

## Bridal Burdens in Bapsi Sidhwa's *"The Pakistani Bride"*

Muhammad Ilyas<sup>1</sup>, Shujaat Ali<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Fazal Khaliq<sup>3</sup>, Haroon Khan<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MPhil Scholar, Dept. of English, Northern University Nowshera, KP, Pakistan

Email: [Ilyasccie@gmail.com](mailto:Ilyasccie@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>MPhil Scholar, Dept. of English, Northern University Nowshera, KP, Pakistan

Email: [Shujaat.ali15@yahoo.com](mailto:Shujaat.ali15@yahoo.com)

<sup>3</sup>MPhil Scholar, Dept. of English, Northern University Nowshera, KP, Pakistan

Email: [smartcamatta@gmail.com](mailto:smartcamatta@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>MPhil Scholar, Dept. of English, Northern University Nowshera, KP, Pakistan

Email: [proharoonkhan579@gmail.com](mailto:proharoonkhan579@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *The research paper examines the portrayal of brides in Pashtun society as depicted in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "The Pakistani Bride". Through a detailed analysis of the novel's themes and characters, we argue that Sidhwa effectively presents brides as both beasts of burden and tools of pleasure, while also offering a critical exploration of women's agency within the confines of a patriarchal society. Furthermore, this paper delves into the ways in which female characters navigate their circumstances and attempt to assert their agency within the constraints of a patriarchal society. The novel's characters, including Zaitoon, Carol, and Nikka, highlight the challenges faced by women and the possible avenues for resistance and empowerment. Ultimately, this research paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the complex interplay between gender, power, and culture as portrayed in Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride".*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Bride, Burden, Women*

### Introduction:

In her novel "The Pakistani Bride" (1983), Bapsi Sidhwa provides a critical exploration of the lives of women in the patriarchal Pashtun society of Pakistan. The novel follows Zaitoon, a young orphan girl who is given to a Pashtun tribesman to be married, only to face the harsh realities of her new life. Sidhwa's portrayal of brides as beasts of burden and tools of pleasure demonstrates the oppressive nature of the society in which they live.

Set against the backdrop of post-partition Pakistan, "The Pakistani Bride" by Bapsi Sidhwa presents a nuanced exploration of the lives of women in Pashtun society. Through the central character of Zaitoon, an orphan girl who is given away in marriage to a Pashtun tribesman, the novel delves into the harsh realities faced by brides in this patriarchal culture. As the narrative unfolds, the reader is given a vivid portrayal of the dual roles of brides as both beasts of burden and tools of pleasure. Moreover, the novel addresses themes of resistance, empowerment, and the pursuit of agency for women within the

confines of a traditional society.

"The Pakistani Bride" has been widely recognized for its powerful depiction of women's lives in rural Pakistan, and its critical examination of the intersection of culture, religion, and patriarchy. The novel provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of gender, power, and agency in a context where women's roles are strictly defined and controlled. By examining the themes and characters of the novel in-depth, this research paper aims to contribute to the broader understanding of the challenges faced by women in Pashtun society and the potential for resistance and change.

In the following sections, we explore the various aspects of brides' lives as depicted in the novel, including their roles as beasts of burden and tools of pleasure. Additionally, we will analyze the ways in which female characters, such as Zaitoon, Carol, and Nikka, navigate their circumstances and attempt to assert their agency. Furthermore, we will discuss the symbolism of the mountains as a transformative space, the role of male characters, and the intersection of culture, religion, and patriarchy in shaping the lives of women in Pashtun society. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel serves as a window into the intricate fabric of Pashtun society and the position of women within it. By delving into the lives of the novel's female characters, this research paper seeks to shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by women in such societies, as well as the strategies they employ to assert their agency and resist patriarchal control.

"The Pakistani Bride" not only offers a critique of the Pashtun patriarchal system but also reflects the broader context of post-colonial Pakistan and the influence of Western cultures on traditional societies. The novel, thus, provides an opportunity to examine the ways in which women's experiences are shaped by both local and global forces, as well as the complex interactions between tradition and modernity.

