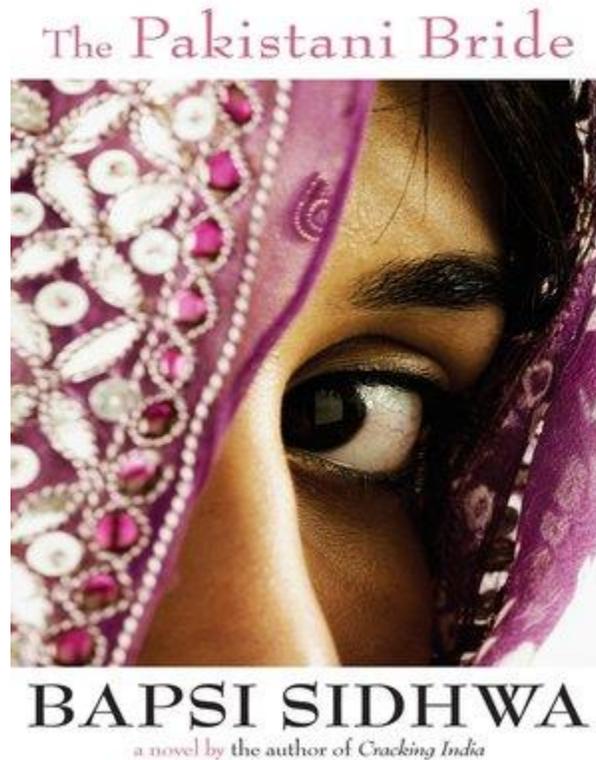


**Phallogentric Ideologies in Bapsi Sidhwa's  
*The Pakistani Bride and Water***

**K. Siva Nandhini**

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Courtesy: <https://www.overdrive.com/media/1274115/the-pakistani-bride>

**Introduction**

Pakistani Literature is a distinct literature that gradually came to be defined after Pakistan gained nationhood status in 1947, emerging out of literary traditions of the Indian Subcontinent. The shared tradition of Urdu literature and English literature of British India were inherited by the new states, Pakistan has emerged in nearly all major Pakistani languages, including Urdu, English, Punjabi, Balochi, Pushto and Sindhi. The nature of Pakistani literature soon after

independence aroused controversy among writers due to its being centered heavily on the negative events related to the India-Pakistan partition.

Feminism, as a movement, has played a very vital role in projecting the suppressed status of women in the patriarchal society. The term 'feminism' signifies the emergence of female power in order to get rid of their excessive dependence on men. It is a worldwide movement to secure equality of women with men in enjoyment of all human rights—social, political, economic, moral, religious, educational, legal and so on. Feminism argues that woman should be left alone to live on her own strength and means to fight against the unjust system and obtain her own subsistence and thereby remove her dependent status. According to Simone de Beauvoir, a world where men and women would be equal is easy to visualize. Women reared and trained exactly like men were to work under the deplorable conditions and on lower wages.

### **Bapsi Sidhwa**

Bapsi Sidhwa is the most familiar novelist in Pakistani writing in English. She is a new and important voice in the world of commonwealth fiction. Bapsi Sidhwa cannot be easily labeled. She was born on August 11, 1938 in Karachi into an eminent family. Soon after Sidhwa was born, her family moved to Lahore, however, there were few parsees and the Bhandara family was cut off from mainstream parsee life. This multi-lingual, multi-cultural background is pivotal to Sidhwa's work. In 1978, at time when publishing in English was practically non-existent in Pakistani, Sidhwa self-published her novel *The Crow Eaters*. Since then, *The Crow Eaters* has been published and translated in numerous European Asian Countries while *The Pakistani Bride* (1982) was the first novel Sidhwa wrote, it was the second to be published *Crackling India* another name *Ice-Candy Man*. Sidhwa's third novel received the recipient of Literature Prize in Germany and was nominated by the American Library Association as a Notable Book the same year. *An American Brat* was published in 1993 and *Water*, Sidhwa's latest book was published in 2006.

