

Political Features In Bapsi Sidhwa's: The Pakistani Bride

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Abstract

This article describes the political features in the novel of The Pakistani Bride by Bapsi Sidhwa. The characters are shown mainly in familial, societal, and cultural spheres. She speaks of their confinements, their struggle to overcome the barriers, and their attempt to achieve freedom. Though the novel, The Pakistani Bride/The Bride. This was published after The Crow Eaters. Though Sidhwa touched politics on an exterior level, her astute observation of its influence on the common man and his day-to-day activities was remarkable. The political issues have shown an impact on the common man. She was discussed political issues in her novel the Pakistani Bride and her other novels.

Keywords: Political features, Indian writing, common man, tradition, culture.

Introduction

The women novelists of Indian Writing in English perceptibly paint the women of different classes and backdrops in their narratives. Along with the traditional women and their scope of lives, they portray the new women who struggle to free themselves from various forms of entrapments that are imposed on them and turned them into dwarfs, subordinates, dependents, or chained. Their presentations help the readers to comprehend the women's situation in the Indian sub-continent lucidly. Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bapsi Sidhwa, Manju Kapoor, Anita Nair, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Radhika Jha, Suma Jasson, Lakshmi Kannan, Meena Alexander, Sohaila Abdulla, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Sha ma Futehally, Dina Mehta, Shoba de, Sunetra Gupta, etc. are some notable postmodern women writers whose pens cherish the problems of the women and their struggle to dissolve them in different colours. Consequently, they gain critical acclaim for

handling creative art with great authority. They also assert that dealing with women subjects is not a mean task but is a profound churning process to get rid of the women's invisible shackles which have kept them displaced, dislocated, and unidentified down the ages.

Among these writers, Bapsi Sidhwa has a special recognition for revealing different shades of the psychological phenomenon in her women characters. The characters are shown mainly in familial, societal, and cultural spheres. She speaks of their confinements, their struggle to overcome the barriers, and their attempt to achieve freedom. Though the novel, *The Pakistani Bride*/The Bride (1983) was the first finished novel of Bapsi Sidhwa, it was published after *The Crow Eaters*. Initially, the editors were afraid that the work might not attract the interest of Western readers as it revolved around a typical Pakistani Indigenous girl. But, the British Press, Jonathan Cape proved that their notion was wrong by publishing Sidhwa's comic novel, *The Crow Eaters*, which was framed around her Parsi community. Then they came back to publish the novel and modified it as *The Bride*, which suggested rather a broad sense. It received wide applause from worldwide reviewers, in the novel *The Bride* (1982, England; 1983; 1984, India; published as *The Pakistani Bride*, 1990, U.S. and 2008, U.S.). She discussed how political issues show influence the common man.

Though Sidhwa touched politics on an exterior level, her astute observation of its influence on the common man and his day-to-day activities was remarkable. Sidhwa elucidated the days of social and political unrest in 1947 in India. Great India divided into India and Pakistan based on two different communities, Hindu and Muslim. The free independent nations shivered with terror. She opined that British rulers were the sole reason for partition trauma.

The British were eager to wrap up now that it had been decided they would go. Antiques, curios, and jewellery had to be purchased and transported, as well as furniture, artifacts, and commerce. The rulers of the Empire were far too preoccupied to give any thought to how India was divided since they were worried about making preparations for returning to their original country and suffering from the misery of being separated from their servants, regiments, and other imperial trappings. One of the thousands of tasks they had to complete.

It is difficult to carve up the earth. India needed a skilled and compassionate surgeon, but the British, mired in domestic

concerns, recklessly and quickly butchered it. They weren't being malicious on purpose; they were just obviously careless. Millions of Indians perished. As the boundary was established town by town and farm by farm, the earth's clumsy new borders were sealed in blood. Hindu and Muslim refugee trains rushed through the night's darkness in opposite directions. They left at strange hours to avoid gangs out to destroy them. However, trains were attacked, robbed, and their escaping passengers were killed. (TPB, pp. 14 &15).

The majority of the people suffered from the havoc created during bifurcation. They lost their people and possessions. Moreover, they were left with a deformed or empty heart. Every person has his own doleful story. Communal riots were one among many factors which nipped the aspirations and happiness of the people and also made them forget basic humanity. Selfish people used this situation as an advantage and made the earth blood-spattered - people were divided into predator and prey basis - i.e., exploiters and victims. Revenge, plunder, and rape were the resultant products of human cruelty and greediness. Sidhwa talked about it through Qasim who witnessed the tragic incidents while he was set off to his birthplace by train: "...they (rioters) are herding and dragging the young women away. The dying and the dead are being looted of their bloodied ornaments and weapons" (TPB, p.29) and also answered to his conscience about the brutality of the mankind when he ran to Muslim territory and found a Muslim youth lying dead in the land of his faith:

Hindus and Sikhs had fled the area and he wondered what passion had caused a Musclem to kill this handsome Muslim youth. Death, cheapened by the butchering of over a million people, became casual and humdrum. It was easy to kill. Taking advantage of this attitude to settle old scores, to grab someone's property, business, or woman, Hindu killed Hindu -Sikh, Sikh -and Mussalman Muslim (TPB, p.32).