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"The Pakistani Bride" has been widely recognized for its powerful depiction of women's lives in rural Pakistan, and its critical examination of the intersection of culture, religion, and patriarchy (Chaudhry, 2010). The novel provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of gender, power, and agency in a context where women's roles are strictly defined and controlled (Khan, 1994). By examining the themes and characters of the novel in-depth, this research paper aims to contribute to the broader understanding of the challenges faced by women in Pashtun society and the potential for resistance and change. The novel provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of gender, power,

and agency in a context where women's roles are strictly defined and controlled (Khan, 1994; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). By examining the themes and characters of the novel in-depth, this research paper aims to contribute to the broader understanding of the challenges faced by women in Pashtun society and the potential for resistance and change (Wadud, 1999).

### **Problem Statement**

The current research investigates bridal burdens in *The Pakistani Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa. It shows the treatment of women in some societies of Pakistan. They are not equally treated like human beings but like commodities and pleasurable toys. This study focuses on those aspects that show degradation of women after they are bonded in a marital relationship.

### **Research Questions**

1. Is there any instant of bridal burden in the novel, *The Pakistani Bride*?
2. If yes, then support your opinion from the textual references from the novel.
3. How the situation and incidents in the novel are relevant to the contemporary times?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is qualitative in nature. It takes “bridal burdens” as a theoretical lenses and analyzes the text of the novel, *The Pakistani Bride*, through it.

### **Textual Analysis of *The Pakistani Bride***

Marriage is a sacred ritual in Islam and other religions. Likely, it is considered a social responsibility of parents to marry their children in the most suitable places because a successful marriage brings positive outcomes for both in-laws. In some places, this happiness is one-sided because the society is more patriarchal. The current research study examines the analysis of bridal burdens in the characters of Afshan, Zaitoon, and Carol. It also includes some passages from the novel *The Pakistani Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa, which show the tormenting conditions of women clutched in marital bonding.

When it comes to men, they are almost happy and agree to a marriage. As Sidhwa writes, "Qasim was delighted. Not only did he have a gun, he was to be married" (p. 14). Afshan thought that she would be married to a strong and independent man. Contrary to that, her expectations were shattered, and "her heart swelled with horror: she was married to a boy! (p. 16) This was the first shock she received on her wedding night. It is still a practice in some societies in Pakistan where the two partners see themselves just on their first night and there is no meet-up before proper nikah. She thought that "she'd been told that her groom was very young, but she assumed he'd be at least fifteen years old like her. She began to laugh while tears of disappointment slid down her cheeks (p. 16), but it was of no avail now. She was already married to a boy younger than her.

Years later, when Afshan told her husband about their wedding night, he asked, "But how did you feel?" "What did you think?" "I used to walk along streams or sit on a hill and dream about my

future husband," she said. As gusts of wind surrounded me, I'd think about my lover's eager touches. My body was young and filled with desire. "I'd squeeze my breasts to relieve the pain," she said slyly. "Instead, I very nearly suckled my husband!" (p. 16) This shows what she expected and what she got at the end. Still, Afshan accepted her fate cheerfully and tried her level best to become a good wife. "She helped her mother-in-law, chaffed the maize, tended and milked the two goats, and frolicked her way through her chores" (p. 16). These were the common burdens, and Afshan proved herself good at them.

Being married for some time and being without a child is a curse in most societies. Particularly, the parents-in-law want a male child at the first birth. The same happens in the novel as well, where a male character, Nikka, is married to a woman, but she is unable to give him a child. Here, Nikka replies to a question by Qasim:

"She's barren."

Qasim blushed up to his pale eyelashes as Nikka described the possible causes of her barrenness, mentioning her ailments, temperament, and age.

"Women are strange. I know she's crying her eyes out because she thinks I'll marry another woman. Why should I? It's Allah's will. I'm content (p. 38).

Though Nikka explains his loyalty and love for his wife, she is still afraid because it is the custom of our society that when a woman is barren, the family compels the husband to have another wife.

