

## CHAPTER: III

### THE BRIDE / THE PAKISTANI BRIDE

*The Pakistani Bride*, also published under the title, *The bride*, is based on a true story narrated to Sidhwa when she, with her family, went on a tour on Karakoram hills of Pakistan; during their stay at an Army camp, the colonels, engineers, and doctors tell them a tale of a girl from plains being carried to Kohistan by an old Pathan to wed his nephew. Only after one month of her marriage, she manages to escape away as she was being ill treated by her husband. In Karakoram region, an escapee wife is punished to death for absconding, because a runaway wife is considered a blot on the family and thought to be an intolerable insult to the tribesmen. Though, the fugitive survives without food in the forests where there is no habitation at all, yet after fourteen days of elopement, the absconder is caught near the river Indus on the bridge, and she is bumped off.

To fulfil the purpose of writing and to give a message to her readers, Sidhwa has made certain amendments and alterations in the real story, while writing *The Pakistani Bride*. Zaitoon's heroic struggle, at the end of the novel, in order to find and cross the bridge, is symbolic and good for its literary meanings; unlike the real story, Sidhwa's fictional

bride from the plains succeeds to survive and overcome as a conqueror, which is a major and noteworthy difference:

In *The Bride* she [Zaitoon] is not killed. *The Bride* has, as it happened, two endings. I first ended it where there's an illusionary scene, in which she has a nightmare vision of being killed. That's where the book was supposed to end. But by this time I had a different feeling for the book. I'd inhabited this girl's body and her emotions for so long that I felt it was a shame, considering all that she had been put through, that she should be then killed off. One of the privileges of being the author of stories is you can change the ending and I did just that. At least in the end she lives—she barely survives, but she lives. (Jussawalla 208)

Bapsi Sidhwa fictionalized the saga in a more complex way, introducing the tribal code of honour and the harshness of Pathan culture, which made them awfully cruel and revengeful; author admits in an interview to Feroza Jussawalla, how this poignant tale haunted and compelled her to pick up the pen for the first time in her life:

When I came to Lahore, I felt I had to tell her story. I had not written before. . . .I had a compulsion to write the girl's story and the story of the tribals hidden away in this beautiful part of the world. I started writing a short story about this girl,

without my really being aware of it; it was developing into a long story. It was an obsession. (209)

Thus, *The Pakistani Bride* is not only significant for its plot and theme that reveals the secrets of tribals of Kohistan but it has also played a key role in shaping the literary genius of Sidhwa as a writer; in this regard, the novel stands above all the works of Sidhwa, because without it, it was quite impossible to behold Sidhwa in the present situation and status of an esteemed author:

[Sidhwa depicts] two cultures, the mountain dwellers and the inhabitants of the plains. The former (tribesmen or the Pathans) are closed off people from outside, whereas the latter (Punjabis) are high class people. The plain is a well-travelled, flat terrain farming province. The Pathan's society tends to be much more clannish, traditional and not accepting the change. Pakistan's population is mostly Muslim, yet beneath this religious unity there is cultural diversity in different regions, especially between the mountains and the plains. In *The Pakistani Bride* this culture-consciousness is foremost. Moreover, different customs of the landscape and the mountains are described by Sidhwa vividly and vigorously. She has brought her world and people exuberantly to life. (Agarwal 47)

The treatment of history in *The Pakistani Bride* has been prominently dealt with by the novelist, as novel's plot is unfolded in the background of India's great historical divide; it is the tale of a female child, Munni, whose parents Sikander and Zohra are assassinated during the rebellion of partition in 1947. A hill man Qasim, who has lost his family to smallpox epidemic, adopts the girl and calls her Zaitoon, the name of his late daughter; later on, both settle in the bustling city of Lahore, and the upbringing of a child born in plain-Indian-city, Jullundur, is made by a tribesman, whose roots lie in the distant Karakoram hills of Pakistan. Interfusion of the duo, which have their own separate and diverse cultural-history, is quite interesting and worthy of attention in the narrative. In Lahore, Qasim meets Nikka pehelwan who becomes his friend-cum-business partner; his wife Miriam looks after Zaitoon like her own daughter. When Zaitoon becomes young, Qasim, in a fit of bucolic nostalgia, decides to marry her to a man of his own tribe. Upon reaching Kohistan and coming across with her husband Sakhi, Zaitoon realizes that she will never fit into this male-dominated tribal society; through Zaitoon's experience, Sidhwa throws light upon the history of gender-discrimination prevailing in the mountainous region of Pakistan. The issue of the fusion of different cultures and experience of the people (especially husbands and wives) have been quite effectively treated by the author on diverse levels: marital experience of the American girl Carol

with Pakistani Engineer Farukh as well as her extra-marital ties with Major Mushtaq, a friend of her husband, is portrayed with great acumen in the novel. When the harsh and brutal treatment surpasses the limit of a bride's patience, she manages to escape away; though, she knows that punishment by the tribal code for such an act is death, yet at last, Zaitoon survives. Another bride Carol, having found the region unfit to inhabit, also decides to go off. Alongwith the Pakistani characters, the author has shown Carol, an American girl wedded to a Pakistani engineer, as a further insight into the Eastern (especially Pakistani) experience of a Western person; through Carol's experience, author tries to make her readers acquaint with the cruelty of the snow-clad region, Kohistan; apart from being naturally beautiful, this region has a history of male dominated social-system that treats woman as a commodity. Through the portrayal of difficulties in life of various female characters, issues like the hill-culture versus plain-culture, sexuality versus chastity, joy versus sorrow, romance (of Zaitoon before marriage) versus regret (after marriage), and freedom of mind (in case of educated Carol) versus shackles of patriarchy (in the context of illiterate Zaitoon) find adequate space in the novel:

The role of women is examined from many angles, leaving the reader to develop their own conclusions rather than spoon feeding or demanding a certain view. Sidhwa walks

between the Pakistani and Western worlds, casting light on an often misunderstood and neglected region, revealing the human perspective there. *The Pakistani Bride* allows the reader to have a fuller understanding of the people living in Pakistan as well as a sense of some history of this region now highlighted on the world stage. (Hoeffler)

Like Bapsi Sidhwa, Mahesh Dattani, in his play *Tara*, has raised the issue of gender-inequality; the parents and grandfather give better treatment to the boy, Chandan, in comparison to the girl, Tara, who is not given the opportunities as given to her brother, and eventually she wastes away and dies. In Shashi Deshpande's novels, violence against women, whether physical, mental or emotional, has also been an issue that crosses all borders and revives the minds of all classes of women; similarly, Zaitoon is the victim of physical and sexual harassment that begins just after the first day of her marriage, and Carol is exploited sexually as well as emotionally by Major Mushtaq. In *The Pakistani Bride*, feminism and its crusade against a male-dominated society have special importance in the Pakistani context.

