

Female Identity in Patriarchal Societies: A Study of Women in Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man and The Pakistani Bride.

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Abstract

Bapsi Sidhwa was an acclaimed Pakistani-American novelist recognized for her vibrant narratives and examination of subjects such as gender, identity, and cultural conflict. Born in Karachi and brought up in Lahore, Sidhwa was part of Pakistan's Parsi community. Her writing frequently explored the intricacies of Partition, diaspora, and women's experiences within South Asian society. Sidhwa gained international recognition as she established herself as a literary link between South Asia and the West. Her writings are considered essential for readers who wish to comprehend the human aspects of historical disruptions and cultural separations. Let me know if you would like to explore her life or works further! In this chapter, the researcher aims to reveal the framework of resistance in Bapsi Sidhwa's novels. This study analyzes the utilization of terms like resilience, resistance observation, and identity to assess the progressive depiction of female characters. They look into the 'resistance' of women as a potential method for escaping oppression and strengthening the feminist perspective. Sidhwa's famous works are the best evidence for the purpose of study of identity and observation her works like The Pakistani Bride, Water, Ice-Candy-Man, and An American Brat have been cited as evidence of women's ongoing struggle for endurance in the face of unethical interference inflicted upon them by their male counterparts in religious, socio-economic, and political settings. Given that India and Pakistan serve as the backdrop for her novels, it is crucial to understand how women are limited within the constraints of male-dominated norms.

Keywords: Recognition, Resistance, Perspectives,

Constraints,

Introduction

Postcolonial feminist and creative writers like Bapsi Sidhwa depict an image of oppressed women who challenge their situations and evolve into strong, autonomous individuals. Currently, there is an ongoing effort in the creation of the postcolonial stage, which reveals the influence of Western discourse on cultural settings that are focused on reclaiming previous domains and acquiring the knowledge to rise significantly

above them toward a point where both colonies honor and recognize each other's endeavors to cultivate space and identity. If the oppressed formulate their own method of resistance, this aim can be realized. South Asian writers have strived to illustrate the divide that exists between the traditional and the marginalized, the affluent and the impoverished, the powerful and the weak, as well as the oppressor and the victim. Authors such as Bapsi Sidhwa, who are aware of the widespread inequality and injustice that continue to exist in the societies of India and Pakistan, capture the attention of their audience and motivate them to pay close attention to the topic in order to foster social change. In this patriarchal structure, women have no option but to combat anything that threatens to limit their rights. The theme of identity is significant in the works of postmodern feminists. Resistance has been viewed as acts of protest, defiance, and disruption by postcolonial theorists like Fanon, Said, and Bhabha. However, a particular framework has yet to be established. At first, the researcher was uncertain whether the details about 'resistance' should be included here or in the previous chapter. This uncertainty arises because the first and second core chapters address the condition of female characters who find themselves in a period of silence and their journey toward liberation. By utilizing *The Pakistani Bride* and *Water* as the foundational framework of the first core chapter, the researcher aimed to examine the submissiveness of the female characters.

The patriarchal system is at the core of women's exploitation. The concept of 'father' is used to elevate the system to power, while the idea of mother is assigned domestic duties. As long as their sexuality is defined by men, women cannot attain freedom. The patriarchal structure has objectified women as nothing more than sexual instruments for men. In such societies, women are also elevated to the status of commodities and desire. As part of the patriarchal order, women have become mere appendages. The dominance of hegemony hinges on economic principles. Women's roles, including motherhood, childcare, and household management, remain undefined and therefore unpaid. Men's employment is quantifiable and viewed as valuable, whereas women's responsibilities are perceived as insignificant, despite requiring greater effort and energy. They were entrusted with domestic welfare, while men were responsible for its financial stability. Women ultimately suffer the consequences of political oppression, stigmatization, and persecution. The combined forces of imperialism, culture, and patriarchy have a detrimental and isolating impact on a woman's identity.

Analysis and Discussion

The Pakistani Bride addresses the oppression of women in Pakistan's secluded regions. It highlights the various ways in which women are oppressed in Pakistani society and portrays the ambiguous and unstable social standing of women in tribal communities. The Novelist Sidhwa employs observation as a narrative tool to uncover the complexities of identity development, particularly for women and marginalized groups. Her main characters frequently find themselves at the junction of various identities, perceiving the influences that shape them while striving to establish their own sense of identity. In the novel *Ice-Candy Man* and *American Brat* serve as the basis to illustrate the evolution of female characters from passivity