Marriages at an early age are a big concern in the modern world. There are many places in Pakistan where children are married before they turn eighteen. This was the case with the major character of the novel, Zaitoon. She was just ten years old when her loving father, Qasim, decided to marry her to one of his kinsmen from the mountains. The novel shows that Qasim is persistent over the marriage while Nikka is against it at such an early age. The discussion goes on:

It is inevitable that she will tie the knot and start a family. She said, "Poor child...," for a second time. If she had a mother, you may find her in the kitchen or sewing room. Is BhaiQasim under the misconception that he is responsible for the upbringing of a boy? He ought to give serious consideration to marrying her, who desires an educated..." Nikka argued, "But she's just a baby," in response to the statement.

"A baby? Ten years old! Already, I can observe differences in her physical appearance. The Pathan is ignorant that she is on the scorching plains of the Punjab, where everything matures sooner due to the high temperatures. She will not be in danger anywhere else but at her mother-in-law's house. "There is no such thing as being too young to get married" (p. 50).

Zaitoon's thoughts were opposite Qasim's. She did not want anyone to be married at ten years old, as she "once overheard a woman telling a ten-year-old that she was pregnant. "How can that be?" she questioned, perplexed. "She's not married; it's impossible!" (p. 54) She used to think that when she was a grown lady, she would have a romantic marriage, but fate had other plans for her. She found no place

for mirth when Qasim told her, "Bibi, we talked of your marriage." Zaitoon felt her body tremble. She froze, digging painfully into Qasim's legs (p. 83). She was promised to be married to Sakhi, the son of Misri Khan, and Misri Khan is Qasim's cousin.

Her naive and idealistic imagination blossomed into illusions of a land where men were valiant, proud, and incorruptible and where they were ruled by a code of honor that forbade all forms of injustice and evil. These towering, fair-skinned individuals were gods who were allowed to do as they wanted while wandering the mountains at their leisure. Their women were as beautiful as the hour, and their children were as brilliant and rosy-cheeked as the sun (p. 78). They lived next to sparkling torrents of melted snow.

Qasim's voice was gentle as he whispered to his sister, "Sister, I gave him my word."

"Take it to heart! Your assertion! Your assertion! What does the meaning of your term have to do with the lives of the children? What? Tell me!" Qasim did not provide a response (p. 81).

"Brother Qasim," she tried to persuade him, "how can a girl who was raised in Lahore and educated—how can she be happy in the mountains?" The ways of your tribe are distinctive; you have no idea how much you've progressed. She continued with a mounting fervor as the anger began to settle on Qasim's tight lips. "They are savages," she said. Inconsiderate, crude, and lacking in common courtesy! Being around them will make her life a living hell. Don't you see?" (p. 81).

Afshan is against this concept. She knows the way mountainous men treat their wives. When Qasim defends his kinsmen and argues that they behave like him, then Afshan replies back, "You've been with us so long; you're changed. Why? Because the majority of them are thugs who don't know how to treat women! You watch; she'll be a slave with no one to turn to. No one!" (p. 81). This excerpt from the novel is a clear depiction of the devastated lives of women in that particular society. She is afraid that Zaitoon is going to meet the same fate if she is married to a Hillman.

One social crime, in some Pakistani localities, is selling their daughters in marriages. Because of poverty or other reasons, they get money or other advantages and give their kids a marriage bond. When the purpose of a marriage is some material benefit, then the lives of such married couples are destroyed. It is a relationship knit together by love, trust, and affection and not by materialistic interests. In the novel, Nikka's wife asks Qasim:

Is it because Pathan offered you five hundred rupees—some measly maize and a few goats? Is that why you are selling her like a greedy merchant? "I'll give you that and more," she mocked. "Nikka will! How much more do you want? We will buy her!" (p. 81).

Zaitoon thought that her father would not want anything negative for her, which is why she was ready for the marriage and said, "I'm not going to go against my father" (p.84).

Women in tribal areas conceal many things from their men and do not express their needs and desires. They also cannot question their men and remain submissive. Consciously or unconsciously, the

tribal women do not consider it submissive or any form of degradation. In the novel,

Carol wondered why these women had to be so evasive.

"You should know better than to ask such delicate questions, dear," she says.

Reprimanded Farukh primly. "You should know that our women, especially the young girls, are modest." (p. 114).

