



From “Other” to “Self”: A Pakistani Female’s Existential Quest in Bapsi Sidhwa’s the Pakistani Bride

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Abstract

This study attempts to highlight the patterns of existential feminism as they appear in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride*, analyzing domestic abuse, which has been a significant impediment to women's advancement and success. This research also emphasizes the existentialist feminist theory that asserts that women are the products of civilization and are constantly expected to appease men, depriving them of all forms of autonomy and turning them into objects for men. This study attempts to illustrate all the scenarios where men are free from all the traditions and rules set by society and exploit the image of marriage. The injustice and abuse of women in Pakistan's tribal regions, as well as their battle for independence, are discussed in this study. A leading existential feminist named Simone De Beauvoir labels males as "Self" and women as "Other." The exploitations of women's lives are examined in this research using the concepts of "Self" and "Other." Nowhere in the novel does a woman exist as an independent "Self." In being the subject, man even forgets his relationship with his object (Woman). Women are punished for acting upon their own will and are neglected. The reason for this study is that the existential experience of the female "Self" in Pakistani fiction has frequently gone unrecognized. Researchers have seldom investigated the dimensions of a woman's life concerning her independent "Self," which she ruthlessly denied. This study digs into this area of a woman's existential Quest.

Keywords

Existence, Self, Other, Feminism, Domestic Abuse.

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Introduction

The Pakistani Bride, narrated by renowned Pakistani author Bapsi Sidhwa, revolves around Woman's struggles who, instead of surrendering to societal expectations, embarks on a journey of self-realization and finding their own independent identity. Sidhwa's goal in this work is to show the quiet parts of domestic abuse in matrimony, in which women play no vital role. Sidwa discussed Pakistan's social and political situation, women's standing, marriage as a topic, the country's partition dilemma, and the issue of women in her books. She is a postcolonial author, and all the events she has written about are personally experienced by her. Postcolonial fiction can be seen as continuing and extending into Pakistani literature. These are some of the primary issues raised by this study's attempt to concentrate on the physical and gendered life of Pakistani women. In Pakistani culture, women have traditionally been the persecuted group. Nevertheless, despite several achievements in empowering women, they play a relatively minor part in political, social, and economic life. Several writers have depicted this problem in their writings. Bapsi examines several parts of Pakistani society in her book "The Pakistani Bride" concerning women's rights, status, position, challenges, etc.

In *The Pakistani Bride*, a new kind of light that emerges in women is captured. It presents a fresh perspective on Pakistani culture and society. Sidhwa discusses male control, the treatment of women in Pakistani society, and women's battle for independence and portrays women as influential people who can stand up for their rights. Elaine Showalter (1979) even adheres to the theory of gynocriticism, which contends that male critics should not evaluate the works of women writers and that women's literary analysis should take place inside a feminine framework. Women are expected to abide by the norms and guidelines established by male individuals from their families and community. Throughout history, the patriarchal society's treatment of women has stayed unchanged. Zaitoon, the novel's protagonist, suffers from these restrictions and rules of the patriarchal setup. She is forced to marry a tribesman against her will. Her father gives more preference to his words than her life.

In her study "Bapsi Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride; An Alternative View Point in Literature," Sofia Dildar Alvi (2012) discusses the position of women in Pakistan's gender-based class system. She also discusses how women in this region are excluded from essential roles in personal and national affairs. "Independent individuals who refuse to be depicted as non-living phenomena under the categories of "shame," "modesty," "honor," etc.," are how she characterizes women. She underlines Pakistani culture's practice of gender segregation. According to her, "Zaitoon's choice of freedom from the slavery of a brutal marriage is a courageous and heroic action which is a testimony to the never-yielding spirit of a woman." She summarizes this novel: "Zaitoon is a symbol of the strength of a woman, indefatigable, unyielding, and irrepressible."