to strength. The story *Ice Candy Man* takes place during the Partition of India and centers on Lenny, a young Parsi girl. Lenny's identity as a Parsi — a neutral minority — provides her with a distinct viewpoint on the religious and political turmoil. Through her perspective, Sidhwa explores personal and collective identities, emphasizing how these identities become fragmented during times of national crisis. In *American Brat*, there exists a degree of semi-autobiographical elements focusing on Feroza, a young Parsi girl sent to the U. S. to escape Pakistan's conservative surroundings. As Feroza adjusts to life in a foreign country, she experiences significant transformation, wrestling with issues of cultural integration, family obligations, and self-exploration. The novel *Pakistani Bride* also addresses the conflict between personal aspirations and societal norms. Zaitoon, the main character, struggles to define her identity as she finds herself torn between the customs of her tribal heritage and the modern influences of urban Pakistan. Her journey reflects the tension between individual autonomy and cultural norms. The story emphasizes the restricted roles available to women within patriarchal societies. Zaitoon's identity is influenced by her status as a woman within a strict tribal framework, where her value is frequently tied to her roles as a daughter, wife, or object. Qasim, who takes Zaitoon in, also faces identity challenges. As a man who departs from his tribal homeland for Lahore, he wrestles with adjusting to urban living while retaining tribal traditions, illustrating the intricate nature of identity in a diasporic setting. Zaitoon's inner journey is characterized by instances of self-examination. As she observes her surroundings, she gradually begins to question the roles assigned to her and considers escape, indicating a growing understanding of her own autonomy.

Therefore, is finally decided that, since the chapters of these novels will be discussing the phases of transition that the female characters undergo, the best use of this space would be to define the essence of the word Identity and observation. It would expect an objective review of whether or not the female characters in all of the selected novels by Bapsi Sidhwa are able to arrive at their identities. The term "Identity" may be interpreted in a plethora of ways, as of subversion, opposition and transformation. In this segment, the researcher makes an attempt to analyse the subversive phase of resistance on the premise of Homi Bhabha's notions of hybridity and ambivalence. In this school of thought, postcolonial thinkers deny the supremacy and efficacy of cultural imperialism and invalidate the essentialist selves that are the fruit of subversion. She uncovers pockets of resistance in the voids that exist between imperial aspirations and indigenous expectations. According to Rehman Valiyur "The oppressed figure out methods to modify and displace colonial power so that it better serves their purposes in these in between zones, according to this paradigm."¹ Because of the hybridity, mimicry, and liminality of the colonial power, the researcher views this subversion as an instrument of resistance that may be used against it. As a means of objecting hegemonic power, the notion of resistance is often woven into the storylines of classics of postcolonial literature. According to Jefferess, "Identity refers to a systematic socio-political strategic conflict against the framework of imperial capitalism as well as political entities."²

The writer uses the principle of an adverse or hostile paradigm and in other words, this type of resistance, rooted on Fanon's ethic of humanism, contextualizes the colonial identity that was created by the colonizers in order to form an indigenous identity. This type of resistance also resists the crosswalks of ethnic background, sexual identity, and social stratification that were replicated by the colonizers. The idea of "Self -Discovery and Transformation" is the name given by David Jeffress to the kind of resistance takes into consideration. In Postcolonial literature: Culture, Liberation and Transformation, explore resistance in the context of transformation, which is distinct from the strategies that were previously identified. When voicing this distinct strategy, he provides support for his ideas by referring to the social and political beliefs that Gandhiji advocated. Jeffress is of the opinion that the potential for change may be realised through the use of this alternate strategy.

The literary creations of Sidhwa can be analyzed when viewed through the perspective of the previously mentioned three forms of resistance. The Pakistani Bride, Water, Ice-Candy-Man, and An American Brat of Bapsi Sidhwa concentrate on the oppression of women and their struggle to liberate themselves from the grips of patriarchy. Acting as the voice for the marginalized, Sidhwa narrates the battles and defiance against the systems that alienate women from mainstream society. To navigate their existence within the traditional context, the female characters employ various methods of resistance. According to the texts, her bond with her husband exemplifies humility. The scriptures of Hindu mythology dictate that a woman should never be permitted to make her own choices, particularly as outlined in the law of Manu. Authentic women are those capable of being successful mothers, wives, and daughters while recognizing the patriarchal constraints that persist in both private and public spheres. Traits such as celibacy, moral strength, suffering, and awareness must be exhibited by these individuals. In relation to Feminism and the Individual, Kalpana highlights this context by referencing the response given by Prophet Almushtafa to a woman from Opalisse concerning pain. She states: "That the query has been posed by a woman and not by a man since a man does not know what it is like to be in agony" ³ She notes that it is particularly relevant because the woman alone understands the number of scars she has been carrying for some time and the extent of psychological, spiritual, and social bondage she has suffered and continues to endure. No one can truly fathom how deeply sorrow can degrade a person's dignity, self-worth, and humanity. The narrative power of Sidhwa's storytelling demonstrates that women are regarded as subordinate beings in contemporary society. This incisive narration from a feminist perspective distinguishes sex, power, gender, and their significance in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

Bapsi Sidhwa, a renowned writer recognized for her significant books like The Pakistani Bride and Ice-Candy Man (which was also released as Cracking India), delves into deep subjects like displacement, marginalization, and the intricate connection between gender and national identity. Her characters frequently struggle with their fragmented identities, which are influenced by significant historical events,

especially the Partition of India. Sidhwa demonstrates how self-reflection becomes interwoven with the ideas of survival and resilience through her stories. Her characters confront the dual hurdle of aligning their individual experiences with the shared histories that shape their communities, emphasizing the complex interplay of identity in times of social change. Sidhwa explores the idea of identity from the angles of history and the experiences of diaspora people. Their written compositions provide a complex and thorough examination of selfhood, adding significantly to the South Asian literary scene.

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