique of close textual analysis, my study reflects on *The Pakistani Bride* through the concepts of 'Gender Trouble' (2003) by Marilini Sinha, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' (1988) by Kandiyoti, and 'Gender and Power' (1987) by R.W. Connell. I have mainly chosen the three female characters, Afshan, Zaitoon and Carol, to explore their lives under the patriarchal rule and study what decisions they take to live their lives.

To study these characters and their lives in Pakistani society, I have adopted the theoretical framework by taking the aspects related to patriarchal and gender-based issues of the society from the studies of Sinha, Connell and Kandiyoti. My analysis focuses on women subjugation in the patriarchal society, gender oppression against women, and their codification.

2. Literature Review

A woman in Pakistani culture and society is defined concerning man and nation, says M. A. Qadir (2006) in his book *Pakistan: Social and Cultural Transformations in a Muslim Nation*. A Pakistani woman is never regarded as an autonomous being and has always been assigned a relative or a marginalized position. Along with the religious codes and values, Pakistan has inherited the established societal norms and gender roles from South Asian culture. These norms make men the family heads and decision-makers and protectors of their women's lives, whereas women like obedient subjects (ADB, 19; Amnesty International Report 2016/17, 86; Alam, p. 127). Though the status of women in Pakistan varies in terms of class, region, and religion, cultural and traditional values; but generally, a woman is taken as a burden right from her birth by her family and is considered a possession or commodity. Her assets are not her values or character but her reproduction and objectification. She has no identity as an individual other than being a mother, daughter, sister or wife. Even the space for women in the family and outside is restricted. (Lari, 2011)

Beyond forty years, South Asia has been the centre of dynamic, essential feminist scholarship and activism. Prominent feminist scholars and activists construct their work to confront important new challenges for feminist

theorizing and practice in South Asia. These feminists respond to religious fundamentalism and secularism, militarization and state repression. Their essays demonstrate the diversity and specificity of South Asian locations and feminist concerns while representing how feminist engagements in the region can develop and move ahead of feminist theorizing globally. (Shildrik & Price, 2017)

A Scoping Study on 'Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan conducted by Aurat Foundation states that South Asia is home to around a fifth of the world population. All South Asian cultures are patriarchal, where the birth of a son in the family is given more importance than a daughter. Such preferences and discrimination throughout their lives provide a solid basis for gender-based violence, which has become a universal reality of the South Asian region regardless of income, class, and culture (Parveen, 2011).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra T. Mohanty, the South Asian feminists, have discussed the issue of third world women and the indigenous patriarchal forms. According to Spivak, the women's bodies have made considerable theoretical appearances, but mostly like a surface which is pushed and pulled in order to win the ideological wars; "between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappear, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling that is the displaced figuration of the 'third world women', caught between tradition and modernization, culturalism and development" (Spivak, 2003).

The Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics (2004) provide an argument about Islam, culture and women. The encyclopedia includes regions with many Muslims like Pakistan, India, Turkey, the Arab States etc. This article discusses the discrimination between men and women based on societal norms. It brings Modesty as the sole concept while stating that even the idea of '*sharm o haya*' (Modesty) was never there for women only. But slowly and gradually, it came to be associated with the women only. The shaping forces of this 'modesty' are both culture and religion.

Similarly, Jawad Sayed and Faiza Ali (2005), in "A Historical Perspective of Islamic Concept of Modesty and Its Implications for Pakistani Women at Work", discuss a similar idea of discrimination between men and women. The concept of modesty and shame like *Chador and Chaardivari* (Veil and the Four Walls) is studied in contemporary Pakistan. It is considered that women are subordinate to men and men are the bodyguards of their honour.

Sen (1987), an Indian economist and philosopher, in his book *Gender and the Cooperative Conflicts* talks about women empowerment and writes that women are as important as men. He has used gender as a parameter of economic analysis. What is intriguing in his work is the concept that women mostly are unaware of their rights and are willingly being exploited (as is sometimes the case in Pakistani society). Therefore, they seldom resist. In communities like Pakistan, women are expected not to have any self-interest, and their contributions are not valued. Women, therefore, get less because they are considered as naturally worthy of less.

