



**Subjugation and the Othering in Bapsi Sidwa's *The Pakistani Bride*:
 A Muted Group Theory (MGT) Perspectives**

Raj Wali Khan

Ph.D. Scholar in English, Islamia College University Peshawar
rwalikhan@gmail.com

Syed Sajjad Ali

Lecturer in English NUML Peshawar campus
ssali@numl.edu.pk

Hina Abid

M.Phil scholar in English, University of Lahore
hinaabid254@gmail.com

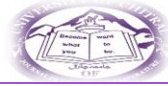
Abstract

The stringent patriarchal system and the intricacies of social conditioning, through coercion and ideological indoctrination concerning gender values, are peculiar to the Kohistani culture. It must be explored before the emancipation of women in Kohistani tribal society. Bapsi Sidwa's *The Pakistani Bride* portrays a girl Zaitoon's life; a female subjected to patriarchal circumstances. She is treated, to some extent, the same way as in Simon de Bouvier's "The Second Sex", However, the peculiarity of Kohistani culture perhaps make it worse. The paper explores the deep causes of female subjugation and Othering in society. Moreover, the paper also advocates the female strengths and individuality implemented in contemporary Kohistani culture by tracing its tenets according to Muted Group Theory (MGT).

Keywords: Marginalization, Dominance, Culture, Patriarchy, Language, Religion Hegemonic Masculinity, Muted Group Theory

Introduction

Society represents man and woman as separate identities, and this gender reality expands from cradle to the last breath of human life. Stereotypes and traditions (Kohistani & Pashtun) have adverse effects on any society, and it becomes a drawback in the progression of society. Some stereotypes and vicious values/ideals in culture are constantly inculcating and perpetuating within the minds of the masses. Through generations, these stereotypes of male dominance, egotism, sovereignty, chauvinism, and female subordination and oppression are converged rapidly in



Pashtun and Kohistani cultures. The ideologies (set of ideas and ideals) basic to any community and its structure are under the control of the culture particularly. The constant backward and rural factors in lifestyle and their ideologies are building and de-constructing society in a binary nature. The male's domination in almost every aspect of human life had pushed the female to the periphery of society, considering them as inferiors and insignificant entities in the world, even that the communication system of that very culture is predominant by masculine language. Gender communication differences are not only an important topic in the modern western world but have also remained a controversial debate in past, “when women challenged the wide use of masculine language in social and organizational settings in 1860” (Kramarae, 2005; Leaper & Ayres, 2007b). A particular language points to a specific culture, hence if culture is male-dominated, the very language of culture might also favor males. The French feministic proponent Beauvoir says, “This has always been a man’s world (Beauvoir, 1997)”. Hence, as mentioned before, the dominant class is also given privileges in language while inferior are left behind.

Many scholars like Lawrence (1959), Lakoff & Lakoff (2004), and Kellner (2010) have turned the academic spotlight on the ways that how culture reproduces social inequalities and dividing society into dominant and marginalized classes. As Khan (2016) States “Marginalization is powerlessness while dominance is the sign of powerfulness, simply, we can say male signifies dominance while female connotes marginalization in Kohistani culture”. Consequently, these stereotypes are framing and transferring these traditions to other generations, which results in female inferiority from generation to generation.

Women who belong to the Kohistani culture have always been disappointed in their rights, as their culture is excessively imprudent and strict in so far it relates to females. Kohistani culture reflects a woman as a commodity to fulfill a man’s lust and to keep her as a showpiece in his home. The same image is portrayed in Bapsi Sidwa’s *The Pakistani Bride* (2008) in which a girl Zaitoon is victimized by the Kohistani Patriarchal system.

Literature Review

To deal with the problem of gender inequality in society, Muted Group Theory (Henceforth: MGT) (Ardener, 2008) is a handy kit for analyses and exploration of the marginalized and subordinate class of society. A dominant gender class of society (male) represents their ideas with



liberty and implies command over the thoughts and lingual behavior of a marginalized class (female). Muted group theory deals with the gender communication system and gender lingual-disparity phenomenon and different aspects of gender inequality that vary in male and female class.