According to Lerner (1989), male supremacy was established through a process that took place over 2500 years. Many events and forces contributed to the development of patriarchy

as a process. According to this, patriarchy is a complex, profoundly ingrained system that is not simply created overnight. Imran Ahmad (2013) also discusses the concept of feminism in Bapsi Sidwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* in his article titled "The Conquered Land: A Feminist Reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*." He refers to women as "conquered territory" that men have total control over. He portrays women as being exploited and dependent on men in his work. He concentrates on the idea of men's "sadomasochistic, dictatorial, and proprietorial mentality" causing violence to women's bodies. He describes *The Pakistani Bride* as follows: "Sidhwa has powerfully and artistically portrayed through the life of an orphan protagonist, namely Zaitoon, that no matter how insensitive a reader of *The Pakistani Bride* to women's questions may be, he cannot turn a blind eye to the scenes of torture and a deaf to the screams her of pain." However, he only deals with one aspect of the novel and does not show the strong side of a woman who becomes brave towards the end.

In his essay "Pakistani Feminist Fiction and the Empowerment of Women," Zia Ahmed(2009) describes the issues facing women in contemporary society, where the female characters in Pakistani fiction are constantly battling to achieve independence. Pakistani literature highlights the hardships of women attempting to break free from the constraints of the old societal structure. His opinion is that women experience loneliness due to their husbands' neglect. *The Pakistani Bride* is "a challenge to the patriarchal ethos and traditions of Indian Pakistani society," according to Fawzia Afzal Khan. The work, according to her, is an attempt to liberate "the feminine self that stays marginalized inside the system." She discusses how a woman can challenge the traditional patriarchal setup and revolt against its injustice. Furthermore, she describes the Woman as a strong individual who tends to stand against all evils. She firmly believes that women are capable enough to struggle for their rights. The existential experience of the feminist 'Self' has often gone unnoticed in Pakistani fiction. This research deals with the female's struggle to 'Self.' By keeping in view the existentialists' perspective about human existence, this research will shed light on the challenges women face in becoming 'Self' and their response to it. It focuses on Zaitoon's character, whose existence is continuously challenged in the novel by the traditional patriarchal setup. Before marriage, she is dependent on her father, and after marriage, on her husband. They make rules and set goals for her life, thus denying her the true meaning of xiv existence. She is treated as 'Other' by both male characters. Ultimately, she refuses to accept the rules that challenge her right to existence and flees to become a 'Self.'

This research will take the idea of 'Other' and 'Self,' as described by existentialist feminists, to highlight Zaitoon's existential struggle to become an essential and complete 'Self. The majority of the reviewers have viewed *The Pakistani Bride* from a feminist angle. However, by seeing it through an existentialist lens, this study will provide this feminist angle with a new depth. According to De Beauvoir (1949), males attempt to subjugate women by labeling them as "Other" in contrast to them. Conversely, a woman is a target while a man is the "Self," or the subject. She is unnecessary, imperfect, and dependent on him, but he is absolute and necessary. While she is destined for immanence and to submit to him, he has the authority to force his will on her. De Beauvoir (1949) further adds that while it is common for people to define themselves in contrast to others, doing so when it comes to genders is flawed. Man unilaterally denies the humanity of women by labeling them as "Other."

A scenario from Hira Mandi's brothel streets where a lady topped by men is humiliated by onlookers offers proof of men's nonconsensual mindset: "Now and again, a man standing with her in the enclosure shouted, "Nach, Pagli! Dance, mad- Woman – and jabbed her with a cane" (p. 65). In this book, Zaitoon's existence as a whole and the marriage itself serve as vehicles for the notion of Woman as a captured land. In work being examined, Zaitoon, a tribal girl born and reared in Lahore, tells how her foster father, Qasim, compelled her to wed Sakhi, also a tribal guy. Her spouse, Sakhi, repeatedly mistreated Zaitoon. For instance, Sakhi considers his wife and mother his property and does not even think twice about beating them. "You are my Woman! I'll teach you to obey me!" For the sake of his dignity, he goes through severe hardships to murder his wife. When Zaitoon waves her hand on a far-off vehicle, Sakhi drags her along the crag and inflicts infinite hatred on her: "You whore, he hissed,...He cleared his throat and spat full in her face. 'You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs...' You wanted him to stop and fuck you, didn't you" (p.185)... "I will kill you, you lying slut" (p. 186).