The novel begins with the declaration of partition, a time when a grim and historical train-massacre takes place, wherein Munni's parents, are slain by the mob of religious chauvinists. Henceforward, the girl and her adopt-father settle at Lahore where her upbringing is made. Sidhwa

fabricates the story of both pertaining to different lineage, one from the plains, and other from the mountainous region.

The novel enjoys marriage as its major theme in socio-historical perspective: “Sidhwa, a Pakistani, writes dramatically of marriage, loyalty, honor and their conflict with old ways in this well-told tale” (Qtd. in *Pakistani Bride* n. p.); through which author tries to explain that the synthesis of two opposite cultures can't go ahead as both persons are from different social milieu in which they are brought up and whereby they are deeply affected; if both are put together, conflict for survival occurs as the new tradition and the old one can't live together; one of them has to depart; yet to explore the ideal combination, the fusion of the two (husband and wife) is treated on many grounds: a plain-city-bred girl (Zaitoon) is married with a hill man (Sakhi); a girl of sixteen (Afshan) goes down the aisle with a boy (Qasim) of ten; an American girl (Carol) gets spliced with a Pakistani (Farukh); even her illicit and extra marital relationship, provoked by the morbid jealousy of her husband, with her husband's friend (Major Mushtaq), is shown.

The treatment of women in Pakistani social infrastructure is another aggressive theme of the novel. Upbringing of Zaitoon, a girl from the plains, by a hill man, Qasim is shown adroitly; on the one hand, she is adopted and loved by her adopt-father as her own daughter, but on the other, her marriage is fixed with his cousin Misri Khan's son, Sakhi, a

man of a mountainous lineage like Qasim himself, without much consideration about her future. Such reluctant attitude, it seems here, may be of an adopt-father in general, not of a father in particular; herebefore (since her adaptation by Qasim to her upbringing), Qasim plays the role of a real father and benefactor as well, but henceforth, after fixing Zaitoon's marriage with a hill man, his behaviour, no doubt, looks like that of an adopt-father at all; otherwise, if he had been his real father, such chances were less to ignore the point even when Nikka's wife Miriam, whom Qasim considers his sister, awakes him up in a persuasive manner:

‘Brother Qasim,’ she coaxed, ‘how can a girl, brought up in Lahore, educated—how can she be happy in the mountains? Tribal ways are different, you don’t know how changed you are. . .’ And as rancour settled on Qasim’s compressed lips, she continued in a rising passion, ‘They are savages. Brutish, uncouth, and ignorant! She will be miserable among them. Don’t you see?’ (*Pakistani Bride* 93)

Another theme exercised by the author is the impact of regional diversity on the inhabitants of different parts of subcontinent; how do the highlanders differ from the plain-landers is raised through the fusion of duo; it is also exercised on another level to find the maximum possibility of the impact on the relations, not only of father-daughter (Qasim-

Zaitoon) but also of husband-wife (Sakhi-Zaitoon, Farukh-Carol); that's why, on hearing Miriam's wish, Qasim (regionally different) gets infuriated, but he tries to control his anger, and puts forth the logic: "Sister, you forget I am from those hills. It's my people you're talking of." Miriam, brilliantly, puts forth the answer: "you've been with us so long, you're changed" (*Pakistani Bride* 93), and blames that hill men "don't know how to treat women!" (93-94); throwing light on Zaitoon's future in mountainous region, she pleads: "I tell you, she'll be a slave, you watch, and she'll have no one to turn to. No one!" (94) But an adopt-father, who has grown up nostalgic about his life in mountainous region, where the promise of a father is more valuable than the future of his daughter, pays no attention to Miriam and puts his icy comment at her: "How dare you," he said. "You've never been there! You don't understand a thing. I have given my word! I know Zaitoon will be happy. The matter should end" (94); effect of mountainous background on Qasim's behaviour is vivid here, as the region situated in the granites of rocks have its different socio-cultural history from that of the plains. In the distant Karakoram hills of Pakistan a woman is considered not more than a commodity, mere a living being like animals, and only a puppet to be played in the male-autocratic hands, be it a husband or somebody else; but in the plains, situation is quite different; a woman has attained almost an equal level in general. Miriam was quiet aware about the fact, and she

was anxious about the future of Zaitoon and her marital life if she walks down the aisle with a hill-man.

Miriam loves Zaitoon as if she were her own daughter, because after having been adopted by Qasim she was carried to Lahore and was rendered to be reared up by Miriam; that's why, flushing into hysteria she condemns Qasim: "Is it because that 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 will give you that, and more,' she said with contempt" (*Pakistani Bride* 94); but as such, a daughter was not more valuable than the words given by her father, a father whose roots lie in the granites of Karakoram hills and which was deeply affected with, and nostalgic about the mountainous life; so, the father of a hill dynasty says, "Sister Miriam, it is not for the goats and maize, please believe me. It is my word –the word of a Kohistani!" (94) Thereafter, Nikka intervenes and placates Miriam. In this context, Sidhwa has raised, though covertly, the question of gender-discrimination—neither Qasim is her real father, nor Miriam is her mother, yet as a woman she is modest and liberal towards the girl, and she shows anxiety for her perilous future in the hills; while Qasim, a man, has been harsh and careless about the girl's would be condition only for the sake of his bloody word. Miriam's guardianship and Qasim's casual attitude for Zaitoon draw the attention towards the prevalent gender-disparity in Kohistan, whereof Qasim belongs. Miriam,

at railway platform, makes her last ditch attempt “to dissuade Zaitoon from going”, and says, “You are ours. We’ll marry you to a decent Punjabi who will understand your ways” (97-98). She tries to shed her burden of guilt by showing maternal love and concern for the girl, and emphatically says, “Tell your father you don’t want to marry a tribal. We’ll help you” (98).