Genders are recognized due to the binary division of society into dominant and subordinate classes in society. Kramarea, states that “People at the top of the societal hierarchy are the ones privileged to define what it means to a female or anything else in a given culture (Kramarea, 1999)”. People, those are highly privileged and have dominancy and power in all matters; they force their decision in other people’s life accordingly. In other words, the MGT (2005) discusses the patterns and aspects (female suppression, use of force, and taboo language) of patriarchy that support the male hegemonic ideologies and women's perceived muteness. In the last decade of 2000, the MGT has gained considerations on raising voice on women's muteness/silence and subjugation in society. In a male-oriented society, where females are supposed to live as dependent on their male counterparts of the family and have no right to act according to their desires, ultimately their speech gets muted. The communication scholars Kramarae (1981) and Orbe (1994) had implemented a muted group theory to underpin women's perspectives and experiences in society.

Kramarae (2005) has pinpointed that the researchers are more interested in asking questions about the issues of women's subjugation in society, how women are grappling in their daily lives to get an equal position. MGT is a relevant theory in portraying the experiences of *Othering* for females from the language, power, and patriarchy perspectives. MGT’s Scholars argue that “Women’s voices are less heard than men’s in parts because they are trying to express women’s experiences (Henley & Kramarae, 2001: 38)”. Kramarae (2005: 55) has mentioned that “In many situations, women are more constrained than are men in what they can say, when and with what results. Accepted language practices have been constructed primarily by men to express their experiences. This means that women are constrained (muted)”. According to Kramarae (1981) language is the creation of men, so communication between men and women has not been on the same level. This is the language that defines absolute power among different groups of society, and it is the use of language that is required to maintain a powerful hold on others.



The language is man-made and so far, easy for them (men) to communicate. Kramarae (2001:21) has proposed that “Women perceive the world differently from men because of women’s and men’s different experiences and activities rooted in the division of labor.” MGT discusses the communication patterns of those, who are relative to the non-dominant group. The female’s communication patterns and their language are assumed inferior as it lacks power. Female voices and sounds are polite in communication (Kellner, 2010; Khan & Faran, 2016) therefore, include them in the subordinate group. Patriarchy is a socially and culturally allowed domination of men in families. This dominant position of men is given by culture and families, which are reckoned and recognized through male bloodlines in society. In a patriarchal system family, the father is given authority, he is the decision-maker of the family. He must decide on behalf of all family members.

Engels (2004) has confirmed that it is “the earliest system of domination by establishing patriarchy, which is the world-historical defeat of the female”. These lines are so powerful in elaborating on the females' defeat in world history in the name of dominance. Patriarchy is also said to be defined as a political schema that distributes unequal power between the genders in the same society and culture (Lakoff & Lakoff 2001). The heads of these political organizations are men and try to take over women in their houses. Patriarchy as Engel believes is the “Ideologies of inequity (patriarchy) and the practice of violence are inextricably linked”. To say this is to clearly define the strong link between patriarchy and domestic violence on females. A strict patriarchal system could be discerned in Afghanistan under the Taliban’s rule, where females are not allowed to openly go to markets, and they are instructed to cover every inch of their skin while going out. Furthermore, Females were not allowed to get an education and were treated in a subordination position. This relation of dominance and subordination is the creation of a patriarchal system.

Beauvoir (1949) has introduced the concept of *the Other* vividly in her book *The Second Sex*. The term the other can be easily interpreted and comprehend as a relationship between master and slave. The concept of Othering is defined as a process in which entities do not set up in equal relationships. One entity is the powerful always and dominant while the rest of the entities are included in fewer priorities. Being a female in a patriarchal society has established a relationship



of dominance and subordination, which simply leads to define a female as the Other. Asian females are mostly deprived of their rights, and they fall into the category of Othering. Many female authors have written about this condition of females in their books, as Simone de Beauvoir(1949:467) the early exponent of females says in her book, “No one is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or scornful than the man, who is anxious about his virility”. She further adds, “Her wings are cut, and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly....”. Simone de Beauvoir on page number (468) has elucidates clearly, how tough it is for females to handle their husbands because the chief and foremost men of the family always depict themselves in a clear dominant position. As she says “ To catch a husband is an art, to hold him is a job”. These words clearly state the position of a female for striving to keep his husband in a good relationship in the home, which is no less than doing a 24-hour job for her