### **Child Marriage**

Child marriage is defined by global organizations as a formal marriage or informal union entered into by an individual before reaching the age of 18. The legally prescribed marriageable

age in some jurisdictions is below 18 years, especially in the case of girls, and even when the age is set at 18 years, many jurisdictions permit earlier marriage with parental consent or in special circumstances, such as teenage pregnancy. In certain countries, even when the legal marriage age is 18, cultural traditions take priority over legislative law. Child marriage affects both boys and girls though the overwhelming majority of those affected are girls, most of whom are in poor social-economic situations.

Women writings make an attempt at self-assertion, an expression of freedom and dignity of an individual. Every aspect of society and history is a patriarchal construction. Marriage, morality in terms of the definitions of respectability, kinship and citizenship, knowledge and access to learning has all been male-oriented. Women's writing is an expression that breaks through the power structure of inequality.

### ***The Pakistani Bride***

*The Pakistani Bride* mainly focuses on the three brides Afshan, Zaitoon and Carol whereas the novel *Water* mainly focuses on Chuyia and Kalyani's life. The child marriage is Afshan, at the age of fifteen, Afshan is married to a ten year old boy named Qasim. The marriage takes place forcefully because her father has not been able to repay his debts that he has taken from the boy's father, Resham Khan. Afshan is offered to compensate the loss and cover up her father's failure. Neither the ill-proportionate age gap matters nor the amount of the loan is mentioned. The amount could be ten rupee or ten thousand; however, the daughter is always there for settlement. This transaction exposes the position of a woman as nothing more than a 'Bargaining Commodity'. When Afshan saw her husband, she was quite amazed by his physical appearance.

At sixteen, Qasim becomes a father. Qasim and his family managed to survive by rearing meagre string of cattle. By the time he is thirty-four, he has lost all his six children. His wife Afshan also died of small pox.

Afshan's story encapsulates women's power of resilience. Her father has bartered her away and married her to a boy, five years younger to her but she does not lose heart. She takes

command of the situation from day one. She assists her mother-in-law in housekeeping, grooms her young husband and bears him six children. Unfortunately, neither she nor her children survive the ravages of the epidemic. Qasim travels down to Jallundar and finds him a job as watchman in the National and Grindlays Bank.

As the train is derailed the group of Sikhs before reaching its destination, the passengers almost exclusively Muslims, are massacred with deliberate cruelty. Zaitoon's mother is killed before her eyes. Soon afterwards, her father is also murdered by the attacking Sikhs. It is then that she blindly runs into Qasim and immediately starts calling him 'father'.

Faced with a terrifying situation, she understands that the best way to protect her is to assume the role of a daughter and Qasim is adopted to cover over the void which has been created as result of the loss of her parents. Thus, she is able to overcome a crushing personal tragedy, which would have been undoubtedly overwhelmed by many adults. Zaitoon real name is Munni but Qasim gives her the name of Zaitoon, because his own dead daughter's name.

### **Returning to the Old World of Kohistani Mountain-Life**

The novelist brings into focus the old world of Kohistani mountain-life to which Qasim now returns after fifteen years of his life. He is in praise of his land by saying that they are lived by their own rules and they had own destiny. They had no government clerks and police. They feel very free and breathe the fresh air.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* begins with the innocent girl, Chuyia was playing with her clay dolls. Chuyia was the daughter of Somnath and Bhagyalakshmi. Chuyia is the most winsome of her characters in the novel. She grows up along with her brothers Prasad and Mohan in a traditional Brahmin family. Her brothers go to school while she helps her mother at house. She is a poor Brahmin Priest. He wants her daughter to get married with Hira Lal who is forty four years old. Chuyia's mother expresses her concern about Hira Lal, her would be son-in-law: "I've heard Hira Lal is a grandfather." (W 13).

Somnath is satisfied that they don't want a dowry and will pay for the wedding. Bhagya is concerned about Hira Lal's age as she says: "By the time her womanhood blooms, he'll be old and spent." (W 14). But her husband has the last word and she thinks that he is right.

But Somnath, Chuyia's father, a poor Brahmin priest, dismisses his wife's concerns about Chuyia's age with this authoritative quote from the shastras:

"In the Brahmanical tradition," said Somnath, shifting into the soothing and at the same time authoritative mode he adopted when speaking to his clients, "a woman is recognized as a person only when she is one with her husband. Only then does she become a Sumangali, an auspicious woman, and a Soubhagyavati, a fortunate woman." And, as if recalling a passage from a holy book, he half-closed his lids to add, "A woman's body is a site for conflict between a demonic stri-svavahava which is her lustful aspect, and her stri-dharma, which is her womanly duty." (W14).