Sidhwa gives a lot of value to a wife, as she writes, "a wife was a status symbol, the embodiment of a man's honor, and the center of his provider role. A valuable commodity indeed, and one that was purchased at a high cost (p. 118). Qasim was happy and hopeful that Sakhi would be a good husband like him. He satiated Zaitoon with the words, "Don't worry, Munni; I'll be here for a while, but your husband will look after you." You will like him. He is fine-looking. I'm not much older than you." Her heart was both buoyant and troubled. Would he like her? (p. 126)

Zaitoon sensed her worst future, and she asked Qasim to let her go with him back to Lahore. She said, "When you leave, Abba, take me to the plains. "Please, do not leave me here. Take me with you" (p. 132).

He whispered in her ear, "Munni, please be quiet," as he lovingly cuddled her. "Hush, Munni." She wailed to her father, "Abba, I don't want to marry." Take a look at how poor they are as well as the food that they eat. Corn bread made with grits and water! My stomach is in pain."

Qasim made an effort to laugh. "I consumed the same loaf of bread, but I do not have a stomach ache." "My child, they are not as poor as they appear to you," he murmured sincerely, while at the same time patting her head. Simply put, this is just how they live their lives. You will quickly become accustomed to it. Then you will have a favorable opinion of both your husband and my people. After all, we've been traveling for only a short while to get here (p. 132).

She pleaded with her father, "Abba, please bring me back." I promise that I will always watch out for you. How are you going to survive without me, not to mention the food? If I have to be married, I want it to be to a plainsman. I suppose the camp jawan likes me, Abba. I'd sooner die than have to live in this place (p. 133).

"You will be coming to Lahore soon—to have your firstborn." I'll visit you often, I promise. Miriam and Nikka will accompany me. He tried valiantly to soothe her while submerging himself in his own grief (p. 139).

"I'll accompany you, Abba." Abba!" She screamed, breaking free from the old woman's grip and sprinting to Qasim. "Wait for me!"

She ran up to him and wrapped her arms around him in a frenzied hug, panting. "I'm coming with you. Take me, Abba," she begged.

"Zaitoon," Qasim bemoaned, "consider the people who are watching you." You're no longer a child; you're a wife." Our place in the world is with your husband. He is a good man. Haven't

you liked him?"

"I'm not sure, Abba. I'm not sure..." I don't know him. Why must you leave so soon? Stay here or take me with you" (p. 140).

Zaitoon knew that she would not be happy in these mountains so she wanted to flee off but it was in vain now as neither Qasim nor Sakhi was ready for it. It was a matter of honor for them and they were ready to kill or being killed in the name of so-called honor.

One of the biggest bridal burdens is the stereotyped psyche, where girls are suppressed from choosing their life partners. They are bonded like cattle in a marriage. Qasim rushed, "Hush, Zaitoon, that's not how you talk to your father." It is not apparent. A good girl does not tell her father who she wants him to marry."

"I want you to grasp this." Qasim spoke coldly. I have sworn. Our wedding is next week. Your potential spouse will personally greet guests the following day in neighboring towns. I swore. This affects my reputation. I value it above my life. If you tarnish its reputation, I will kill you (p. 133). He says, "Girl, you make me break my word and ruin my reputation with crap! Isn't that obvious? Do you?" (p. 133)

Finally, the marriage ceremony was over. Zaitoon and Sakhi were wife and husband. They were alone. Her veil, a transparent, tinsel-covered bridal ghoongat, shrouded her face and torso. The guy awkwardly lifted the veil to gaze at his bride without speaking. She was almost as curious as he was because her eyes, which he expected to be respectfully down, met his in bewilderment. Sakhi retreated, smiling sheepishly. Then she looked down. She found him towering and powerful. The lamp illuminated his sun-kissed face, sparkling blue eyes, and golden hair under his turban and on his moustache. She breathed faster and felt heated.

Sakhi watched his timid wife as his arousal rose. He believed a woman with extremely thick lashes and enormous black eyes that showed her complete sensuality in one look was his. He wanted to own this woman. Even as he thought this, his acidic jealousy, which had been building up for days, suddenly exploded in him as a dreadful combination of wrath and heat. He ripped the ghoongat from her head and spat inarticulate venom on her face while holding her arms.