According to Sartre (1948), our acts determine who we are. He asserts that one must exercise freely since it is the only way to get rid of sickness. Because we can choose our actions, unlike animals and plants, who can "be," we are here. Unlike humans, who have complete control over their activities, they live, grow, chew food, and eventually die. An individual has the power to transform themselves into an entity and elevate himself above the status of simple existence via his decisions and deeds. He distinguishes between the verbs "to be" and "to exist." He also thinks that a person should not be unconcerned with his environment. He must decide what to do, adopt a position, and give the significance of his actions.

According to Sartre's theory, Zaitoon is denied existence since she is not allowed to make decisions for herself. She lacks essence since she cannot act on her own. Her father controls decisions for her before marriage, and her spouse has total authority over her after marriage. She was forced to give in to her father's requests to preserve his dignity and her love ambitions to live a fairy tale existence in Kohistan. She encounters the terrible truth of such a life as soon as she marries a Kohistani "tribe." Thus, Qasim's possessive and domineering mentality is shown. "I've given my word. Your marriage is to be a week from today. ... I've given my word. On it depends my honour. It is dearer to me than life. If you be-smirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands" (p. 158). Qasim acts more like a landowner who gives up his prized garden to someone who merely promises to destroy and obliterate it.

De Beauvoir (1949) inquires as to how "female humans" are inferior to "male humans" and hold a subservient role in society in Book I, "Facts and Myths," of her work *The Second Sex*. She uses biology, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism to explain both males and females to address this query and help the reader better comprehend who she is. Moreover, it is common for people to define themselves in contrast to others; doing so when it comes to genders is flawed. Man unilaterally denies the humanity of women by labeling them as "Other." The narrative depicts women's abuse, denigration, and persecution in a patriarchal culture and how males view them as less than subjugated territory.

Challenges to Female's Existence by Male 'Self':

The Pakistani Bride discusses the topic of oppressed women in Pakistani society, particularly in tribal regions. As stated by Anita Desai (2013), "Sidhwa's novels though different from one another but share in common a passion for history and truth telling" "Man is born by chance and will die by chance, according to Sartre (1948). The only way to deal with this issue is to exercise one's freedom. Only having the ability to make decisions for oneself will enable one to do so. Humans exist because of their freedom of choice and to act, while animals and plants do not exist. He believes that an individual is responsible for his making himself into an essence by choices he makes and his actions, thus lifting himself from the mere level of existence. When applying this existentialist belief to the novel *The Pakistani Bride*, it becomes evident that women are not given any right to make choices for themselves and to act independently. Male characters can be seen as having absolute power and authority over women. They make decisions and give orders to women. According to Sartre's definition of existence and the essence of human life, this act of male dominance denies women of their existence.

De Beauvoir (1949) claims that males treat women as "Other," defined as the opposite of men, to illustrate how they oppress them on all levels. The Woman is the object, the other, while the male plays the role of a self. She is supposed to submit to him, and he has the full right to force his will on her. She is inessential and incomplete, depending on him to complete her, whereas he is absolute and necessary. As in the novel, Sakhi says, "You are my woman, and I will teach you how to obey me." This distinction between 'Other' and 'Self' is not natural but artificial.

According to Indian critic Makarand Paranjape, "it would seem that the entire code of honor of the tribe rests on the notions of sexual superiority and possessiveness" (Dhawan, 1987). Even the institution of marriage is under the complete control of men. The Woman is thought of as the property of man as described in the novel "A wife was a symbol of status, the embodiment of a man's honor and the focus of his role as provider. A valuable commodity indeed and dearly bought." (pg. 119)

At Qasim's wedding, her wife was asked thrice if she would accept Qasim as her husband, and thrice an old aunt murmured 'yes' on her behalf, which shows how women were even denied to choose their life partner. Zaitoon is married to Sakhi against her will. Qasim gives his words more importance than the life of her daughter. He says, "I have given my word. On it depends on my honor. It is dearer to me than life. If you besmirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands". Those rooms were allotted to women who had no windows. Moreover, women were forced to wear a burka. De Beauvoir(1949) explains that a woman's existence consists of three leading roles: wife, mother, and entertainer in her book *Second Sex*. No matter how prestigious the Woman's home may be, her dependence on men causes her to feel incomplete and frustrated in the end. She also depicts the agony of aging when a woman loses her ability to reproduce, losing her identity and primary function. There are many examples of a woman losing her identity in the novel. For example, when Sakhi's mother asks him not to beat his wife, he beats his mother too and calls her "meddling woman." A man's honor is more important than a woman's life. If Zaitoon flees Sakhi's home, his brother, Yunus Khan, says: "You fool! Your honor? Why didn't you think of it when you allowed the bitch to run away? You knew she'd run. Are you a bugged-up eunuch? You should have slit her throat right