Kissack (2011:545) has pinpointed that “Thus, assigned to a set of language rules that marginalizes their words, women are doubly restricted from expressing their voice”. The women are not allowed to express their language and voice. The language rules are organized by the male gender of society. Kissack (2010) in his research conceptually seeks to find the answers to women's status in organizations. Organizations are extremely patriarchal in their nature and masculine language spread its claws in creating gender disparity. Kissack's (2011) findings concentrate on the textual polarity of males and the authenticity of females, hence females are deprived to write their views in language. The critical aspects of these findings are also the basic assumptions of the MGT.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The study is purely qualitative in nature because the text has been analyzed descriptively from the perspective of Muted Group Theory (MGT)(see for detail, Griffin, 2003; Kramarae, 1981; Treichler & Kramarae, 1983). The research article has applied a textual analysis method to reach specific meanings according to the subjective theory.

The theory of Kramarae (2005) postulates that a language is a man-made construction that is a handy way to control and pursued the female accordingly, sometimes by force or by trick. This tool empowers the male to construct and reconstruct the social phenomenon for their purpose. Kramarae, one of the leading scholars in the communication theory, believes to change the status



of women (lower group) in society, the change of language is very essential in society because the language and ideas of women are always overlooked by the male.

Analysis of *The Pakistani Bride*

The Pakistani Bride (Sidhwa, 2008) is a novel about a girl's life Zaitoon written by a female proponent Bapsi Sidhwa. She wrote this novel in her early 20's during her trip to the tribal mountains area. On her way, Sidhwa encountered a true story about the atrocities of a tribal girl. She has portrayed particularly the story of a girl Zaitoon, who was being sexually subjugated and oppressed in her life. As the theme deals with a girl named Zaitoon, she takes refuge under Qasim during the subcontinent's partition. Zaitoon loses her parents during the massive massacre that occurred at the time of migration. Qasim a tribal man saves her life and takes her to Lahore, where they spent the next fifteen in an urban area. He raises Zaitoon as her daughter. When Zaitoon reaches puberty, Qasim decides to marry Zaitoon to a tribal boy Sakhi belonging to his region. Also, Zaitoon's marriage may strengthen his relationship with his tribe.

The Pakistani Bride (2008, TPB henceforth) depicts different elements and characteristics of geographically and culturally different areas like Lahore city and the barren tribal area of the Kohistani Mountains. Zaitoon, who is brought up within the urban lifestyle, cannot manage to adjust herself to the rustic area of the mountains. The story unfolds the indescribable fluctuations and physical torments of Zaitoon's life after getting married to an uneducated and uncivilized person. The brutal and rigid cultural and linguistic behaviors (language use) of tribal men in the mountains left Zaitoon bewildered. She became the utmost victim of female discrimination and humiliation by her husband Sakhi. Finally, when Zaitoon loses her patience, she decides to stand against those atrocities and runs away from arduous married life.

In the novel, Zaitoon is shown to confront many oppressive situations while living her miserable married life. It is because she is subjected to the patriarchal rule of Kohistan. The Kohistani culture further suppresses and represses a woman due to its geographic location, illiteracy, and male-dominated tribal tenets.

To deal with the phenomenon of subjugation the early part of the novel introduces another pathetic girl, Afshan, who is the recompensed prize to Qasim's father from Afshan's father for not



paying back the debt. This female trade dilemma of an atrocious culture, which clearly shows the bitter appalling, and heart- saddened situations of females in a patriarchal culture. Men having their rule over women and women are being traded as animals or commodities of daily lives. Critics like Farrukh Khan (1996) states, “Such a transaction reveals the status of a woman as nothing more than a bargaining commodity, whose role as such has already been decided” (TPB:142). As Qasim’s father tells the debt matter in flushed anger to his son and Qasim’s remarks are evident to prove the fierce nature of a tribal little young boy.

“You know because of the bad feeling between me and Resham khan? It is because of a loan I made him last year. He hasn’t made me yet. The boy spat knowingly. Looking up from his ancient gun, he met his father’s gaze with theatrical intensity. I will kill him with this gun, he announced, his hazel eyes flashed” (TPB¹:1).

The young boy reflects the fanatic cultural roots that are inherited in their blood from generation to generation. The zealot and fierce behavior of killing people on mere affairs of money and property is the common business of their lives. Male domination and sovereignty are the landmark characteristic of their strict culture, where women are undoubtedly no less than equal to animals. Qasim’s father replies soothingly to his son;

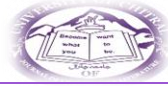
“Resham Khan has promised us with his daughter.....The boy was a still little young, but the offer was too good to pass on” (TPB: 2).