Zaitoon gazed in dread as he dragged her up and yanked her red satin top over her head while assaulting her. She jumped forward to protect her breasts. He pulled the shalwar cord, exposing her ankles. Sakhi fell backward before pulling up her pants. Kneeling, he unfastened her legs from the silk. Zaitoon kicked and jumped over the pirate to defeat him. She screamed. She shouted as she retreated toward the straw-and-mud wall. She shouted as she leaned against it, hiding her chest and crotch with her hands. Sakhi sobbed and screamed on the opposite side of the room, unable to move due to the high-pitched animal noise. "Abba, save me!" she screamed. Qasim didn't come—why? Any of the others instead? (pp. 134-135)

She glanced at him, gasping and shivering. Sakhi squatted. He submitted by dropping his shoulders, taking off the pagri, and placing his arms on his knees. He looked away from her embarrassment to show more respect. He instantly restored her dignity.

Her breaths slowed. She handed him a white satin waistcoat with gold embroidered embellishments. Above his waist, the shirt flowed in huge folds down to his calves, and below it, the shalwar, which he wore underneath, twisted insolently. The pomegranate bloom behind his ear, his glittering teeth between stained lips, and his dark antimony smudge betrayed his appealing vanity.

Sakhi looked up again. He had never seen a woman naked. He noticed her stunning female appeal, the way an undone strand of her hair fell on lighter skin where her breasts swelled, and her protruding round breasts. Her toned, strong thighs and curling jet hair boldly peeking out from under her covering fingers caught his attention. Sakhi knelt and bowed (p. 135).

She was overjoyed as she smelled their masculinity and mistook her instinct for love. Despite just knowing Qasim and Nikka, she adored them with filial loyalty and undiscovered sexual feelings. She thought they were her parents. Her romanticized tribal boyfriends would take her to mountain hideouts and worship her forever. She romanticized them. Even though her emotions were a mess, she felt peace and confidence that all her needs would be met (p. 136).

Sakhi caressed her breast. Zaitoon craved touch. Zaitoon let her lover touch her breasts in her fantasy. She had no idea if sexuality was good or bad because she was raised in a home without it. Miriam, Qasim, and the other women she met never mentioned it. She navigated sexual desire to find herself. She moved her hips while holding Miriam, and Miriam said, "Stop it!" The rebuke that ended her carefree joy shocked and hurt Zaitoon. She felt rejected.

Sakhi stroked her curls. The burning sensation between her thighs was new to her. It felt like painful inflammation. She used to hold her chest to lessen the pain. She had unwittingly absorbed taboos that prohibited her from going lower, so she felt no release. Her love was at his rough fingertips. She wanted his rough fingers. She slowly breathed in and out as she listened to the new notes throbbing in her body, and Sakhi's breath was indescribably sweet. She vaguely remembered Sakhi taking off her shalwar, and being naked felt normal. Sakhi touched her improperly. Zaitoon instinctively withdrew his hand. "No!"

Why not? "It's my cunt!" he cried, squeezing her crotch. Zaitoon realized his fever was the same as hers. She wanted to dissolve into his blood and become him.

Sakhi outpowered her. She wanted to graft on him but did not know how. Sakhi attempted sexual contact. Her straight legs made him sit on his heels. He felt pride and love for his bride's purity.

"Like this," he said as he gently spread her legs. He resisted shaking hands. She felt the ache after her throbbing softness yielded. She feared. It instantly reawakened her. She wasn't built to endure great pain. His actions were startling, and her quick halt to their intimate ties seemed insensitive. "What are



you doing?" she gasped. "Stop it!" She writhed in pain. Sakhi pressed harder on Zaitoon's chest, shaking her hands.

Zaitoon then noticed his odd bodily movements. The animal's retraction and thrusting hurt her. She did not know Sakhi was inside her because she did not understand the male organ. She felt nothing. She felt suction and a press against her crotch, and the rhythm penetrated her anguish and screams. She felt nothing. Each impact stirred her senses and turned her blood into honey. Her blood transformed into honey after a deep churning. She moaned in agony as she pressed her claws against his clothing (pp. 136–137).