Chuyia's father Somnath feels somewhat happy about her marriage because Hira Lal's family doesn't want any dowry for their wedding. Bhagya is concerned about Hira Lal's age but she consoled herself by thinking about her husband's situation. The marriage ceremony takes place at a temple, where only Brahmins are allowed to enter. Chuyia looks like a doll, sitting in front of Hira Lal. He applies the red sindoor to the parting in Chuyia's hair and to her forehead. He offers her a new sari with which she covers her head, and with this act the couple is considered officially married. She gets married without even having a realization of the sanctity of the concept of marriage. According to Indian culture, the woman was not expected to have a voice of her own beyond the periphery of marriage. They also think that a woman's role in life is to get married and have children. Husband is given the authority of a ruler to control the destiny of woman.

Chuyia carefree life does not change after her marriage. She continues to play with her brothers and other village children. Chuyia continues to live in her parental home as is the custom with wedded pre-pubescent girls. Two years pass away, Chuyia has almost no memory of her wedding. One day her father, Somnath brings the news that Hira Lal is ill. After five days he

tells his wife that Hira Lal must be dying. Chuyia's mother-in-law wishes for her son to die on the banks of the Ganga so he can liberate his soul and attain moksha. And his mother also wishes that Hira Lal's wife must be at his side.

Chuyia is taken into Hira Lal's place by the bullock cart. Hira Lal also dies. Somnath doesn't know how to convey this news to his daughter. So he has started slowly by asking her if she remembers about her marriage. Not taking too much of time she says no to his father. Somnath said that she has got married two years before. Now her husband is dead. She is widow. Somnath was unable to face the innocent child. Her mother-in-law takes the mangalsutra from her neck and the beads scatter on the ground. The bangles are also smashed. The barber cuts her hair and she is asked to wear white homespun cloth. Chuyia becomes speechless.

Her father introduces her new home. She asks where her mother is. In that question, Somnath has no answer. Her fate pulls her to go to ashram. There, she must live in penitence until her death. Inside the widow-ashram, Chuyia encounters the strong and the weak, the corrupt and the honest, the victims and the victors. Still years away from a proper understanding of the ways of the world, she is told that she no longer exists as a person – all because of the sudden death of her husband she has barely even met.

### **Traumatic Experiences of a Girl**

Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* has been a heart touching novel describing the traumatic experiences of a girl named Zaitoon is now sixteen years old and her father Qasim is nearing fifty. Age has made him nostalgic. He often talks about his past life in Kohistan and his accounts are so fascinating that Zaitoon sometimes has a yearning desires to see what she considers her native land. In her imagination she can see tall, light-skinned, proud, heroic and incorruptible men living beside crystal streams of melted snow, with their bright, rosy-cheeked children and beautiful women. Once Qasim's cousin brother Misri Khan visits him and Qasim promises Zaitoon's marriage to Misri Khan's son.

Qasim arranges Zaitoon's marriage to the tribal man. It is Miriam who brings out the contrast and points out how Qasim himself has changed, "They are savages. Brutish, uncouth,

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and ignorant! Most of them are bandits; they don't know how to treat women!"(TPB 93-94) whereas Zaitoon is brought up in liberal ways of life in Lahore. She is educated and really belongs to the plains. Mirriam is even prepared to adopt her as her own daughter since she has doubts about the ways of the tribals. She tries to explain this to even Zaitoon but Zaitoon does not listen to her. As she is young, she is guided by "Visions of the glorious home of her father's forefathers and of the lover her fancies envisaged" (TPB 98). Both Nikka and Mirriam advise her to return to them the circumstances required so.

### **Journey of Zaitoon into Unknown Yet Romantic Mountains**

Thus begins the journey of Zaitoon into unknown yet romantic mountains, into the civilization completely different from the one in which she is born and brought up. The novelist brings into focus the old world of kohistani mountain-life to which Qasim now returns after fifteen years of his life, where "We are not bound hand and foot by government clerks and police. We live by our own rules- calling our own destiny! We are free as the air you breathe!" (TPB100). But he forgets that it is difficult and insecure world for his daughter, the bride to be the hill man. There is shift not only in the scenario of the novel but also tone of the novel.