The bargaining of a girl Afshan has demonstrated, how ruthless the laws of tribal culture work. A man not being able to pay off his debt is accorded to trade her daughter as a useful commodity and accepted by another family proudly. The will of a girl is not important, neither at the time of bargaining nor at the time of marriage settlement:

“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 (TPB: 8)”.

When Afshan saw Qasim, she was bewildered as she was married to a young boy.

¹ TPB:1 MEANS The Pakistani Bride page:1



“The girl did not know whether to laugh or cry. She had been told that her groom was very young, but she had thought that he would be, like herself, at least fifteen. She began to laugh, while tears of disappointment slid down her cheeks. She laughed uncontrollably” (TPB:10).

Here her all-girly desires are also compromised. It is portrayed here, how women are marginalized in Kohistani's patriarchal society. They have no right in the decision-making process of their own lives. They are snatched from the power of decision-making since they are born as daughters. Qasim Khan left his village after the deaths of his children and wife and went to Delhi in search of a new life, where he was confronted bitterly with a Sikh, and the battle went worst on arguments. The Sikh abused Qasim Khan and his tribe by saying, “You filthy son of a Muslim mountain hog (TPB: 16)”.

The words were a severe insult to Qasim's tribe and religion, so in response, Qasim to save the pride of his culture and tribe suffocated that Sikh to death. This extremist male supremacy and pride of tribes are the legacy of Kohistani's people which is inculcated into the minds of young boys from their very childhood. They feel no guilt and criminality to kill someone in the name of pride. As Bapsi Sidhwa has portrayed in the novel defining the nature of tribal people:

“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 honor, and superstition. Generations had carried it that way in his volatile Kohistani blood (TPB: 23).”

From the perspective of patriarchy, it is valid to discuss the education system, which is the most important jewel for any girl in any nation, but in male-dominant cultures, women are also banished from cherishing this right. The Pakistani Bride shows the education system for females in the novel is itself patriarchal and involves a process of Othering. The education imparted to females also creates boundaries and partitions in gender and shoves females to domestic slavery and subservience.



This kind of educational training is so interweaved with the culture and tradition, that females do not comprehend its consequences and push themselves to obey men's class blindly. The way females should be dressed, eat, fashion, and talk; all these characteristics of females are monitored cautiously and are observed under high restrictions of cultural and moral codes. Females are observed under strict principles of Eastern culture. But on the whole, girls are not to be accorded to get an education as there is no beneficial use of their education in the view of society. This issue was also retained with Zaitoon's life. She was not considered appropriate to get worldly knowledge and education. After getting five years of education in school, Zaitoon's education was hatched, as it was not considered important for the girls to get high education. Mariam, in whose supervision Zaitoon is guarded in Lahore, also says even being a woman herself,

“Now that she's learned to read the Holy Quran, what will she do with more reading and writing_ boil and drink it? She is not going to become a baboo or an officer/, No, Allah willing, she'll get married and have children (TPB: 42).”

These typical patriarchal notions are brutal as to make a girl slave and to sustain her only to domestic works. As Brons (2015) declares in his study “Othering, an Analysis”, about this double standard attitude of society “I understand now that nothing but otherness killed Jews, and it began with naming them, by reducing them to the other. Then everything became possible. Even the worst atrocities like concentration camps or the slaughtering of civilians in Croatia or Bosnia”. So, these are the extremist ways to exploit an existing personality and distort her according to their perspectives.

Zaitoon on the behalf of all other domestic girls is portrayed as the ultimate prey of society that is being divided into a binary system. Societies in which girls are considered to have useless minds for education because society does not accept educated girls. A patriarchal society which has based on a typical stereotype, that a woman who gets literate and educated becomes a liberal mind and forgets her duties. Society held a view that the education of girls and their intellect are the actual hindrances in their upcoming peaceful married life. The girls are only beneficial for domestic duties and perceiving kids are their sole duty. These are the patriarchal ties to bend a woman on her knees throughout her life. In the next few lines of *The Pakistani Bride*, Mariam further puts forward her views about female education.