then!' Yunus Khan fondled his brother's hair. He pressed his blubbering, distorted face to his chest. It was not strange that Sakhi cried, for men here wept as copiously as women. In this land where subtle expressions of grief were misconstrued, men, dominant in all spheres, were jealous of their supremacy in sorrow. They lamented loudest." (pg. 174)

Miriam, the wife of Nikka Pehalwan, can feel the difficulties that Zaitoon had to bear after her marriage to a tribesman. So she asks Zaitoon to tell her father that she does not want to marry someone from the mountains, but Qasim does not move an inch on the request of his daughter and gives more importance to his words. Additionally, Miriam begs Qasim not to wed Zaitoon to a mountain man, to which he responds, "She is my daughter, and I know what is right for her." Miriam exudes panic and declares: "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. 'Nikka will! How much more do you want? We will buy her!' Qasim replies: 'Sister Miriam, it is not for the goats and maize, please believe me. It is my word-----the word of a Kohistani'" (pg. 79- 80). Miriam does not want Zaitoon to be married to someone from the mountains because there is much cultural difference between the people of plains and mountains.

As described in the novel: "The difference was greatest in the 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 comes from, men---- as in stone age--- walked thirty days over the lonely, almost trackless mountains to secure salt for their tribes." People living in the mountains have a different life from those on the plains. Their culture and traditions are completely different from each other. People from the mountains are stricter towards women than people from the plains. They think that women as their property and have every right to use force on them. They do not even hesitate to beat their mother.

Sakhi abuses Zaitoon both physically and sexually. He even beats her and says, "You are my woman, and I will teach you how to obey me" (pg. 169). The Woman is not given free will in any matter; she has to obey the man in every matter. Free will, the basis of existence in this world, is also denied to women in the novel. As described in the novel: "Carol felt submerged in the helpless drift of Zaitoon's life. Free will! She thought contemptuously, recalling heated discussions with her friends on campus. This girl had no more control over her destiny than a caged animal.....perhaps, neither had she..." (pg. 118) Zaitoon completely surrenders her independent will to her father. She does not want to marry Sakhi but agrees because of her father's will. She could not go against him. Many people urge her not to marry Sakhi, but she marries him because her father wants her to. Ashiq urges her to listen to her feelings and go against her father. He says: "Your father told the Major Sahib that you are not of the hills. What do you know of them? Ask me, I know how they live---all the murders, the bloody family feuds. You are like me. You will not be happy there. Please don't go. I will tell Major Sahib that you don't wish to go. You have nothing to fear, I....I will care for you. 'No,' cried Zaitoon, 'don't say anything to the Major. It is my father's wish. I must go with him'" Sidhwa also exposes the hypocrisy of those who talk about respect for women and do wrong to other's women. Despite being so stringent about their Woman's pardah, Nikka and Qasim frequently visit Lahore's red-light district. It reveals the true nature of those men who do not even think twice about killing someone who behaves impolitely toward their honor. The same

guys who will kill anyone for their honor also pay to watch another man's naked honor in the presence of other inebriated males. Words like 'Shame,' 'Honor,' and 'Respect' only apply to women while men are free of religious and moral bonds. According to their spouses, siblings, and father, women in the story are considered to have silent voices. Males strip women of their identities and treat them like nothing.