### **Kalyani's Life**

In the novel *Water* Kalyani's life is like a Chuyia's life. Kalyani looks very beautiful. Her mother was died before she had first year birthday. So she is forced to marry a man who is sixty, when she was only six on that time. Her husband also dies within few years of their marriage. After her husband's death, her head is shaved but Madhumati allows her to grow her hair back because she wants to force her into prostitution. Inside the ashrama she meets Narayan, a young upper class Gandhian idealist. She admires his beauty. She speaks to Narayan through Chuyia. Chuyia becomes the secret emissary carrying little notes from Narayan and conveying Kalyani's verbal answers to them. Narayan reveals his love with Kalyani to his mother. His mother is shocked and she shoutes her son for selecting a bride as a widow.

### **Questioning Patriarchal Laws**

Narayan is a Gandhian and also a rationalist who questions the patriarchal laws and points out at the end of the story, after Kalyani's death, the injustice laid down by the law-

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makers of the ancient age that have institutionalized male dominance over women. The purity of the Kalyani-Narayan romance reaches its highest celebration when Narayan expresses his love by reciting the Sanskrit verses of Kalidasa's classic *Meghaduta* ("The Cloud Messenger"), a poem about the pain of separation between lovers, foretelling at the same time their future parting.

In the novel, their relationship serves as a powerful contrast to Kalyani's enforced prostitution, which is enjoyed by Narayan's father, a wealthy landowner (zamindar), who secretly used her for his pleasure and hypocritically calls her a whore. Narayan's love for Kalyani is far removed from his father's lust, his feelings being even nobler as motivated by the Gandhian ideals of emancipating her from widowhood by making her his wife. Like Chuyia, Kalyani has been led to prostitution unwillingly. After having fallen in love with Narayan, she finds herself no longer capable of living as a passive victim of patriarchal oppression.

The two cultures cannot meet, be they of Pakistan and America or the mountains and the plains. Sidhwa feels that the rules of the society, the old traditional male made rules, should be followed by women only. Carol's conflicts are resolved when she decides to accept her failure in her marriage to Pakistani Farukh and courageously decides to return to her own culture and land. Bapsi Sidhwa brilliantly explains the pathetic condition of child marriage through her novels *The Pakistani Bride* and *Water*.

### **Marital Disharmony**

Marital relation is one of the most frequently studied phenomena in the field of family and relationships. Continued importance is placed upon the quality of marital relationship due to its impact on individual and family wellbeing. Over the years, the quality of marital relationship has been investigated as satisfaction, adjustment, adaptation and happiness. Sometimes these terms have been used interchangeably and sometimes as complimentary elements of marital relationship quality.

Zaitoon is the protagonist of the novel *The Pakistani Bride*. After her marriage, Zaitoon transfers into tribal village where her husband lives. As she was grow up in city, she is unable to

survive in the tribal village. She faces many difficulties in her life. Zaitoon is shocked at the brutal treatment of Sakhi as well as other tribal men to their women. Zaitoon confronts a completely unfamiliar and savage surrounding. Qasim leaves Zaitoon alone with her fate. Sakhi is cruel not only to Zaitoon but to every women including his own mother. Whether the woman is a mother or wife, is destined to receive ill-treatments from men in tribal society. There is no civilization, no touch of law in the tribal society.

In the novel, *Water* Chuyia's marriage life is not a successful one. After the death of her husband, her father brings her to ashrama where all the widows stayed. There also she suffers a lot. When Chuyia's father tells her, "you are a widow now". She asks, "For how long, Baba?" (W 29). No one can expect a girl of eight years who is just not aware of marriage, to accept the widowhood. The male domination and prevailing superstitions have made woman so hardhearted that she becomes cruel towards her own sex.

The first night of Zaitoon's marriage reveals both the proprietarily lust and jealousy on one hand and sympathetic consideration for this delicate girl of sixteen in Sakhi. Sidhwa artistically and delicately describes the tragic and comic aspects of the first night of marriage. Very few women writers, whether Indian or Pakistan have endeavored to describe the initiation into sex life of the young bride in such detail.