“Poor child...had she a mother she’d be learning to cook and sew....Does Qasim Bhai think he’s rearing a boy? He ought to give some thought to her marriage....who’d want an educated...?”(TPB: 42).

And the way she further proclaims!

“The Pathan doesn’t realize she is in the hot plains of Punjab__ everything ripens early here...She’ll be safe only at her mother-in-law’s”(TPB: 42).

The difference in gender disparity is clearly shown through Mariam’s dialogues. How bluntly, she is exclaiming that a girl is to be brought up only for marriage purposes. No one wants and requires an educated girl rather than one, who knows how to do domestic slavery. And the woman is only secured and has only one shelter after reaching puberty is the home of her husband.

Kramarae (2005:23) has strongly proposed her views about marginalized groups (female) in society. According to Kramarae “They have less or no power to explain what they think and desire and similarly females are desired to merge in the mainstream culture of men”. Females are being muted by applying these patriarchal notions and subservience. Society is imparted in two binary positions of men and women; women own the less considered fellowship in this group. So, they have to mute their mouths and shut the door of their desires. That’s why Afshan has to compromise on choosing her life partner and unfortunately, she became part of the subordinate class of society. The voice and experiences of the minimal class are squeezed beneath the terror of the dominant class. Men and women dwell under different and unequal rules of society. Women are not to be cherished their desires but men are the happiest creature to do according to their will. As Zaitoon reaches the age of puberty,

She is administered not to play and walks like a girl as she was a day before. Now she must act as a sensible mature girl. She is no more allowed to talk to a man and to play with her age mates. As Mariam warns her in a conversation saying,

“You are now a woman. Don’t play with the boys and don’t allow any man to touch you. This is why I wear a burka”(TPB: 45).



Another strong patriarchal concept to apply to women is the concept of Burka. As soon as a girl reaches puberty the strict notions of society are imposed only on her. They are restricted not to play with the boys and to cover themselves properly. Now the Burka is another patriarchal tool used by men in society to oppress their Muslim females. Being an Islamic woman, you must hide from the forbidden eyes but the dominant men have made this thing imposed and compulsory for every girl. Men are liberal and independent to indulge in every good and bad activity while women are to be kept under thick veils and forbidden from the world outside. Being in a subordinate position, women have no option only to mute their mouths. This is the main drawback of a culture according to kramarae, where women are the sole victim and obliged to others against their consensus. Niut & Rosenthal (2009) state that “A hierarchy creates an uneven social system, through which some groups are dominant and others subordinate.”

Hierarchal and uneven social systems have become the shallow base of society. So, to keep this system in the form of a female’s voice has always been kept in boxes and does not let the voice come out by the dominant gender male class. Women are not even allowed to wear garments of their own choice.

Lawrance(1959:55-56) has mentioned that “.....By imposing confining garments on women, or by otherwise hobbling her, the man was enabled almost universally to keep her in a state of inferiority and subjugation to him as a personal possession”.

The MGT deals with the fact that a language is the ultimate key holder of power in any culture. This point of theory deals correctly with the lingual behavior of Sakhi in TPB. He uses extremely abusive and vulgar language to his wife. Zaitoon has no option to resist him and Sakhi keeps on beating her. Zaitoon, at last, starts pleading with him and asking for mercy. She kept on saying ‘forgive me’ to let herself escape from his beating. But Sakhi went in a mood to kill her and put aside her pleading. He was furious enough to kill her. His wrath gets more flame on considering, what if anyone of his tribe saw Zaitoon doing this act of waving. He says, “What if someone had witnessed his ultimate humiliation?”

“He aimed a swift kick between her legs, and she fell back. Sakhi kicked her again and again and pain stabbed through her. She heard herself screaming (TPB: 161)”.



Conclusion

The patriarchal notions are artfully interwoven with the political power for male sovereignty. In a culture, where women are supposed and recognized with their soft facial and language expressions, serving their obedience to the fullest to a male. Women are no less than treated parallel to the beautiful and delicate showpiece to sustain in a home with negligence. Their voices are neglected; their emotions and desires are malicious and have no worth listening to. Just like the woman in the study Zaitoon. There may be many Zaitoons, Afshans being subjugated to peculiar stringent Kohistani culture. The emancipation of women like Zaitoon could be brought about by awareness and education.

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