In contrast to males, who are unrestricted in every area of their lives, the burka is depicted as a symbol of the absolute quiet of women. Carol jokingly remarks, "Maybe I should wear a Burka," as she becomes upset by the tribesmen's persistent staring (pg. 183). When Carol wants him to present her to the tribesmen, Major Mushtaq, who first thought it was liberal to have a sexual relationship with his friend's wife, switches to tradition. He claims, "Get in and close the window...you know how their minds work. He will spread it all over, I am keeping a tart!...Do not know by now that women do not ask for introduction to such men." (pg. 185) Mushtaq's response to Carol's demands demonstrates his apprehension about a woman going above and beyond her expectations. Carol realizes that she and Zaitoon share the same fate. Both have been a plaything in the hands of men who used them for their own sake. Carol's fantasy about tribespeople is dashed to the ground when she comes across a tribal girl in the water of the river. She says: "Women get killed for one reason or other...imagined insults, family honor, infidelity...even imagined infidelity" (pg. 188). The women in the novel share the same fate and are exploited by men who do not even give them the right to exist.

Stories from both women reveal the novel's central concept, i-e, the exploitation of women's rights in a male-dominated society. These stories shed light on the violence, degradation, and injustice done to women in a society where men are given every right to control and guide them. In this tribal setup, as depicted in the novel, man is known for how well he can control his wife. Women in Pakistan are conditioned to be demure; they are not allowed to express their emotions openly. They are expected to follow the will and decisions of their fathers, brothers, and husbands. Even if a woman looks a man in the eye, she is considered a prostitute. As Farrukh says to Carol: "Don't you know if you look a man in the eye, it means he can have you?" Carol replies, "This is ridiculous! I don't believe it." "Don't you? You looked at me, and you got laid". It shows how the male Self has complete control over the female Other. She cannot even see a man in his eyes, or men will take her intentions wrong. Women in tribal areas are not even allowed to be seen by men except their husbands, brothers, and father. This act of men completely denies the existence of women. When tribesmen see Carol, Major says to her: "Come now, I should have thought you'd like being noticed. You know how it is with us---segregation of sexes. Of course, you only know the sophisticated, those Pakistanis who have learned to mix socially---but in these settlements, a man may only talk with unmarried women---his mother, his sisters, aunts, and grandmothers---a tribesman's covetous look at the wrong clanswoman provokes a murderous feud." (pg. 96). Sartre says that for human beings, existence precedes essence, which means that first, we exist, then we define our roles in this world, which determines our essence. This makes us human beings.

When we see female characters in the novel through Sartre's definition of the essence, it becomes clear that women's lives have no essence. They cannot choose their roles and actions in the world; therefore, their lives have no essence. While the male characters can be seen as

having authority to define their roles in the world and of women, "His promises, his opinions, carried weight." (pg. 68) Richard Taylor, an American philosopher, compares the existence of humans and non-human animals. He believes that the existence of non-human animals is an endless cycle of eating and being eaten; birds fly only to return home, and animals eat, chew, and sleep and repeat the same process every day. He concludes by saying that these lives are an example of the meaninglessness of existence. When it comes to humans, he differentiates them from non-human animals by saying that they are free to choose their goals, strive for their achievements, and take pride in them. Zaitoon's existence does not come in the category of human existence if we see through Taylor's definition of existence. She is not free to make choices for her life, set goals, work hard to achieve them, and take pride in her achievements. She is destined to depend on her father and husband, who choose the goals for her life. After bearing pains and hardships, she revolts against this patriarchal setup of existence. She runs away to find the true essence of her being. Her imagination about tribe members is also shattered after her marriage to Sakhi.

Before marriage, Zaitoon yearned to see what she thought of as her native country. "Her imagination flowered into fantasies of a region where men were heroic, proud, and incorruptible, ruled by a code of honor that banned all injustice and evil. These men, tall and light-skinned, were gods--- free to roam the mountains as their fancies led. Their women, beautiful as houris, and their bright, rosy-cheeked children, lived beside crystal torrents of melted snow."

Zaitoon, as expected from women, surrenders to her father's wish to marry her to Sakhi. She gave her father the right to set goals for her existence in this world. By giving this right to her father, she denied herself the right to existence. When Miriam tries her best to dissuade her from marrying Sakhi by saying: "You are ours. We will marry you to a decent Punjabi who will understand your ways. Tell your father you don't want to marry a tribal. We will help you." Zaitoon replies: "I cannot cross my father." (pg. 82) Qasim proudly explains to her daughter about his people: "You will see how different it is from plains. We are not bound hand and foot by government clerks and police. We live by our own rules---calling our destiny! We are free as the air you breathe!" (pg.85) The word 'we' in these lines represents only men. In his tribe, men have authority over everything; they are free to make rules for themselves, not women. Ironically, Qasim, in this dialogue, shows the brutality and arrogance of tribe members. They do not adhere to any regulations set forth by the government. Instead, they have their own set of norms for living that women must abide by.