Zaitoon had been led astray by the high-handed decision of her father; she did not put her foot down and stood against her father’s decision; it shows the dominance of male hierarchy in the society. On the one hand, Sidhwa has raised the question against the girl like Zaitoon for not having the enough daring attitude; this suggests that a female should be strong enough to fight against gender-discrimination on such occasions; on the other, Miriam, a motherly woman, has no free will, and her compassion for Zaitoon proves to be weak in order to make Qasim, her so-called brother, dissuade from his overbearing decision.

But, unaware of the age-long history of gender-discrimination on the hills, and her would be plight, as a bride thereon “. . .Zaitoon, swung high on Qasim’s reminiscences, beckoned by visions of the glorious home of her father’s forefathers and of the lover her fancies envisaged, merely lowers her head and said shyly, ‘I cannot cross my father’” (*Pakistani Bride* 98); unfortunately, hitherto, Miriam was of no help for Zaitoon, as she had failed in convincing her, so she renders her own self

to God saying, 'Bismillah'—'God bless you'. On shrieking of whistle and leaving of train, Nikka also tenderly says to Zaitoon, "Remember you are our child as well. If you're not happy, come straight back to us. God be with you" (98). Nayantara Sahgal has also fabricated the same story in her novel *Rich Like Us*, in which a girl of sixteen (similar age to Zaitoon), Bimmie, goes for wedlock; like Zaitoon, Bimmie has also romantic ideas about her marriage, and can't see the underlying suffering behind it; another similarity between both novels is that in *The Pakistani Bride*, Miriam, who is not in blood relation to Zaitoon, is shown anxious about her future after marriage, while his father is depicted careless; in *Rich Like Us*, the situation of Bimmie in her marriage makes Sonali sad and restless. It is a tragic irony of fate that Bimmie's own parents do not think her to be virtuous; while, Sonali, who is not Bimmie's own person, feels great sympathy for her. Henceforth, it is at the very outset that the cultural differences also begin to dominate the life of Zaitoon and it turns out to be a major theme in the novel, and acquires a pivotal significance to enhance the interest of readers and critics alike: "The cultural difference is the pivot. . . Sidhwa shows how it is always a barrier to human relationships. Thus, racial, regional, national and cultural issues of historical as well as topical significance form the core of her novels" (Singh, R. P. x).

In fact, Kohistan, situated on Afghanistan-Pakistan border, is a mountainous region holding the place among the most remote outposts of the world; recently, having suspected as the hideout of Al-Qaeda militants, it has come into light and has attained a significant place in daily news. The men living in this region are harsh, brutal, and are not ready to tend for any change in their traditional beliefs; actually, they are cultural-chauvinists, and stereotypes. As such, the novel begins when the sub-continent gets partitioned, and India and Pakistan breathe as the two separate and independent nations after the centuries-long British rule; in 1947, Qasim's wife, Afshan, as well as his children including a nine-year-old girl, Zaitoon, most loving to them, die of widespread smallpox.

People not only were dislocated due to the partition but also on account of the epidemic of smallpox a number of people left their houses in order to keep themselves unaffected from the impact of this fatal disease and to forget the memories of their relatives whom they have lost to smallpox. From the perspective of this historical event, the portrayal of the dislocation of Qasim is also worthy of mention: “. . .later a clansman who worked in the plains persuaded Qasim to travel down to Jullundur. He secured him a position as watchman at an English bank” (13). In Punjab, this Pathan comes across a partition victim, an orphan Punjabi child, Munni, whom he adopts and gives the name Zaitoon, the name of her own girl-child, which he had lost to smallpox; but when she reaches

marriageable age, Qasim, in a pang of bucolic nostalgia, promises her to a man of his tribe. At first, fifteen-year old Zaitoon agrees as she takes the fancy to the tall, light-skinned men, and rosy-cheeked babies roaming like angels in that snow-clad region; but upon reaching the mountain region of Qasim's memories that has also been her own world of fantasy, and after meeting with her would be husband, she feels that she can't get nestled into the tribal milieu forever. Men of this state are harsh, savage, tyrant, oppressive, and disobedient, and women are often tortured and killed here; this she also feels. Qasim as well accepts it, though covertly, when on reaching Kohistan region he says to Zaitoon, "You'll see how different it is from the plains. 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!" (*Pakistani Bride* 100)

On the hills, not only Zaitoon finds herself bizarre but Qasim also feels out of place at Jullundur (a city of plain), on his first arrival from Kohistan. He is bewildered, here in a different milieu, by each common article like torches, safety-pins, electric lights, cinema, and cars that spin amazingly before his senses; even language emerges as a problem for him. Women's walking with brisk buttocks and nude midriffs is a new sight of experience for him; the taste of spicy curries and vegetables is a far cry to him from the daily mountain diet of flat maize-bread soaked in

water; thus, he feels an amazing contrast between his birthplace at hills and the city of Jullundur:

The difference was greatest in the really basic values. The men of the plains appeared strangely effeminate. Women roamed the streets in brazen proximity. These people were soft, their lives easy. Where he came from, men—as in the Stone Age—walked thirty days over the lonely, almost trackless mountains to secure salt for their tribes. (*Pakistani Bride* 21)

Qasim realizes that mountainous living is harder than that of the plains; another difference is felt by him during his predatory visits in bank toilets; he leaves the toilet seat clogged with stones and scraps of smooth-surfaced glass, as it is usual on the hills but to wash the bottoms; colleagues visiting the lavatory find it inconvenient to perform; and one day, Girdharilal, a clerk in the bank, catches him red-handed; when he asks if he has thrown the stones therein, Qasim only smirks, as he is unaware of what wrong he had done; this raises the hackles of Girdharilal, as he abuses him: “you filthy son of a Muslim mountain hog!” (*Pakistani Bride* 22) On hearing this, Qasim ventures to throttle him, not only to his tribe but also to his blood and religion, because as per the alpine tradition, “death was the price for daring such an insult to his tribe, his blood, his religion” (23), and it was also a fact that Qasim had

slaughtered a person (on the hill) before arriving here; but this was not a mountainous arena, instead, it is a lawful region “with no friendly mountains to afford him sanctuary” (23); so both, Qasim and Girdharilal, had wrenched apart. Of course, Qasim would have pardoned the abuser, had he been a plain-lander; but as such, he was a highlander, totally alien, so he decides to take vengeance himself upon Girdharilal, as soon as he gets the chance; though, he knew that it was not acceptable by the rules of that land and he might be caught and hanged for the crime he decided to commit. After three years, he also gets the chance to take revenge on Girdharilal, just prior to the partition of India in 1947 when uproar was on its zenith in Jullundur; at one night, breaching the curfew, he visits Girdharilal’s quarter and knocks the door. He guns him down as he (Girdharilal) opens the door; soon after, he gets on a train going to Pakistan, crowded with displaced Muslims. Thus, the issue of cultural differences moves from periphery to centre, and compels Qasim to bump Girdharilal off; Sidhwa seems to convey that it was the diversified cultural-history of a hill man which forces him to gun down the abuser; had he been an inhabitant of plains, he would have pardoned him off.