Sen's ideas are further elaborated in *Gender, Nation, State in Pakistan: Shifting Body politics* by Rouse. In her book, Rouse (2006) discusses the state policies of different Pakistani governments in terms of religion, modernization, and militarization; and the effects of these policies on the nation, most notably on women. The struggle for dominance by the governments is asserted at the cost of the submission of women. Hence Ayub Khan is portrayed as an agent of modernization and Zia of Islamization.

Another article, "Pakistan, Islam and Modernity" by Khalid. and Anjum (2010), points out the relationship between state and religion in Pakistan. State, modernity, and religion are considered important factors by the authors in moulding Pakistani society. The article states that the changes of regimes in Pakistan and their legislative measures for Islam and women affected the gender ideology in Pakistan. The article closely looks at the martial law regimes of Ayub Khan and Musharraf as modern and secular, whereas that of Zia as conservative. My research also shows that religion has always been very assertive in determining the ideology of the nation-state in Pakistan.

In *The Struggle for Pakistan, A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*, Jalal (2014) has also stated similar facts while narrating the political history of Pakistan. She also maintains that Zia's regime has politically Islamized Pakistan for his purpose while Musharraf tried to free Pakistan from that prevailing gender discrimination. Mumtaz (1987) in *Pakistani Women: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back* takes up the same topic with almost similar thoughts. She also talks about the wake of feminism in Pakistan during Zia's regime.

These sources problematize the status of women or the issue of gender in Pakistan. Still, none has looked at the legislative measures taken for women by the then government and their effects on Pakistani women's lives. My study further problematizes the gender issue by discussing that Zia's legislation also aided the subjugation of

Pakistani women in society. Therefore, to understand these effects, I have discussed the legislative measures taken by Zia ul Haq's regime in the following few paragraphs.

Zia's regime spread over almost ten years. He contended that Islam was the only reason for the creation of Pakistan, so the country needed a swift transformation into Islamic ideology. He formulated the laws and policies for Islamization and its implementation. Through the 'Nizam-i-Mustafa', Zia successfully transformed the Pakistani state and society in fundamental ways. During Zia's regime, some standards and norms were set to behave as pious Muslim males and females. Toor (2011), Jalal (2014), Haqqani (2005), Khan and Saigol (2004) and many other historians think that Zia used Islam to legitimize his Islamisation and his authoritarian Islamic regime. His legislative bodies constituted laws like Hudood Ordinances Laws, Law of Evidence (1984) and Zina Ordinance (1979). "Chaadar and Chaardivari" (the veil and the four walls of home) became the famous official discourse. Islam was used to justifying various government directives on women's dress, separate women universities, ban women's participation in spectator's sports etc. All these rules made women symbols and bearers of the concept of Islamic Nation. It became a general understanding that the state is projected through its women. In Amina Yaqin's opinion, Zia-ul-Haq's military regime is thought to be the 'lowest period in the history of women's rights in Pakistan' (Yaqin, 2001). On the other hand, Jalal (2004) thinks that though women suffered the brunt of Zia's Islamization, they emerged as more "assertive force than at any other time in Pakistani history".

The Islamization propagated and strengthened long-established social and cultural values and sent a larger message that the abstract terms like shame and honour are related to women of our society and subjugated. Men are justified to treat them the way they want to. In her book, *A Pilot Study on: 'Honour Killings' in Pakistan and Compliance of Law*, Lari (2011) writes that the impunity given to society is the treatment of women. It had long-lasting effects on people's psyche in different forms, such as violence against women.

Mumtaz and Shaheed (1987) write that it was not until the last few decades that Pakistani women even conceived of their struggle against a patriarchal system. These women had played a part in demanding greater rights and concessions from within the existing system, believing that achieving their rights was a natural evolutionary process. The implementation of Zia's legislation regarding Islamization of the Pakistani society made women alert across Pakistan. They became conscious of their rights and freedom taken away from them in the name of Islam.

So, Zia ul Haq's martial law regime reflected a particular set of ideologies. The state ideology was envisioned on women of the country, which affected women's bodies, social roles, and social mobility through the legislation. The Pakistani women were positioned and mapped on to the nation's honour by men ruling these legislative bodies. This ideology was further inculcated into the familial structure of the country, and women were also considered carriers of their family honour.