Sakhi's sense of insecurity with this dark girl of the plains always surges up in him murderous instincts and he treats her cruelly thereby frightening her to an extent that her attempts to adjust herself to her fate appear futile to her. Sidhwa once again focuses on the enormity of Zaitoon's situations poignantly thus:

The enormity of the change she faced struck her with brutal force. In an intuitive flash-sapphire eyes and ice-blue waters merged with the terror of her dream in the cave it was an ominous presentiment. (TPB 167)

Sakhi tries to find out one or the other reason to torture and beat Zaitoon even for false reasons, he beats and kicks her until she faints and he gets exhausted. As she is brought up in the liberal ways of life in Lahore, she cannot understand Sakhi's murderous jealousy and hate.

The woman, Zaitoon as a mother or a wife, is savagely ill-treated. The incidents that Sakhi beating the animal almost to death and beating his own mother and his wife Zaitoon brings into focus the tribal manhood, and their unjust treatment against women. Man is a master even if he is a child, as Sidhwa points out at the beginning of the novel, describing Qasim the child husband of his grown-up young wife.

Women are slaves to the men of the family, and they torture her at their fancy at any time even without reason. No laws of civilized life appeal the tribal men. They may kill their women for the dishonour caused to them but do not hesitate to rape women if they get such an opportunity as is revealed by the author – an attempted rape on Qasim's wife earlier and Zaitoon being raped by the two tribal men of some other group. Women are exploited both sexually and also for household work which includes collecting fuel and fetching water from the stream.

In the novel, *Water* Chuyia's total lack of comprehension and anger at being left at the doorstep of a strange place by her own father and the screams for her mother is an image made more by Sidhwa's understated description as seen through the eyes of a bewildered child. At this time, the author attentively observes how Chuyia's father reverts helplessly to the harsh reality of sending her daughter to a widow colony, Vidhwa ashram, highlighting the fact that in rigid dominator systems, every human being is a victim of the violence and un-humanness that support them.

Inside the dominator system, the widow constitutes threat to society as she is perceived to be inauspicious and polluted, because of her association with death and sexually dangerous as she becomes desirable and uncontrolled by a male counterpart. The disfiguring of the body is enforced in order to reduce their attractiveness as women by transforming them into sexual beings by prohibiting them from wearing the symbols of marriage - vermilion mark, bangles, marriage pendant, and more deeply traumatic, having their heads shaven.

The brutal transmutation of Chuyia's body being shorn as a trademark of her civil death, and the strict severance from old ties marks the beginning of the miserable life that awaits her in the destitute widow's house:

With her white sari and bald yellow head, Chuyia was a very different child from the girl who had ridden in the bullock cart. (W 44)

ndifferent by Chuyia's tears, Madhumathi, a soulless grotesque figure whose every word is law in the ashram, tells the child:

Our Holy Books Say, 'A wife is part of her husband while he's alive.' Right? The widows nodded their heads in solemn concurrence. And when our husbands die, God help us, the wives also half die. She paused for effect and sighed dramatically. So, how can a poor half-dead woman feel any pain? she asked, not really expecting any answer. Chuyia, tears still slipping down her face, raised her head, and between sniffles, replied with a child's innocent logic, because she's half alive? (W 52)

Through the passage of time, Chuyia's defiance is tempered and she begins to accept the austere ways adopted by the other widows. The rest of the novel revolves around the lives of the widows in the ashram around the beautiful young Kalyani, the only widow whose head is shorn, around Shakuntala whose belief in the scriptures is unwavering and absolute, around Chuyia. The novelist's distressing the depiction of the social background of governing the daily life of the abandoned widows, and the fear, disregard and contempt with which the outside world views them, creates an awesome picture in the minds of the readers. They are destined to suffer till their death. The tradition-bound society forces them remain isolated, because of that they have no ray of hope and life for them.

### **Exposing Hypocrisy and Double Standards**

In Brahminical tradition, a woman is recognized as a person only when she is one with her husband. Outside of marriage, the wife has no recognized existence. So, when her husband dies, she should cease to exist. The same thinking is responsible for the cruel act of Sati which fortunately was outlawed in 1829. The same thing did not hold true for the men; men were

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allowed to remarry, keep mistresses or visit prostitutes. One Brahmin man in the book explains it:

Our holy texts say Brahmins can sleep with whomever they want, and the women they sleep with are blessed (W 74).