The train is ambushed by a mob of Sikh rebels; having been frightened, Qasim jumps down the train immediately and takes shelter in the cluster of trees. Sidhwa presents the vivid and horrific picture of this bloody historic event at the time of partition:

. . .Only now does the engine-driver realise there is something farther down the track. A roar rises from the mass of jolted refugees. The train's single headlight flashes on. It spotlights the barricade of logs and some unaligned rails. White singlets flicker in and out of the glare. The train brakes heavily and the engine crashes into the logs. People are flung from their scant hold on footboards, roofs and buffers. Women and children pour from the crammed compartments.

Now the mob runs towards the train with lighted flares. Qasim sees the men clearly. They are Sikh. Tall, crazed men wave swords. A cry: 'Bole so Nihal', and the answering roar, 'Sat siri Akal!' Torches unevenly light the scene and Qasim watches the massacre as in a cinema. (*Pakistani Bride* 27-28)

Though, Qasim is frightened by the train massacre, yet he feels no compulsion to sacrifice his own life for the sake of these people—culturally and religiously different from his own—because, “These are people from the plains—not his people.” When the carnage abates, a little girl clings his legs calling him, “Abba, Abba, my Abba!” (*Pakistani Bride* 29) After a little indecisiveness, he accepts the child and says, “Munni, you are like the smooth, dark olive, the Zaitoon, that grows near our

hills. . .the name suits you. . .I shall call you *zaitoon*” (30). Qasim is highly nostalgic regarding his birthplace; therefore, he names the girl after the dark olive, *zaitoon*, which is found on the hills. The impact of regional differences is quite visible here, as he gets the inspiration to name her from the mountainous object:

A simple man from a primitive, warring tribe, his impulses were as direct and concentrated as pinpoints of heat. No subtle concessions to reason or consequence tempered his fierce capacity to love or hate, to lavish loyalty or pity. Each emotion arose spontaneously and without complication, and was reinforced by racial tradition, tribal honour and superstition. Generations had carried it that way in his volatile Kohistani blood. (*Pakistani Bride* 30)

Qasim and Zaitoon make tracks for Kohistan; during the travel, Qasim tries to make her learn the lesson that Kohistan suits them much: “You’ll see how different it is from the plains. 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!” (*Pakistani Bride* 100) Qasim was enthused with the spirit of his forefathers; the raw and wild ranges of Kohistan were his elements.

Sidhwa adroitly uses the technique of flashback in depicting the partition; with the impact of dislocation, she raises feminist issues, side

by side, to add a new hue to the plot. The beauty and savageness of Kohistani male-autocratic landscape are expressed marvellously by the novelist. Zaitoon is the narrator of the novel; she is shown young, pretty, and an oppressed victim, a puppet in the hand of her husband and a rebel alike. Zaitoon's husband, Sakhi, is another significant character in the novel, though, he emerges late in the story; the most vivid figure in the novel is Qasim's friend Nikka, who disappears mid-way but never returns; Carol, an American wife, plays a juxtaposed role to Zaitoon; in this way, on the one side, an Indian wife is shown, while on the other, an American one is depicted; similarly, the fusion of East and West is also shown in Ruskin Bond's novel *A Flight of Pigeons* and Kamala Markanday's *Some Inner Fury*; former, based on the Indian freedom struggle, is the romantic infatuation of a married Pathan, Javed, with an unmarried British girl, Ruth; while latter, slightly dealing with the theme of freedom struggle, is directly focused on the romantic affair between Richard Marlowe and Mira. Balachandra Rajan blends two themes: East-West encounter and the partition, in his first novel, *The Dark Dancer*. In *The Pakistani Bride*, Zaitoon, at the very beginning of her marriage, tolerates the unjust and cruel behaviour of her husband, and (yet) tries to get herself entrenched in this almost new society, which never suits her; to the contrary, since the starting period of her marriage, Carol (an American wife) is shown roaming free as per her own wishes, and not

following the tribal customs; even, she enjoys an illegal relationship with Major Mushtaq. Other minor characters are Qasim's late wife Afshan, and Nikka's wife Miriam; former was bestowed upon Qasim as a gift and she was considered worth more than the loan due that was left unpaid by her father, and the later was a wife, always observing *purdah* (veil) and following all the rules of male-dominant society.

Like Carol in *The Pakistani Bride*, Manju Kapur, in her novel *Difficult Daughters*, has launched Virmati, a young woman born into an austere and high-minded household of Amritsar, who falls in love with a married Professor in her neighbourhood. Through the extra-marital relationship of Carol and major Mushtaq, Sidhwa advocates that such ties are not allowed, even in the distant Karakoram hills, where most of the society is uneducated; that's why, when Carol asks M. Mushtaq, if Farukh, having known about their illicit intimacy, would kill her, he replies: "I might, if you were my wife" (*Pakistani Bride* 224); furthermore, Sidhwa gives the full vent to the issue, when Sakhi, having seen his wife waving hand at the army trucks, roars: "You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs. . . You wanted him to stop and fuck you, didn't you!" (185) though, this is a significant and vivid example of gender-discrimination, yet, it covertly shows that sex has its bounds and it is limited within the marital barriers. At this point of sexual ties, Sidhwa surpasses Khushwant Singh, who, in his novels does "highlight the fact

that sex knows no bounds and barriers. Sexual relations may develop among any class of people without any regard of social stratification” (Singh, P. K. 133). The message Sidhwa delivered is noble in nature for the sake of the society that brings the socio-cultural history of the subcontinent to the readers in order to get them educated, and at the same time, she plays the role of a writer far better than Khushwant Singh for making a fair society:

As far as *The Bride* is concerned, Bapsi Sidhwa does an excellent job of portraying both the cultures and how they affect the life of this young girl, Zaitoon. The conclusion of the novel is in realistic scenario, one that a young woman in today’s Pakistan would face in this situation. Additionally Sidhwa’s portrayal of a young American woman, Carol, is deadly accurate and a scathing commentary on the ignorance, self-centredness and ethnocentrism of the first world. (*amazon.com*)

*The Pakistani Bride* is a poignant tale of Zaitoon, a bratty teenager’s journey to womanhood, whereby Sidhwa has thrown light upon the gender differences, which have been imposed upon a woman under the guise of traditional taboos, as if it has been a convention to a girl-child, like Zaitoon, to have tied-up blindly in the cruel hands of a tyrant husband, like Sakhi, by an insular or a traditional father, as Qasim.