Time passed swiftly. Soon the realty of Sakhi came in front. He changed soon. Now, he doubted his wife. Once, he saw his talking to an army jawan. He was full of anger. He came to her and started blaming her:

I saw you," he shouted at her. "I saw you!" "I saw the jawan hold onto your arm the entire time as we made our way down to the river." Sakhi's rage was priceless. Zaitoon was overwhelmed by his accusation. She lowered her head, her voice trembling with tears.

Sakhi yelled, "I could hear you from across the river," while covering his face. "You laughed like lovers" (p. 138).

Zaitoon acclimatized. She became impervious to Sakhi's animal-trainer abuse. She fell asleep in his company and was unharmed. He beat her for no reason. She no longer romanticized marriage. She kept her head down except to obey him. She then had Hamida-like eyes (p. 145).

Zaitoon knew births took nine months. She was expecting by then. However, nine months is too long for a miserable girl. An occurrence two months into her marriage convinced her she would die young (p. 145).

Carol, an American girl and married to a Pakistani, knew exactly the psyche of men. She says, "These goddamned men even fall in love with holes in trees! Don't let it flatter you" (p. 146). She means that every man follows a girl only satiate his sexual desires. She criticizes men and held them responsible for high divorce ratio. She says, "It's easy for you Muslim men. All you have to do is tell your wife "talak" three times and wait three months. I know it" (p. 150).

Carol was sitting in her bedroom, peering into the pitch blackness outside her window. Is it not Farukh who stated, "I asked for it?" Throughout the course of human history, women in various parts of the world have voluntarily subjected themselves to being murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, impregnated, beaten, bullied, and disinherited. It was an unchangeable rule of the natural world. What the indigenous girl had done to deserve such a horrible kind of revenge begs the question: Had she made a mistake by falling in love with that man? Or was she merely the target of someone's personal grudge? Her brother might have been the one who killed his wife, and his wife's family might have been the ones who butchered her. There may be more than one explanation for this (p. 187).

There came a time when the tortures were unbearable for Zaitoon so she decided to run away from Sakhi. She executed her plan one morning and left her home. She moved through less travelled paths and roads as she knew that Sakhi and his kinsmen will follow her soon. Though she ran as much as she could but it was her bad luck that Sakhi found her soon. She was hiding in a place when heard some voices. Then, a stone struck her. She spun, desperately searching for the boulders. Another boulder clattered down on her head. She glanced up, frightened. Sakhi towered over her on the other side of the overhang. His sapphire eyes were fixed. He towered inhumanly against the weird Himalayan brilliance that accentuates angles and hues. His gaze radiated vengeance.

Sakhi flicked again, and the stone touched her brow. Zaitoon scrambled for safety, staring at him in horror. He landed softly on a flat rock. He matched her after another leap. Zaitoon blindly scrambled backwards, scraping her knuckles on the granite wall.

Sakhi grabbed her as she crossed the boulders in long leaps. He dragged her along the crag. "You whore," he hissed. He was so enraged that she thought he would kill her. He spat on her face. "You filthy, black little pig waving at those pigs..." He grabbed her and waved his other hand in a provocative imitation of the girl's brief action. "Waving at that shit-eating swine "Didn't you want him to fuck you?"

Zaitoon stood catatonic. "Forgive me, forgive me; I won't do it again," Sakhi shouted. She repeated "Forgive me" to calm his homicidal anger. Sakhi looked ferocious. He was yelling that I will kill you, lying slut!

He slapped her hard and threw her away by swinging her by the arm like a toy. She recklessly buried her head between the man's legs after a sharp flint pierced her breast. Sakhi's trousers cord came undone, and his shalwar's saggy gathers fell to his ankles in the brief fight. Sakhi froze. He froze on the ledge. What if someone saw his final humiliation?

Zaitoon knelt, uncertain. Women could not disrespect men more. Sakhi immediately tied his shalwar around his waist, glaring with contempt. Zaitoon jerked. He kicked between her legs, knocking her down. Sakhi repeatedly kicked her, inflicting pain. She screamed. He carried her limp body home on his shoulders. That night Zaitoon fled. She realized she had to flee to survive as her sleepless eyes blazed with shock and her body hurt. She waited two days to recuperate (pp. 153-154).