The novel exposes the hypocrisy and double standards of the Indian society in the 1930's, especially with unfortunate widows-ones, too. Sidhwa creates new life for all her widows to give them humanity in their stripped and primal state. In fact, happier past is the one thing that saves each widow from despair.

*The Pakistani Bride* apart from the tyranny of her husband, Zaitoon is further tormented by the sense of alienation, the variation in the lifestyle, rites and rituals. Her colourful clothes are in sharp contrast with the coarse dull coloured fabrics worn by the Kohistani women. Her garments lose their luster similar to her life. She is forced to survive on the dry maize bread dipped in water, which is the staple diet of the villagers. Used to the spicy Punjabi cuisine, she feels hungry. Her physical appearance stridently conveys her alien origin; hence she has both physical and mental barriers which prevent her from assimilating into the new culture.

Major Mustaq acts as the spokesperson of the novelist and voices her views about the problems of cultural discrepancy. When he realizes that the Punjabi girl Zaitoon is about to marry a Kohistani, he conveys his anguish about the fate of Zaitoon. The wide variation in the culture would eventually cause rift between the pair. It would have been better for Zaitoon to have accepted the proposal of the Punjabi jawan, but bound by her sense of duty to her adopted father she marries Sakhi. Major Mustaq after rescuing Zaitoon wishes that she had a peaceful life with the people who would understand her behavioural pattern and cultural traits.

Sakhi is forced to abide by the established norms of the community, in order to protect his honour he should establish justice by brutally killing his runaway bride. If he fails to accomplish the task then for a lifetime he should bear the brunt of the community. By running away from the tribe, Zaitoon has broken the established cultural norms and committed a heinous crime. The entire tribe, disregarding all the differences unites to hunt her down.

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Sidhwa contrasts Chuyia's view of the miserable life led by the widows with the public reception of and the reaction to the presence of widows around them. This contrast allows her to focus the huge gulf that exists between how religious traditions ascribe things to be and how they actually exist. When Chuyia laugh out loud at the antics of a small puppy she was washing with Kalayani, an old woman nearby glares at them forgetting the decorum of a widow.

Sidhwa has highlighted in her novel that the main purpose behind condemning widows to a life of celibacy is to control and curb their sexual apped. The widows are not allowed to eat spicy food, wear colourful clothes or adorn themselves because their active sexuality, without any male control, threatens the moral order of the society.

In both the novels, *Water* and *The Pakistani Bride*, women suffer a different situation due to their marriage relationship. In *The Pakistani Bride* Zaitoon is oppressed by the male dominated society. In the *Water* the innocent Chuyia suffers a lot in widow's ashrama due to her child marriage. Countless women across the country live by these words, suffering abuse and trauma at the hands of their husband and in – laws. Bapsi Sidhwa brilliantly portrays the bitterness of the marriage relationship in her both novels.

### **Victimization of Women**

Women victimization is one of the evils confronting women all over the world. Women being extremely vulnerable are easy targets of any form of oppression, humiliation, deprivation and discrimination. Partition literature explores the sexual trauma, sufferings and painful experiences of women during and after the Partition. This, in many ways, demonstrates the fact that inequality of sexes is neither a biological fact nor a divine mandate but a cultural construct. Bapsi Sidhwa specifically explores the abducted women's experiences. Anita Rau Badami represents an actual violation of the female body during the violence, through her writings. Baldwin on the other hand portrays women as victims of both the patriarchal society and the Partition.

The novel thematically deals with the oppression of women in context of psychological and sexual by men in the conservative tribal society. In the novel, there are three major women characters ranging from Zaitoon, Carol and Saki's mother, Hamida who represent different aspects of the problems faced by women in a patriarchal world. These are the different types of problems become symbols of traumatic life of suppressed women. The lives of women become very worse and their families are illiterate and live in tribal society.