People of his land follow Locke's idea of 'State of Nature. This says man is free, and there are no rules and rights in the state of nature. It only gives one freedom, while it is the social contract that imposes restrictions upon men. If we see men of Qasim's tribe, they are still in a state of nature and have freedom and do not follow any rules made by the government. This idea of Locke can only be applied to men of his tribe because women have to follow the rules made by the males. Men are still free, but women have to be in agreement which is against their will. Jealousy is also a trait of men seen in the novel. Every male in the novel does not let his Woman talk to or see another man, but he can see other women and talk to them. Farrukh feels jealous when she goes out with her friend Pam. "He also made it plain he did not want her to go out with anyone but himself. There had been a row when she had gone to a movie

with Pam. She had been hurt but had later decided it was a sign of his deep and unique love." Mushtaq establishes a sexual relationship with Carol but does not want to divorce his wife and marry her. Nikka and Qasim visit the red-light area of Lahore quite often and see the dance of naked women with other drunken men. Qasim only cares for his honor and pays money to see other women's naked 'honor.' "They have their own notions of honor and revenge; a handful of maize stolen, a man's pride slighted, and the price is paid in bloody family feuds." (pg. 98) Women are seen as things owned by males and do not have an independent existence.

Carol, an American woman married to a Pakistani, also faces the same problems of identity, freedom, and existence. She becomes sad when she sees Zaitoon's condition. A woman, who used to live her independent life in America before her marriage to Farrukh, is now utterly dependent on men for everything. She tries to find love and care in Mushtaq, but he also uses her for pleasure. "The obscene stare stripped her of her identity. She was a cow, a female monkey, a gender opposed to that of the man---charmless, fearless and exploitable." (pg.103) When she tells Farrukh that they cannot stay at this place with the army, he says, "it's not that bad, though a woman has to be careful, I suppose." (pg.107) It shows how a woman has to be careful in every matter while a man has nothing to be worried about. They are all independent and have complete control over everything. Qasim becomes angry when the soldier takes a ride with him and Zaitoon. "He was immediately filled with resentment at the young jawan's presence. Not only was the old tribal accepting a ride from the hated soldiers, but he was allowing the young jawan to walk with the girl---his girl." (pg.127) He does not even bear the presence of a male near her daughter while he visits the red-light area to see naked women. Male dominance ultimately challenges the Woman's existence. Women follow their ideas, rules, and orders. No doubt a woman should respect men, but it does not mean that men have complete control over their lives. Men have the upper hand in some matters, but they should also give women proper respect and care, which they deserve. By establishing their superiority, men deny women their right to exist, which is the fundamental right of everyone. Being born and living is not life; one should have complete control over one's life and make independent decisions. This is what actual existence means. One should be responsible for all his actions. Despite knowing everything about tribe members, Zaitoon surrenders to her father's will, and her father also should have given importance to her daughter's will. All these acts of violence against women do not lower their spirits. Instead, it makes them strong enough to go against the will of men to find the true meaning of their existence.

Female's Quest to become 'Self':

The Pakistani Bride does not only deal with Woman's existence. Rather, it also highlights the Woman's struggle to become a 'Self.' The second half of the novel shows the strong and determined side of women. Sidhwa portrays women not only as dependent creatures but also as strong individuals who can stand against all odds. By focusing on Zaitoon's character, she can surrender to her father's will and stand against the cruelties done to her in a dominant male society. By investigating Zaitoon's life after marriage, we will find a new side of her character. The girl, who used to abide by the rules made by men for her existence, is now an individual who has the power to struggle for her right to exist in this cruel male-dominated

society. All the events described in the previous chapter lead her to go against male superiority to become a 'Self.'

In describing themselves as 'Self,' men occupy the role of the subject while women are considered an object. Zaitoon is shown as an object over which man has complete control. When she talks to her father that she does not want to marry, Sakhi says, "Hush Zaitoon, that's no way to speak to your father. It is not seemly. A decent girl doesn't tell her father to whom he should marry her."