The issue of gender bias becomes more aggressive, when father, a man of Pathan Culture, is connected with his adopted daughter, a girl-child of Punjabi Culture, which has no blood relation at all, only an adopted relation created by circumstances (post-independence riots):

He moved swiftly, in shadows, aware that he had to cross the border before daylight. . .suddenly. . .he realised it was a child, a little girl. Clinging to his legs, she sobbed, ‘Abba, Abba, my Abba!’ . . .The child was the size of his own little Zaitoon lost so long ago. Her sobs sounded an eerie, forlorn echo from his past. (*Pakistani Bride* 29)

Having been escaped from the attack of religious fanatics on train at Jullundur, Qasim reaches a refugee camp at Badami Bagh in Lahore; cradling the girl in his arms he wades into the flocks of refugees and comes across Nikka Pehelwan, shorter than him, but magnificently built, with cropped hair, smooth and well-oiled face. Nikka, at first sight, recognizes the distinction between the duo:

‘Is she your daughter? The Pehelwan asked.

Qasim grew tense. ‘You heard her.’

‘Where is your wife?’

‘Dead.’

‘Was she also Pathan?’ Nikka inquired. ‘The girl is dark.’

(*Pakistani Bride* 36)

Upon hearing this Qasim glares at him, but Nikka flashes a warm smile, and says, “I’m not a hill-man. I don’t know your ways” (*Pakistani Bride* 36). Another supportive story, at the very beginning of the novel, is fabricated to make the matter more emphatic; novel begins with the ongoing process of the fixing of marriage of Qasim, an ignorant boy of ten, with Afshan, a girl of sixteen. Resham Khan had promised Arbab (Qasim’s father) his daughter’s hand because he hadn’t paid the loan, borrowed from him the previous year; so he decides to sacrifice his daughter in lieu of loan; moreover, the girl was considered, by Qasim’s father, worth more than the loan due: “The sturdy, middle-aged tribesman knew just how generous the offer was. Any girl—and he had made sure that this one was able-bodied—was worth more than the loan due. . . .The boy was still a little young, but the offer was too good to pass up” (7-8). Though, to begin with, Arbab had decided of marrying the girl himself, as he had only one wife, but in a paternal passion, he determines “to bestow the girl on Qasim.” Discriminatory policy has left its influence so much that even a child of ten had “the prospect of a playmate he knew he would have the sanction to tease, to order about, and to bully!” (8)

Gender discrimination and patriarchal domination have prevailed into the roots of Pakistani society, especially the mountainous one, so much deeply that woman has no right to have her view heard and be taken seriously in most of the matters affecting her life; this all is

highlighted well in the story of Afshan; even the right of a woman provided by the Islamic religion has been snatched from her; Sidhwa raises this matter skilfully. Afshan is sitting amidst the huddle of women, and in accordance with the rule of Islam, she is being questioned whether she would like to get married with Qasim or not: “thrice she was asked if she would accept Qasim, the son of Arbab, as her husband and thrice an old aunt murmured ‘yes’ on her behalf” (*Pakistani Bride* 8); while on the other side of the fence, following the age-old tradition of gender-inequality, at mid-night, the sleepy bride-groom is told that he is going to meet his bride, so he should smarten himself up in order to impress her with all his finery. Thus, Sidhwa appears to have suggested that the root cause of gender bias is girl’s right, like Afshan, which often remains negligible and that is also left unfocused; it is the basic case study of gender inequality:

The major female figures, like Zaitoon, Carol and Miriam (Nikka, the shop vendor’s wife) are confined within the narrow framework of rules imposed in general by the patriarchal society and the male figures of the household in particular. They are not expected to play any pivotal role in the “significant” decisions, even though their feelings and their whole being might be at stake. This aspect of their

suppression is abundantly enunciated by the treatment meted out to the young Afshan. . . .(Khan 145)

Sidhwa portrays the traditional taboos, partially imposed on women, and highlights the issue of gender-disparity in post-independence scenario; when Nikka establishes himself in his business, his status in the society is elevated in comparison to his wife, Miriam. Sidhwa portrays how a Pakistani woman in such conditions has to suffer and change her behaviour in order to follow the patriarchal system of male-dominated society of the nation; author also shows how a woman is bound to follow the cultural paradoxes: “Miriam, reflecting her husband’s rising status and respectability, took to observing strict purdah. She seldom ventured out without her veil” (*Pakistani Bride* 51).

Furrukh Khan in his essay gives the extension to the issue of male-dominance in order to get it defined properly, he comments:

What the society seems to dictate is that it was permissible for Miriam to work alongside or individually on her own when it is difficult for Nikka to manage on his own. But now that he has the ability to fulfil his financial obligation in the running of his household, it is time for his wife to be segregated from the general public. It is taken for granted that the wife would comply with these guidelines. What the society seems to dictate is that as a man acquires financial

stability and stature in the society it is important for his “*Izzat*” (Honour) that his wife/daughter be “protected” from the men in the society. (145-46)

Clara Nubile consolidates the voice of Sidhwa against the issue of *Purdah* (veil) system:

. . .control over women deals with two aspects. One is women’s disinheritance from immovable property in the form of land, and their exclusion from the productive economy, involving removal from public life and seclusion to the domestic sphere of the house in the form of *purdah*. The second is the far greater control exercised by men over women’s sexuality—imposed by caste constraints—through arranged marriage, child marriage, prohibition of divorce, and strict monogamy for women. . .These strictures were enforced most severely. . .Sex-segregation was the rule in traditional system and it is still conspicuous in modern Indian society. (6)

This tribal code of honour is further exercised, when Zaitoon, after getting wedded with Sakhi, visits a river and waves hand at Army jeep going on the road; on beholding this, Sakhi loses his patience, and in fit of anger, he drags her along the crag and abuses:

You whore,' he hissed. His fury was so intense she thought he would kill her. He cleared his throat and spat full in her face. '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! (*Pakistani Bride* 185)

Commenting on the behaviour of Sakhi, a Kohistani husband, Makarand Paranjape writes: "It would seem that the entire code of honour of the tribe rests on the notions of sexual superiority and possessiveness" (99). This is not much and Zaitoon's exploitation goes on further. Sakhi shakes her like a rattle, and says, "I will kill you, you lying slit!"; though, she apologizes to be forgiven again and again, yet he slaps her hard and swinging her pitilessly like a doll flings off her. Upon this brutal and unbearable act, "in a wild lunge she blindly butted her head between the man's legs" (*Pakistani Bride* 186); through the reaction of Zaitoon, author seems to have suggested that like man, woman is also a human being and she also feels pleasure and pain, and if she is ill-treated or say beaten cruelly then she also has her limit; in the above-mentioned case, the torture reaches over the limits or sustainability of Zaitoon, so she turns rebel. Sidhwa writes:

Zaitoon knelt in misgiving and suspense. There was no viler insult a woman could inflict on a man.” But on the man’s side, a Kohistani husband’s one, he thinks that how extreme humiliation he would have felt, had someone witnessed. Glowering with thunderous hatred “he aimed a swift kick between her legs, and she fell back. Sakhi kicked her again and again and pain stabbed through her. (186).

Lifting her inert body across his shoulders, Sakhi carries her home. That night Zaitoon resolves to run away, as her only hope of survival lies only in absconding.

Through the behaviour of Sakhi (a tribal) towards Zaitoon (a wife from the plains) author seems to advocate that one must keep in the mind that this is not simply an instance of socially-inappropriate behaviour, rather, it is morally shameful act of callousness towards women. Having suffered such barbaric event, and on getting the chance, the girl, with her dilapidated fantasies seen before the marriage, carefully ventures into the unfamiliar rocks. This was the only way to breathe in an open and freer society, a de facto and de jure region:

*The bride* provides an incisive look into the treatment of women. It is the most contentious of Sidhwa’s novels, the most critical towards unjust traditions that undermine the structure of community. The novel relates how Zaitoon,

trained as an obedient Muslim girl, is captivated by the fantasies of her protector father's visions of the lost mountain paradise. Married eventually to a tribal man in the north-west regions of Pakistan, Zaitoon rapidly discovers that reality is harsh and her romantic dreams erroneous. She rebels at the cruel treatment, the beatings, mistrust and realizes that her imagined ideal community is no longer. . . .

(Dhawan 16-17)

Sidhwa seems to unravel here that on reaching its highest point, Zaitoon's torture becomes the cause of her elopement; it also signifies that the reason of this is the union of two human beings, hailing from different regions and upbringing; a plain-Lander's (wife's) behaviour seems doubtful and offensive to a highlander (husband); he endeavours to place a restriction of social taboos on her, and warns her not to cross the cultural barriers, laid down by his ancestors much ago. Another husband of the same kind and birthplace is Farukh, a Pakistani, who goes down the aisle with an American. He is an extremely jealous husband because his wife is westernized and frank; she meets everybody openly and liberally. Though, Farukh is also an Engineer, and along with Carol, he belongs to the upper-middle class of Pakistanis, yet this western-educated husband fails to fill up the ideological gap, between the East and the West; if Carol talks and smiles with a man, he feels jealous, and probably,

it seems that this is the reason for Carol to have extra marital relationship with Major Mushtaq. At this point, Farukh is parallel to Sakhi in general. This lack of trust makes him suspicious of his wife, and widens the gulf in their marital relation; that's why, after the elopement of Zaitoon, when Carol asks Major Mushtaq, if he would help the victim, he throws light on the plight of women in the hills: "women get killed for one reason or other. . .imagined insults, family honour, infidelity. . . ." (*Pakistani Bride* 223). Carol, a sufferer of her husband's jealousy, questions Major Mushtaq: "what's the matter with the men here? Why are they so insanely jealous?" (223). Mushtaq answers that killing of and jealousy against the women is universal, so Zaitoon might be killed. On listening this, Carol gets disillusioned that she has accustomed and adjusted herself in this male-dominated region; she asks Major:

'Do you think Farukh would kill me?' 'Who knows? I might, if you were my wife.'

She looked at him sharply. He was leaning forward, his eyes twinkling.

Suddenly a great deal became clear to her. . .all the time I didn't matter to you any more than that girl does as an individual to those tribals, not any more than a bitch in heat. . . .

She stood up and walked slowly to the Mess door. (*Pakistani Bride* 224)

For the first time, Carol knows that she has been exploited covertly by Major Mushtaq for a long period, just like a puppet and not more than a bitch in heat. This chapter proves that a woman, like Carol, is considered a commodity, and a man is inclined towards her to quench his lustful thirst. Furrukh Khan writes:

Sidhwa implicitly suggests that the Kohistani people and society as a unit exist in a state of historical and cultural] [petrification]. It is quite apparent that she perceives these Kohistanis (who may symbolize the Pathans as a whole) as inextricably caught in the clutches of their “ancient” (thus barbaric) traditions, belonging to a distant past mode of life, a world of ignorance in contrast to the sophisticated, “civilized” narrator who embodies the “new world.” (150)

Through the statement of Major Mushtaq, Sidhwa seems to demonstrate that the key settlers of gender parity include the socio-economic set-up, religious and cultural standards, geographical conditions, and educational level of the society. Sidhwa unfolds that in Kohistan, male-chauvinists are aggressive, where man perceives himself superior to woman; in this kind of society, males are trained to be dominant, while females are forced to be submissive; in such condition,

male, even being on the wrong path, are considered as right; while a female, on the other side of the fence, despite walking on the virtuous path, is often wrong thrust upon her. The moral judgment of such a society is taken on the gender-based dominion; for example, on the one hand, Sakhi is not opposed by people when he beats his own mother as well as his wife on the slightest pretext, though this is illegal in the eyes of Indian as well as Pakistani judicial system; while on the other side, having been exploited beyond limits by her husband, when Zaitoon ventures to flee from the harsh territory of Kohistan, her husband, father-in-law, and others chase to bump her off, because in Kohistan absconding of wife is a disgraceful matter for the family, and it is considered as an unpardonable offence, for which the punishment is death. Regarding this context, Simone de Beauvoir rightly observes almost the same: “Marriage subjugates and enslaves woman and it leads her to “aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently toward death without questioning its purpose” (500).