Sidhwa brought out glimpses of the bloodshed terrain through her note and the heart rendering stories of victims through Qasim. This mode of narration helped the readers to view the situation as a whole or completely:

Time went by. Stories of collective tragedies stoked violence, instability, and fear. The anger and terror in people's thoughts over the impending partition of India erupted that summer. Communal areas were automatically created in towns. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs all dashed into the area that represented their religions to find the illusory protection of strength in numbers. Homes in

remote areas were burned and looted. In the dark, the fires illuminated the sky. It appeared as though the earth had changed into the sun and was radiating light skyward. Roads were littered with the remains of dismembered men, women, and even children. The inhabitants fled from their villages into the towns, leaving everything behind. (TPB, p.23).

Qasim was receptive to the sagas of losers - Moola Singh, who lost his 20-year-old brother when his village was attacked by a mob: "that tied one of his legs to one jeep the other to another jeep - and then they drove the jeeps apart ..." (p.16). Munni, who lost her parents when they were attacked on the train: "Sikander (her father) crumples to the ground, astonished by the blood gushing from his stomach. A woman tramples over him. He tries to ward off the suffocating forest to his legs with his arms. More and more legs trample him, until mercifully he feels no pain" (TPB, pp. 28 & 29), and an old man with a wispy beard speaking in an impeccable Aligarh Urdu from central India separated from his wife, four sons, and their families, all of whom were strewed on the train.

In this novel, Sidhwa demonstrated India and its people in three phases i.e., before the partition, during the partition, and after the partition. Her realistic surveillance of a blooming free nation was a quite genuine picture. She seized the status of the nation, its different shades, people's ambivalent attitude towards newly attained independence, the glimpses of the contemporary political scenario, resultants, and changes:

The country was young. The newly formed administration and bureaucracy battled to maintain some sort of order and stymied by puritanical. The country fought for its balance as a result of fetish, unethical opportunities, the newly wealthy and power-hungry individuals. When a Tongawalla was scolded by a policeman, exclaimed, "We are independent now; I will drive where I please!" others sympathized. Ideologies competed with reason, and everyone had his definition of independence. 50 million individuals are free, breathing, and calm. They let their self-control slip and left their trash lying around, posing serious risks to the public's health and safety. Because some of the same outdated rules, rituals, taboos, and social divisions still existed, many people felt tricked.

Unused muscle, tentatively flexed, grew strong, and then stronger. Dictatorial tyrants sprang up -feudal lords over huge areas of Pakistan (TPB, p.50).

Sidhwa made her personal views in a clear-cut manner by pointing out Jinnah's place in the newly formed nation Pakistan and also the countless selfish politicians' unconstructive roles:

Within a year of founding the new state, Jinnah passed away. Even though he was old, his passing came too soon. Stepfathers took the position of the Father of the Nation. The Constitution has been altered, modified, and condensed. Iqbal's vibrant vision of Muslim unity transcending national boundaries—a mystic poet's vision—became the property of insignificant bureaucrats and even more insignificant religious extremists. (TPB, p.51).

Through the character Nikka, Sidhwa showed how a common man was entangled in the trap of politics and how human behavior was affected. Of course, human behavior was sometimes abnormal and many times unpredictable.

Nikka was initially a humble and contented man. He led life according to the dictates of fate. He accepted Qasim as his friend. He accepted his friend's tribal ways of behavior and conventions and then never tried to indulge in his private affairs. He was clever enough to start the paan and betel nut business at the refugee camp and get a quick turnover. He showed his muscle power to his competitors and challengers. His physical strength brought him recognition and gave him the title 'Tiger Nikka'. His victory over the street rowdy or extortionist fetched people's admiration. Then he was patronized by Qila Gujjar Singh, a political factionist, who sent him against other local wrestlers. He reached his expectations and proved as a consistently winning wrestler. He was introduced to the political sphere indirectly: "One of the political factions sniffed him out - embraced and flattered him - and he became a minuscule part of a huge political package". In all ways political issues have shown an impact on the common man. She (Bapsi Sidhwa) discussed political issues in her novel *Pakistani Bride* and her other novels.

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Next page

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