De Beauvoir investigates and enquires about how "female human" is inferior to man in Book I, "Facts and Myths." She looks to biology, psychology, and historical materialism to show that women are not less valuable than males. She explains how women and men differ in many ways in various fields, but there is no historical or biological evidence to support the idea that women are less valuable than men. The man has made himself superior to women in every respect. A woman has the same independent existence as men. She is not bound to follow the rules which determine her existence. Zaitoon, portrayed as shy and dependent on men for everything, runs away from her husband's house. She becomes strong enough to choose a way for her own life. A critic, Kamala Edwards, beautifully defines Sidhwa's works: "Sidhwa is a feminist and realist. One sees in her women characters the strength of passion, the tenderness of love, and the courage of one's convictions. They struggle to overcome the hurts of time and escape the grip of a fate in whose hands they are often mere puppets." All these qualities can be found in Zaitoon's character. She has passion and tenderness of love. "Her young, romantic imagination flowered into fantasies of a region where men are heroic, proud and incorruptible, ruled by a code of honor that banned all injustice and evil. These men, tall and light-skinned, were gods--- free to roam the mountains as their fancies led. Their women, beautiful as houris, and their bright, rosy-cheeked children, lived beside crystal torrents of melted snow." (pg.76)

In history, we can only find myths that justify female subordination; there is no solid proof to prove this fact. Miriam musters the courage to stand against male dominance and asks Qasim not to marry Zaitoon to someone from the plains. "They are savages. Brutish, uncouth, and ignorant! She will be miserable among them. Don't you see? They don't know how to treat a woman." She dares to challenge male superiority. She goes against the male's idea of a woman. They want women to be shy, silent, and dependent on them, but Miriam does not accept this Criterion to be a woman. She tries to raise her voice against the cruelties done to women. She foresees the pains and difficulties Zaitoon has to bear after marrying a tribesman. Miriam wants to save Zaitoon from these difficulties, but she disagrees with her idea. "I cannot cross my father." (pg. 82) Zaitoon does not go against her father and marries Sakhi. She even tries to adjust among those cruel tribesmen after her forced marriage to Sakhi. Finally, however, when her husband's cruelties become unbearable for her, she decides to run away and go against the will of her male 'Self.' She rejects being shown as a non-living phenomenon with the incorrect connotations of humility, honor, and shame. Her tale is divided into several parts throughout the book, including her early years, her forced union with Sakhi, her trip to the hills, and her fight for life. She struggles to navigate hills with only a little blanket and hardly enough food for one full meal. "As the SEARCH PARTIES were leaving the village, Zaitoon was discovering a path through the chaos of boulders and had

scrambled to the end of a narrow cleft. It opened onto a gritty rectangular plateau, and crawling from the dim passage, she sprawled face down on the earth. Gasping with exhaustion, eyes closed, she lay dead to the world." (pg.176)

The novel's female protagonists portray a Pakistani familial environment that deprives women of their identities and treats them like nothing. Burka is a representation of both opacity and shadow.

When a woman wears a burka, her identity is hidden and unidentifiable. The concept of the burka symbolically shows the male's attempt to make females unrecognizable or unknown in this world. It denies them their true identity. "You are now a woman. Do not play with boys--and don't allow any man to touch you. This is why I wear burka..." (pg.45). Men, on the other hand, have complete authority to live their life as they want. "Proud husbands, fathers, and brothers, they were the providers. Zealous guardians of family honor and virtue sat, when in their homes, like pampered patriarchs, slightly aloof and ill at ease, withdrawing discreetly whenever unrelated women often visited the household. As soon as Miriam, in her burka, appeared before a screened door, a signal passed, and the few men who had strayed in left. If in going they happened to see her, they saluted, 'Salaam-alekum, Sister' and continued their obscure passage." The forced union of Zaitoon demonstrates how marriage may turn into hell in such a scenario. Her spouse constantly hits and assaults her without cause. The entire family verbally criticizes her when she raises her voice to protest the violence and attempts to stop Sakhi from smacking her hand. His tribespeople shames Sakhi for being unable to manage his wife effectively. How well a guy controls his wife is a measure of his character. "'Waleykum-Salaam,' he replied. 'How is your wife from the plains? You know she requires a man to control her....' All morning, cruelly wounded by his brother's taunt, Sakhi labored furiously." (pg.147). Sakhi does not even respect his mother and calls her a "meddling woman." His violence is not verbal but physical and sexual. He establishes his right over her body on the first night of his marriage. "Here was a woman all his own, he thought with proprietorial lust and pride, a woman with strangely thick lashes and large black eyes that had flashed in one look her entire sensuality. Nevertheless, even as he thought this, the corroding jealousy of the past few days suddenly surged upon him in a murderous fusion of hate and fever. He tore the ghoongat from her head, holding her arms in a cruel grip; he panted inarticulate hatred into her face." (pg.139)