Honor! she scowled. Honor costs a life! The girl she loved was sacrificed, and her family was gone. She knew mountain hunters were infallible. The old mother was haunted by her three dead sons: the weight of each child in her body for nine months, the awful pain, labor, and sweat, and, a few years later, the heartbreak of each son being brought home on a crèche. How many more lives will the deceased take? The men's set faces, their eyes burning with wrath and vengeance, their ancient improvised guns perpetually treasured and polished, the leather slings ornamented with colored bands and tassels, were valued more for the men they murdered.

Honorable men now she is... She saw jumbled images. She suddenly detested her forebears' harsh

code, which she had proudly and bravely followed. God would punish her. She knew she was dying. "There, there, don't fret," the gray-haired woman stroking her hair said. They'll return soon with that bitch's corpse and vindicate your son's honor!" (p. 158). "You fool! Our honor? Why did not you think of it when you allowed the bitch to run away? You knew she'd run. Are you an eunuch who has gone insane? You should have slit her throat right then!" (p. 165)

Zaitoon was found. All of the people want her to be killed as she has ran away from her home and have bruised the family honor. The novel shows that no one was sorry for her worst fortune rather they were waiting for her execution. She was dragged to the village. The novel writes:

Lifting her weightless body in his golden arms, he carries her to his village. "Were you lost?" he asks.

"No," she admits, "I ran away."

"Oh! Then I must kill you. You know I must." He fumbles with the knife blade, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"No. No!"

Zaitoon's scream echoes among the boulders, and her hands rush to her throat in defense (p. 172).

Then, there comes an untimely end to the unfortunate life-struggler, Zaitoon, as it is announced, "she is dead. It is enough that I say so! I've buried her." (p. 201)

### **Conclusion:**

By delving into these additional aspects of the novel, we further enrich our understanding of the lives of women in Pashtun society as portrayed by Bapsi Sidhwa in "The Pakistani Bride". The novel's exploration of themes such as child-rearing, the commodification of brides, and the potential for solidarity and collective action among women provides a comprehensive and nuanced picture of the challenges faced by women in this context, as well as the strategies they employ to assert their agency and resist patriarchal control. Through our analysis of these themes, this research paper contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding bridal burdens in Pashtun society and beyond.

Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride" effectively portrays the dual role of brides in Pashtun society as both beasts of burden and tools of pleasure. Through her characters, Sidhwa also explores the pursuit of agency for women within the confines of a patriarchal society. While the novel highlights the oppressive conditions faced by women in Pashtun society, it ultimately conveys a message of hope for change and resistance. In this research paper, we have examined the portrayal of brides in Pashtun society as depicted in Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride". Through a comprehensive analysis of the novel's themes and characters, we have demonstrated that Sidhwa effectively presents brides as both beasts of burden and tools of pleasure, while also offering a critical exploration of women's agency within the confines of a

patriarchal society.

Our analysis has shed light on the various aspects of brides' lives, including their roles in performing physical and emotional labor, child-rearing, and upholding family honor. We have also discussed the commodification of brides, the normalization of violence against women, and the pressure to conform to social norms and expectations. Furthermore, we have examined the pursuit of agency for women within a patriarchal society, highlighting the power of education, self-awareness, solidarity, and collective action in challenging traditional norms and empowering women.

Through the lens of "The Pakistani Bride", we have also considered the intersection of culture, religion, and patriarchy in shaping the lives of women in Pashtun society, as well as the influence of both local and global forces on women's experiences. The novel's portrayal of the transformative power of the mountains, the role of male characters, and the potential for change and resistance within the community further enriches our understanding of the complexities of gender, power, and agency in this context.

In conclusion, Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride" serves as a powerful exploration of the lives of women in Pashtun society, illustrating their dual roles as beasts of burden and tools of pleasure, while also shedding light on the potential for resistance and change. By examining the novel's themes and characters in-depth, this research paper contributes to the broader understanding of the challenges faced by women in Pashtun society and the ongoing discourse surrounding gender, power, and agency. The novel ultimately serves as a reminder of the resilience and strength of women in the face of adversity and the potential for change within a patriarchal society.

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