3. Textual Analysis of *The Pakistani Bride*

Human society and culture have always been dominated by the concepts of patriarchy that establish the male dominance over females. Beauvoir, a French philosopher and essayist, writes, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (*The Second Sex*, 1949 p.320), summed up an argument that impelled several questions, simple and complex, into the minds of thinking and rational individuals of the society. Writers of the twentieth century like Adrienne Rich, Woolf, Plath, Sidhwa, Uzma Aslam Khan, Shamsie, Bina Shah, etc. have urgently needed to represent their efforts to resist patriarchal culture and norms through their writings. Their entire endeavors focused on the projecting the image of women as 'rational, thinking and speaking individuals' who can express their misery in her own words.

Bapsi Sidhwa, in her novel *The Pakistani Bride*, has interwoven the life of women in the Muslim community that moves episodically with the story of all three brides, Afshan, Zaitoon and Carol. Their stories highlight the situation and treatment of women in Pakistani society and represent the subjugation and oppression of Pakistani women. Sidhwa shows how the tribal society considers women as valuable commodities to be bartered or traded. They are considered a territory to be conquered, and their males are shaped as abusive of power, dominance, and sabotage of women's rights (Connell, 2005). Afshan, Qasim's would-be wife, is fifteen, five years older than Qasim. But she has to accept him. Qasim's father was being generous when he decided to give the girl to his son. He had first thought of marrying the girl himself but later decided to give her hand to his son.

Pakistani women, especially the tribal women, are bound to accept husbands of their family's choice. Under classic patriarchy, girls are given away in marriage at a very young age into households headed by their husband's

father. They are subordinate to all the men and the more senior women, especially their mother-in-law (Kandiyoti, 1987). Bapsi Sidhwa emphasizes the ghastly image of a woman in different parts of the novel. Neither the age nor the amount of debt counted as the compensation was too reasonable to neglect. The wish of the girl was not asked either. The wedding ceremony is arranged, where Afshan is asked whether she accepts Qasim as her husband, and each time an aunt replies positively on the girl's behalf: "Thrice she is asked if she would accept Qasim, the son of Arbab, as her husband and thrice an old aunt murmured 'yes' on her behalf." (Sidhwa, 1990, p. 8) This episode exhibits how women are subject to forced marriages. They are treated merely as commodities. It shows how women have less rather no right to speak against the societal role allotted to them. Despite this restriction, Afshan's silence suggests her resistance to conform to this belief; she accepts it repressing her anger to dodge the further detrimental repercussions because "woman is the name of recurrent acceptance" (Connell, 2005, p. 183). And that affirmation is usually linked with women, "as long as I say yes, yes, I am a woman." (Derrida, 2002, p. 74)

This reveals that how women were objectified as mere substances of men's desires without having any liberty or freedom to exercise their wishes. These limitations were decided by men and justified through Islam. This is what the legislative measures of Zia's regime did to Pakistani women. The women in the novel are sold like objects or won either in the name of family honour or to settle male bullies and male scores. Being "a man, conscious of the rigorous code of honour by which his tribe lived" (Sidhwa, 1990, p. 7), Qasim's sense of honour often provoked him to outrageous actions like fighting, abusing and bullying other men in the clan, especially in case the discussion turned to their womenfolk. At the age of fourteen, he saw his wife Afshan washing at the stream. He wished to grab her and exerted physical force to overpower her. Still, when a stranger tried to intervene in the rumpus between the two, "Qasim, red with fury, cried, 'But she is my wife. Let's go, she is my wife'" (p. 11) as Mulvey writes that a woman does not have any individuality and gains attention only if she is capable to appeal to her male counterpart, and arouse in him, feelings of love or concern for her. However, the males do not have personality traits like those of women's. They are presented as strong, complete, influential, and egocentric (Mulvey, 2004).