*The Pakistani Bride* and *Water* are novels about South Asian societies characterized by a mind divided similar to the one that existed in the classical Western Cartesian philosophy. Marked by a distinct and dominant reverence of religion in everyday life, these societies exhibit a clear inclination to privilege transcendence over imminence, the spiritual world over the material, rationality over corporeality, and consequently, men over women. *The Pakistani Bride* is a story about women and marriage written against the backdrop of the relatively newly independent Islamic Republic of Pakistan. *Water*, set in the historical context of a pre-independence Indian Society, revolves around the themes of marriage and widowhood.

Both the novels are linked and dominated by images of women who are primarily conceived in terms of the corporeality and sexuality of their bodies. Sidhwa shows in *The Pakistani Bride* and *Water* that whether it is the Hindu Brahmin Patriarchal society of pre-independence Pakistan, both societies consistently objectify and essentialise a woman's body in terms of its physiological reproductive function. They use it an excuse to reductively position a woman in society in the role of a wife and mother. The characters of Zaitoon, Carol in *The Pakistani Bride* and those of Chuyia, Kalyani and Sakhuntala in *Water* illustrate that in the prevalent patriarchal cultural norms and customs of Pakistani society and the dominant socio-religious doctrines of India, a woman fails to attain the legitimacy of an independent self or an individual being like that of a man.

Sidhwa based *The Pakistani Bride* on an actual story she had heard about a Punjabi girl like Zaitoon who had entered into an arranged marriage with a Himalayan tribal man, attempted to escape, and after fourteen days of wandering in the mountains was found by her husband; he cut off her head and threw her body into the river. That Sidhwa allows her heroine to escape is

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significant. By altering the original story, Sidhwa sends the message to women that they must rebel no matter the consequences. Further, through the voice of the American bride she denies the male excuse expressed by Carol's husband that women ask for it. Carol thinks with sarcastic disgust, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, to get importunately impregnated, beaten-up, bullied and disinherited. It was an immutable law of nature.

Certainly Sidhwa's stories are always about women who dare to go beyond the limits set for them, along with her own story. They can only raise the awareness of women-and of men as well. Although the men in her novels may often be weak, unreasonable, and cruel. Sidhwa sees them caught in the webs of another so-called immutable law that needs to be reversed. They, too, must rebel against the role in which tradition has placed them. In Sidhwa's view, only when this dual rebellion takes place the story of *The Pakistani Bride* be a happy one.

Sidhwa's novel *Water* can be seen as a victimization of women to break through the constraints of patriarchal society and discover themselves as human beings. They are shown as the victims of male world and the role that a traditional society forces on them. Sidhwa's fiction has in its backdrop of the socio-political condition of 1936 India, with Gandhi's freedom movement and his making people conscious of their equality, liberation against ignorance, superstitions and backwardness. It also reveals the inner consciousness of mind and feelings of women's hearts in relation to the outer world. A deeper insight into her women characters; who live in a widow ashram, reveals them not as different characters with lives interwoven, rather as five stages of woman's life in a circle that undergoes repression of emotions and desires of various degrees.

Sidhwa has highlighted the victimization of women through two novels *The Pakistani Bride* and *Water*.

### **Summation**

In the twenty-first Century, women writers' works are considered as a powerful medium, which changes the social life of women. Their novels consist of the latest burning issues related to women as well as those issues that exist in the society. They describe the whole world of

women with simply stunning frankness. The majority of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated women.

Bapsi Sidhwa's protagonists are mainly women and they invariably win against men in their struggle for survival and honour. Zaitoon in *The Pakistani Bride* manages to save her life despite the looming threat. In the same novel, Carol, an American girl who is equally oppressed in her married life, decides to break free and returns to her own American culture. In *Water* Chuyia, too, escaped in the end of the novel. Thus Sidhwa's women are strong-willed, assertive and courageous. They resolve their crisis in their own way. The fact that her novels have been translated into several languages and published in numerous European and Asian countries shows her popularity across the world and also the adaptability of her art. Though her literary output is meagre, she holds a very special place among contemporary writers of English fiction in the subcontinent. It makes to proceed further research in her novels.

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Bapsi Sidhwa's acclaimed first novel is a robust, richly plotted story of colliding worlds straddled by a spirited girl for whom escape may not be an option. Fiction. To read this book, upload an EPUB or FB2 file to Bookmate.