One day, while walking on the bank of the river with Major Mushtaq, Carol catches the sight of a young woman’s head floating in the water. The purport of the episode is emblematic, through which the author appears to indicate towards women like Carol about their upcoming future:

A sooty shadow in a pool of water distracted her and she turned round. A darkness swayed on the ripples, and, completing its rotation beneath the surface, the face bobbed up—a young, tribal woman's face.

Carol made a strangled sound and fell to her knees. In one leap Farukh was beside her. He saw the pallid water-logged face. 'God! Someone's cut the head clean off!'

With a motion that appeared serenely willed, the face turned away and, resting a bloodless cheek on the water for a second, hid beneath. A tangled, inky mass of hair swirled to the surface and floated on the lapping current.

Carol knelt horrified in the blue haze rising from the river. She knelt frozen in a trance that urged her to leap into the air on a scream and flee the mountains.

'Probably asked for it,' said Farukh. (*Pakistani Bride* 225)

Thus, in both cases (of Zaitoon and Carol), after having been disillusioned and finding the society almost unbearable and uninhabitable, the duo resolve to set themselves off this male autocratic society, though the level of realization is quite different from each other; the absconding of Zaitoon and her husband's efforts to recover her, familiarize Carol with the harsh reality of women in Kohistan; while unlike Carol, Zaitoon has to suffer a lot:

Carol. . .staring into the dark. ‘. . .asked for it,’ isn’t that what Farukh had said? Women the world over, through the ages, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, to get importunately impregnated, beaten-up, bullied and disinherited. It was an immutable law of nature. What had the tribal girl done to deserve such grotesque retribution? Had she fallen in love with the wrong man? Or was she simply the victim of a vendetta? Her brother might have killed his wife, and his wife’s kin slaughtered her. . .there could be any number of reasons. . .

Whoever said people the world over are the same, was wrong. The more she traveled, the more she realised only the differences. (*Pakistani Bride* 226)

Carol knows that the ethnic discrimination has been prevalent and created since ancient times; in other words, gender inequality has its own history; the writer puts forward this through the realization of Carol; her encounter with a chopped off head floating on the water compels her to have a premonition that her independent attitude would get her killed sooner or later; otherwise, despite the morbid jealousy of her husband, she had decided to settle in Pakistan earlier, but the news of Zaitoon’s assassination by her husband and his clansmen jolts her resolution to stay there. Having found the glimpse of her would-be condition through the

telepathic peephole of Zaitoon's plight, she realizes that one needs "an inherited memory of ancient rites, taboos and responses: inherited immunities: a different set of genes. . ." (*Pakistani Bride* 227); as she is not programmed to fit into this society, so she doesn't have any of these characteristics; consequently, she resolves to return to her native land: "I think I'm finally beginning to realise something. . .Your civilization is too ancient. . .too different. . .and it has ways that can hurt me. . .really hurt me. . .I'm going home" (229), as Randhir Pratap Singh aptly remarks: "Zaitoon's running away from the hills to the plains and Carol's going back to America seems to suggest that it is very difficult, almost impossible, to surmount the cultural barriers" (65). Qasim's nostalgic feeling for and his attraction towards his birthplace compels him to make Zaitoon's marriage fixed with a man of his tribe; this sentiment also signifies his love for his Pathan culture; thus, the issue of cultural incompatibility comes to the centre from periphery.

Lack of prudence in Zaitoon, as compared with Carol, is due to her upbringing, since the former is brought up in a Western and developed country, America, while the later, due to having lost her mother at the age of ten, has been under the guardianship of Qasim, a tribal, and Nikka's wife, Miriam, always observing *purdah*, which has taught her at the mere age of eleven:

‘You are now a woman. Don’t play with boys—and don’t allow any man to touch you. This is why I wear a burkha. . .’ From her Zaitoon learned to cook, sew, shop and keep her room tidy: and Miriam, who spent half her day visiting neighbours, took Zaitoon with her. Entering their dwellings was like stepping into gigantic wombs; the fecund, fetid world of mothers and babies. (*Pakistani Bride* 55)

Thereafter, Miriam decides to have a talk with Qasim to insist him not to send Zaitoon to school, and he agrees; she also carries her in such a neighbourhood, where “rooms with windows open to the street were allotted to the men: the dim maze of inner rooms to the women” (*Pakistani Bride* 56). Like Carol, who finds an indication of her future, Zaitoon has no such example from which she could take any idea of her would-be condition; so, it is easier for an America-born, and educated wife to find her way out of such patriarchal society, in comparison with an orphan at the mere age of ten years that has been adopted by a man of a conservative culture, and which is nurtured as well as mentored by a homely wife, who has been obeying the socio-gender and cultural taboos imposed upon a woman for centuries. From this point of view, Sidhwa has fictionalized Zaitoon in a right, emphatic, and true way, in order to get the reader convinced with the manner she has introduced the heroine of the story, and for the good relevance of the book: “With an

entertaining, highly readable writing style, Ms Sidhwa draws the reader into Pakistan and its peculiar—and yet universal—problems. Her conclusion, not completely definitive, does what any good book does. It leaves us wanting more” (Qtd. in *Pakistani Bride* n. p.).

It is through the depiction of the matrimonial failure of an uneducated wife, Zaitoon, contrasting with Carol, an educated wife, successfully revolting against her husband in the society of Kohistan, the two cultures—Punjabi and Kohistani Pathan culture of Pakistan and American culture, have been deftly portrayed by Sidhwa. Covertly, author also raises the issue of female education, so that the gulf between man and woman, Kohistan and Punjab, hill and plain, literacy and illiteracy, Eastern and Western, dominant and submissive, tormentor and tormented, can be filled up. Author shows the mingling of three mutually incompatible cultures, and the aftermath of such union through the marriage of a plain-city-bred uneducated girl with an uneducated tribal, and an educated American girl with a Pakistani educated tribal man; the encounter of East and West is also interesting; author seems to convey that in such cases, not only uneducated couples fail, but education also fails in paving the way to a successful marital life of the duos. Indira Bhatt also perceives the same:

The two cultures cannot meet, be they of Pakistan and America or the mountains and the plains. Sidhwa portrays

that society which strictly abides by the old traditional male made rules to 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. (160)

Zaitoon's experience of marriage to a hill man turns bitter when she is raped by two unknown tribals who keep her hostage for two hours:

When Zaitoon regained consciousness, her body screamed with pain. She wept, putting her trembling legs through the shalwar. Her brown skin gaped through new rents in the cloth. She had not seen her legs in days and gazed in revulsion at the twitching, fleshless shanks. A red spot spread on the cloth between her thighs. She folded her legs quickly and covered the stain with front of her shirt. Printed with faded lavender flowers, it was torn down the front and at the shoulders. (*Pakistani Bride* 230)

In the above lines the faded lavender flowers have a symbolic significance—the lost honour of a wife or a woman; after this dishonourable and disgusting act, her life turns so grim and different in the hills that her youthful days spent in the plains seemed to her like a bygone age, which now appears a distant reality. Now this escapee wife has the only intention to get the bridge over the river, across which lies

her land and subsequent freedom. Floating through halcyon scenes of her past and the reminiscences melted into hallucination, her delirium receded, and the aspiration (to find the bridge) rises as a must need in that pathetic condition and after that bruising experience:

. . . *The Pakistani Bride*, is an exclusive paean to women's zest for life, their adaptability and indomitable courage. In this novel, no women character is a defeatist, they never yield. Whether it is Zaitoon, Carol or Afshan, the prime concern of Sidhwa's women is preservation of life. Despite being brutally treated by her husband, Zaitoon does not commit suicide. Her instinct for self preservation keeps her going. (Sinha 200)

Here, Zaitoon emerges like a heroine, be it a bruising experience of an inhabitant of plain city or a harsh reality of the hill; she comes before the readers as a powerful character, not merely a weak one. After being raped, "Zaitoon awakened late in the evening. Her pain had eased and her mind was alert again. The comforting roar of the river throbbed in her ears, and once more her instinct for life came to the surface" (*Pakistani Bride* 232); in fact all her senses were alert, even, while sleeping in the dreams she had the premonition of whatever unpleasant might occur to her. She dreams as if Sakhi is sneaking towards her on hands and knees; she feels dead after all. She is now instantly old and her tenure has spent,

so she is ripe enough to die: “She is aware of his grief, and of the relentless pride and sense of honour that drives him. It is not an act of personal vengeance; he is dispensing justice—the conscience and weight of his race are behind him” (235).

The novelist seems enough aware of the age long history of gender disparity and xenophobia that has been assimilated by men of Kohistan up to so much high level that to give the retribution to a fugitive wife is not considered a matter of personal vengeance, rather it has been in retaliation for the vitiation of pride and dignity of the ethnic group made by her. During the moments of her premonition “she had lived through one version of her destiny and that somehow she had escaped it, though at price. . .her destiny would have taken the exact shape of what she had imagined” (*Pakistani Bride* 235).

Though, Zaitoon reaches the bridge at night, yet she doesn't cross it taking extra precaution, lest she should be hunted down by her husband; instead of it, she waits for the light of dawn to come up so that she may easily observe if she is under the surveillance or not. In the day, when tribesmen look from afar, Major Mushtaq standing on the bridge hears a faint, crocking voice coming from between the boulders: “Major Sahib? Major Sahib?” (*Pakistani Bride* 238) Major guessed about the whereabouts of the girl from the seminal circles of rocks that the inverted cradle hid the girl. Zaitoon, having spent many days without food, has

become so much weak that when Mushtaq lifted her she weighed equal to a five year old child. Major carries the girl on his shoulders, wrapped in blanket, like a baggage containing stones and chunks of wood. After a little while, Sakhi also reaches, and having recognized the blanket he understands that Zaitoon is inside it; he insists to let him see the girl but Mushtaq emphatically says that his wife is dead, and he has no option but to believe him. Major swears that his honour will not be sullied; the statement of such guarantee was delivered because Major knew that the main cause behind the intention to have her killed is to bring the absconded wife to justice for, in Kohistan, fleeing of a wife is an unforgivable crime, and to save the lost or looted pride and honour, a husband has to kill the same. So, he was on the right path according to the Kohistani tradition; it also gets verification here that gender discrimination has diffused into the roots of Pathan customs and the veins of its followers alike.

Having studied the expression of Sakhi (that he was getting influenced by arguments of the Major), and to divert his mind from the matter if the girl is alive or dead, the Major concentrates his own mind on the boulders that had put her out of their sight. Finding no alternate, Sakhi, a tribal husband, goes to the same site where his wife had been hidden at night:

Leaping up the boulders he looked into the stone-strewn bowl. Immediately he knew a great many things. His quick, hunter's eyes saw where the girl had leaned, and where she had fallen and bled. He knew the route she had come by, how emaciated she had become and where the blanket was spread. (*Pakistani Bride* 243)

Sliding into the hollow, he kicks over a stone as if it had been culpable to have her wife concealed; he finds a piece of cloth with faded print of mauve flowers, and a fluffy knot of threads shed from the blanket; both of these articles have their own particular significance, the faded mauve flowers are the emblem of a naïve Punjabi girl, traumatized by the Kohistani customs of gender inequality, the fluffy knot of threads of the blanket scattered on the rock, stands for humiliation and indignity of the Pathan tradition made by a wife pertaining to a different culture. That's why, on listening to the news of escapee's death, and viewing the piece of cloth with faded mauve flowers and the fluff of threads of the blanket, "Misri Khan's massive shoulders straitened. He thrust his chest forward and his head rose high. It was as if a breeze had cleared the poisonous air suffocating them and had wafted an intolerable burden from their shoulders" (*Pakistani Bride* 244). Hereafter, as the author fabricated, Zaitoon might have two alternates: firstly, she may live with Carol at

Lahore; secondly, she might be proposed for marriage after a decent interval by Asiq Hussain.

The novel is based on a true story; but it is a work of fiction, so Sidhwa has altered and omitted certain minor details of the tale, like the murder of absconding wife, for the sake of a successful and didactic plot and to give a message to its readers:

Sidhwa's view of life is optimistic. She loves life in spite of all its ugliness, brutality and horror. In the original story on which *The Pakistani Bride* is based, the girl is murdered but Sidhwa makes Zaitoon survive. She seems to give a message to women that life must be preserved at all costs since one can fight oppression only when one is alive. It is worthy of note that no woman character dies in any of her novels.

(Singh, R. P. 89-90)

Thus, Sidhwa becomes successful in overlapping the age-long-old gender-discrimination with the history of cultural-diversity on the basis of the partition of the sub-continent.

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