On the one hand, this code of honour objectified women while, on the other, projected men as heroes who were justified to safeguard these weak creatures (women) through sexual force. Afshan's silence can also be taken as a silent revolt against forced marriage and the commodification of women. Later, when she first beholds her groom, she laughs loudly at her fate which signals the repression of her anger on reluctantly getting married to a boy younger than her (Sidhwa, 1990). It helps her to prepare herself to accept her fate and lead a life without any conflicts. It demonstrates the objectification of women and shows that the women are commodities used to serve men's needs and pleasure (MacKinnon, 1987). Women are represented and judged by the sexual parts or functions of their body alone while ignoring their personality and subjectivity (Bartky, 1990; Langton, 2009)

Zaitoon also suffers at the hands of her men. She is tortured on the very first day of her marriage, which continues until she flees. Two months after her marriage, her husband severely beats her up for acting against his commands and going up to the river. She is devastated and wants to return to her world, the world beyond the river, her familiar world. Sakhi treats her brutally as if she is a commodity, as Kandiyoti (1987) says that in a patriarchal society, a husband is primarily in charge of and answerable for a woman's honour. Atakav(2015) also observes that honour is characteristically supposed to be inherent in the body and sexuality of women; so the major roles of the male members or heads of the family are to protect their women's honour, to regulate their marriage and to exercise strict control on their women's sexual or love related activities. "This idea of regulating women's lives, experiences, and sexuality are common in patriarchal discourses surrounding a society". (p. 52).

Sakhi looks for even a trivial reason to beat her and tells her that as "you are my woman; I will teach you to obey me" (Sidhwa, 1990, p.117). Ahmad (2010) comments that the women in tribal society are considered territories conquered by the traditional way of the social system. According to some feminist theorists (Dworkin, 1974, 1981, 1985; Jeffreys, 2005; MacKinnon, 1987), the sexual objectification of women not only reflects the existing gender hierarchy (in which the subordinate group is at the dominant group's service) but also reinforces it by promoting the subjugation of women and derogation of their value.

The character of Sakhi constructs the role of the traditional patriarchal husband and reveals 'dominance and power in a patriarchal society'. Sidhwa mentions these men as symbols of patriarchy. Proud husbands, fathers, and brothers, they were the providers. Zealous guardians of family's honour and virtue, they sat, when in their homes, like pampered patriarchs, slightly aloof and ill at ease, withdrawing discreetly whenever the household was visited

by unrelated women (Sinha, 1987). Zaitoon reaches her threshold when Sakhi beats her for waving towards the army men. His rage was so forceful she thought he would kill her: .

You whore, he hissed... You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs... 'Gripping her with one hand he waved the other in a lewd caricature of the girl's brief gesture. Waving at that shit-eating swine, you wanted him to stop and fuck you, didn't you?' (Sidhwa, 1987, p. 185-186)

This reflects the concept of keeping the women within the home (*char Diwali*) and refers to the famous discourse of Zia's regime, "*Chaourr aur Char Diwali*" (Veil and four walls). In the long-established discourses of honour, the idea of a Pakistani woman's sexuality is sheltered from the external world where the woman is at risk. The honour and dignity of the females of the family is not only a matter of their own individual self, but includes and have an effect on the family and society. Women live under the restraint of 'Purdah'- and this indicates a division between the activities of men and women (Weiss, 2015).

However, women strategize within a set of concrete constraints, which Kandiyoti (1987) identifies as patriarchal bargains. Different forms of patriarchy present women with distinct "rules of the game" and call for different strategies to maximize security and optimize life options with varying potential for active or passive resistance in the face of oppression. Zaitoon also decides to leave this painful life behind her. She plans to run away. Referring to Zaitoon's experience, Indira Bhat observes thus:

Zaitoon's odyssey from the plains to the Snow Mountains and back to the plains is symbolic of the inner journey of the young woman from the fantasy world of love, romance and heroes, to the harsh and hostile realities of life, where man is the hunter and exploiter, cruel and inhuman treating women and animals alike. (Sidhwa, 1990)

