



## **The Cultural Impact in Bapsi Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride**

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### **Abstract**

Literature is an expression of various facts of human life as well as a social chronicle. A work of literature is inescapably conditioned by the choice and development of its subject matter, the ways of thinking it, in corporate, its evaluations of the models of life it renders, and even - s form by the cultural, social, political and economic organization and forces of its age. Cultural impact is the result of external forces where as cultural change comes as a result of constant gentle pressure that is internally- motivated rather than externally originated. In the same way, an author's personal experience, culture and style will surely be reflected in their writings.

*Keywords: Cultural Impact, Pakistani Bride.*

## **1. Introduction**

The Pakistani writers have demonstrated a feminist approach in their works. The portrayal of women by Pakistani writers should also be seen in the context of the postcolonial feminism. Pakistani fiction may be part of postcolonial fiction, which is fiction produced mostly in the former British colonies (India, Australia, Africa and Asia have been British Colonies.) The postcolonial writers have explored themes of struggle for independence, culture, and displacement. Post-colonial fiction has portrayed the injustice, oppression, and the exploitation by the colonizers. It also portrays the lives of women who were doubly affected by the process of colonizing. The writers of postcolonial fiction have portrayed poor women as well as rich women, educated as well as uneducated women, old women as well as young women.

In the post- Independence period, women have started to write novels. They are Arun Joshi, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Kusum Ansal, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Bharathi Muketjee, Gita Mehta, Gita Hariharan, Arundhati Roy and Bapsi Sidhwa.

Bapsi Sidhwa was born to Zoroastrian parents Peshoton and Tehmina Bhandara in Karachi and later move with her family to Lahore. She was two years old when she contracted polio (which has affected her throughout her life) and she died in 1947 at the time of partition (facts which would shape the character Lenny in her novel *Ice Candy Man* as well as the background for her novel.)

She currently resides in Houston, U.S. She describes herself as a Punjabi- Parsi- Pakistani". In an online interview to her Pakistani friend, Sadia Rehman in August 2012 she said "Feroza is closest to me

and my views” about the identity issues of Pakistani Parsi immigrants to the US, their life- styles and their culture.

The novel *The Pakistani Bride* was written by Sidhwa in a weird circumstance. She said that Sidhwa heard a real- life story or a pathetic city girl who was brutally murdered by her own husband who was from a different culture. This paved way to the birth of the most read and more discussed novel in the name of *The Pakistan Bride*.

The novel begins with Qasim a young tribe leaving his village in the remote Himalayas for the plains. Caught up in the strife surrounding the creation of Pakistan, he takes an orphaned girl for his daughter and brings her to the bustling, decadent city of Lahore. Amid the pungent bazaars and crowded streets. Qasim makes his fortune and home for the two of them. As the years pass, Qasim grows nostalgic about his life in the mountains while his hopelessly romantic teenage daughter, Zaitoon, imagines Qasim’s homeland as a region of tall, kind men who roam the Himalayas like gods. Impulsively, Qasim promises his daughter in marriage to a tribesman, but Zaitoon’s fantasy soon becomes a grim reality of unquestioning obedience and unending labor. Bap Sidhwa’s acclaimed novel is a robust, richly plotted story of colliding worlds straddled by a spirited girl for whom escape may not be an option.

Without another option to consider or re- consider or the bewilderments of Zaitoon knew no bounds. Sidhwa has built up the plot with keen notion which explores the whole story in a way which looks at things through feministic perspective. It has also revealed the secretive silent sufferings of women whose hand were given in marriage to a man of different cultural background and behavior. It is not that women should not get married to a man from different culture. It is only to bring to e society’s notice that getting adapted to a different circumstance will definitely take some or its own time. The main reason for this is that culture and behaviour never remain the same.

Culture, as it has been said earlier, is not static element, it evaluates. It changes but it does not have anybody influencing specifically to change it. The reason that culture changes is not in anybody’s hand and no one is responsible for that impact in culture. As the saying goes, ‘change is the only things that never changes’ culture of a society keeps changing and transforming continuously. This might serve as a way to impact the cultural background of a society. The terms’ impact’ and ‘changes’ themselves are completely two different angles.