With insufficient resources, she leaves for a difficult journey. She is not familiar with the mountains and terrains, while Sakhi sets out along with his tribesmen to find her out and murder her for the honour. She fears that she will be killed but continues the journey towards the other side of the river, where lies her free life. She is raped by two strangers on the banks. Bruised and beaten, she reaches the bridge, and her husband also comes there. She is seen by the sergeants first to her good luck, and she manages to survive and escape further. The bridge ends Zaitoon's struggle of life. She has found the bridge and plans to cross it. The bridge becomes a strong symbol within the novel, but it also shows the patterns of Sidhwa's writing. Havelly (as cited in Dhawan and Kapadia), writes in this regard that 'Life is like a risky crossing of the bridges. What waits for Zaitoon on the other side is a future which promises only loneliness, ostracism and further struggle'. (p. 134)

As Afshan suffers from emotional subjugation, having been denied her emotional and bodily desires of a newlywed bride, Zaitoon suffers from the physical domination, having been assaulted and tortured by Sakhi; Carol suffers from mental subjugation. Carol constantly suffers in the novel due to her husband's jealousy, suspicion, and abuse, Farrukh. In their foundational paper on sexual objectification, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) began by observing that women's bodies are culturally constructed: "Bodies exist within social and cultural contexts, and hence are also constructed through socio-cultural practices and discourses" (p. 174). Carol, an American, represents such practices as she marries Farrukh, who represents another patriarch. Though Carol belongs to a privileged background with a dominant race, still she suffers from her traumatic subjective experience. Her loneliness, desire for the company of an individual and her craving for love are pieces of evidence to prove her psycho-emotional grief and lack of compatibility with her husband. That is why she gets infatuated with Major Mushtaq, who reciprocates her liking and respect. Her husband is domineering and possessive, and after every party they attend, he is overwhelmed by his jealousy. "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!". (Sidhwa, 1990, p. 110). The disobedience of the long established traditional and mutual rules and mistrust, accusation or evidence of sexual immodesty by the victim can get her killed or punished by her immediate family (Ahmed, 2010). In this gendered social construction, honour appears as a male trait and shame as a female trait (Gilmore, 1982, p. 65). Carol feels torn due to these taunts and insulting attitudes (Sidhwa, 1990, p. 111). So we see that even a privileged lady could not be free of the norms of patriarchal society. It shows that no matter what ethnicity, class, religion or social stratum they belong to, women experience the pains of patriarchy.

Moreover, these three narratives also reflect that the government's decision making influences the whole society to the grassroots level. It shows Zia's regime's legislation regarding women. In Pakistan, the rules governing marriage, family, inheritance, and divorce-most of which pertain to women are thought to be in the domains of religious authorities. When the women question any of these laws, they are told that they are confronting religious

clergy and "established order" (Rouse, 2004, p. 12). Sidhwa's novel is a representation of the government's priorities. The spaces allotted to men in the novel reflect their status in society. They are given open and spacious rooms near the balconies to be in touch with the outside world. Whereas the spaces provided to women are at the corners so that the men cannot see them; "Rooms with windows open to the street were allotted to the men: the dim maze of inner rooms to the women – a domain given over to procreation, female odours and interminable care of children." (Sidhwa, 1990, p.56)

4. Conclusion

In the light of the above discussion, it is concluded that *The Pakistani Bride* (1990) by Bapsi Sidhwa traces the history of Pakistani women's subjugation and mirrors the stereotypical social norms of Pakistani society. It also establishes on the basis of the selected novel that Zia's legislation further aided the oppression against Pakistani women about women in Pakistan as they were silenced and marginalized at the familial, local as well as national level. The female characters of the novel represent the suppression of Pakistani women and their marginal position in society and also demonstrate the autonomy and resilience with which women constantly resist and rebel against the persistent patriarchal norms.

The novel expressively portrays the guarded status of women in a world subjugated by men where women are not individuals but possessions, no more than a piece of land and sometimes an animal to trade for many social privileges. The novel illustrates that Pakistani society is sexually repressed as women observe Purdah to save herself from the gaze of men. A woman's compliance, acquiescence, and passivity is considered the pride of her lord, and her smallest act of disobedience is treated as an attack on his inveterate honour. Women in Pakistan, as the novel, have no voice in personal or professional, private or public, domestic or societal, regional or national matters. Sidhwa has told the story of brave and strong women in Pakistan who dare to defy their destiny and challenge the oppressive social norms.

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