Something new, shining and unknown always attracts attention. There are some elements which determine the changes in a locale. The people should believe that it exists and then comes in either impact and change; but then the problem with believing something is that the society won’t be able to notice the subtle impact in their cultural aura which has been there with then for centuries together. Obviously, this has been changing continuously without much know ledge of the society.

The cultural values are differentiation between three modes of cultural impact. They are value conversion- the replacement of existing cultural values with new ones, value creation the- development of new ideas to apply to new situations and value connection the development of conceptual link between phenomenon a previously thought unconnected or connected in a different way.

Many ideas, philosophical arguments, suggestions have been produced regarding the culture. Sidhwa’s *The Pakistani Bride* also this problem of inequality has been widely discussed by the author. This situation aroused in the novel because of the sudden change m culture that was faced by the protagonist Zaitoon. Her name itself was not her original. She was called Munni by her parents. When she was taken by Qasim, he started c lling her Zaitoon which was hi daughter ‘s name and Munni, according to Qasim resembled his daughter Zaitoon. From this we can know that the story’s main character neither belonged to Qasim ‘s culture nor to where she was brought. This made the point that the protagonist was in the midst of cultural chaos.

The point of inequality, Zaitoon (Munni) was not aware of cruel treatment and hard core culture. She was welcomed by everyone in their when she was younger, that is before getting married to an

uncultured tribesman. This could be seen in the novel when Sidhwa said “Entering their dwelling was like stepping into a gigantic womb, the fecund, felid world of mothers and babies”, and the contradictory element which portrays her subjugation could be seen when Sakhi gripped hardly Zaitoon at the moment of Qasim ‘s departure. His mother also said in an angry tone “your father will visit us soon”.

This scene clearly sets the mood for a different culture and an entirely different cultural behavior.

In order to highlight the pressure of inequality, thrust upon already bewildered Zaitoon in the name of culture, Sakhi’s behavior towards her could be taken as the best illustration. Like most of the women she was also not allowed to speak or to make her point neither in front of her husband nor while he is speaking. Sakhi’s mood swings between care for Zaitoon and his own male reputation in his locale shows how cultured they are and how their culture is varied from the cultural background in which Zaitoon was born and bought up.

Sidhwa has brought in three culture backgrounds. The first section contains the portrait of the sympathetic condition of Qasim and his tribal village of Kohistan. The second consists of the story when Qasim left forth Punjabi plains in search of a job and caught up in the partition - fever. When Qasim found Munni in the midst of the riot between the migrators and revolutionaries. He named her after Zaitoon his dead daughter. She served as a tool for Sidhwa to portray the cultured society where she and Qasim led the rest of their life until he promised Zaitoon’s hand in marriage to his tribesman.

Sidhwa has brought in another perspective to the story by introducing a character named Carol, an American woman married to a Pakistani in the United States and had come to visit the Karakoram mountain region where Zaitoon was about to be married when Carol and Zaitoon met for the first time. The cultural difference could be seen when Sidhwa made the meeting of Carol and Zaitoon. Through Carol’s realization Sidhwa has talked about women’s plight when they were married to a man from different culture. Carol came to know that women were seen only as an object which produces sexual pleasure and were deprived of every other equality with men in the overall society.

Here she said “Carol could have seemed totally extraneous to the scene but her disillusionment is woven together with Zaitoon’s tragedy in a way that makes the latter explicable to the western, and westernized;” people. In the final section in which a young girl makes her way through the forbidding mountains of the Karakoram Range, the land itself acquires a personality - oppressive, brooding, and magnificent..

## 2. Conclusion

Sidhwa was outraged when she heard the real story of a girl who was murdered only because she was not able to get adapted to the culture where she was married. She took four years to build the storyline with great care. She introduced many side and parallel characters to that of Zaitoon’s character. This is the main point which is pointing out the cultural difference and the consequences of getting into the midst of an unknown culture. This brought in the conclusion in the minds of people that sudden change in culture might bring about even death to an individual or the entire.

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