The fact that Zaitoon managed to get away from these tribesmen is a win for women over a patriarchal culture. The Woman's bravery and daring in running away "endorses a challenge to the institution of patriarchy" (Ross, 1991). Finally, after great difficulty, she escapes the abusive marriage's grasp into the untamed hills. The honor-hungry tribesmen pursue her, but she escapes the vicious monsters because of her unwavering will to become "Self." "Honor! She thought bitterly. Everything for honor---and another life lost! Her loved ones were dead, and now the girl she was beginning to hold so dear was sacrificed. However, she knew the infallibility of the mountain huntsmen." Abrioux states: "Zaitoon is ultimately protected and saved, which suggests that an awesome ancient, natural order combined with a young girl's spirit can overcome the oppressive shackles of conspiracy of men (Abiroux, 1990)." Women in the novel refuse to surrender before the tyrannical attitude of men. Instead, they choose to live by their preferences and reject the norms and guidelines established by males in a

patriarchal society. Zaitoon's brave decision to escape from the cruel servitude of her marriage to Sakhi demonstrates the strength and courage of female will. She struggles to get a life where she can make independent decisions and set rules for her life. As Sartre believes existence precedes essence, she is now moving towards essence. Before fleeing from her husband, she just existed, but now she is heading towards 'living.' In getting herself the status of 'Self,' she faces many difficulties. She becomes half dead when she reaches the army camp. She remained fainted for hours. "' You want to eat me? You want to eat me?' cried Zaitoon. 'I'm alive...look, I'm alive!'" (pg.181). She is raped by two men but does not lose courage and struggles for life. The difficulties in her way are so severe that she often thinks about returning to Sakhi. "Her terror of wild beasts drove her to seek the even more fearful nearness of man." (pg.184) Nevertheless, then she realizes that he will kill her. "' Were you lost?' he asks. 'No,' she says with forgivable reproach, 'I ran away.' 'Oh! Then I must kill you. You know I must.' Tears stream down his face, and he fumbles with the knife blade. 'No. No!' Zaitoon's cry echoes amid the boulders, and her hands fly protectively to her throat." (pg.182)

Qasim is well cognizant of the harm he has caused to his daughter. His patriarchal mindset predominates over his logical reasoning. It does not allow him to reason. For him, traditions, customs, and words are more important than his daughter's peace and happiness. He wants to take her back with him but does not. "Qasim had an unreasoning impulse to take her back with him on some pretext or other. Miriam, after all, might have been right. He should have listened to the child's plea the night they arrived. His departure imminent, he felt he had acted in undue haste. Too late, he tried to fight this wave of sentimentality and fear. He reasoned that it had been brought on parting; she was bound to be happy. 'Allah,' he thought, 'if anything should happen to her, I will not be able to bear it!'" (pg.144)

Carol is also destined to live a life according to the will of her husband. She, too, has to follow the rules made by men. Like Zaitoon, she also revolts against male dominancy. Her husband always thinks negatively about her and becomes jealous when she talks to any other man. "As an American married a Pakistani, she was allowed much more freedom than a Pakistani wife." (pg.191). The characters of Farrukh and Sakhi, though they belong to different parts of society, share many similarities. Farrukh, an educated young army officer, tries to be dominant over his wife, just like Sakhi, who is a tribesman and does not have any education. Carol also tries to be independent and goes against her husband's will. She develops a sexual relationship with Major Mushtaq. She takes revenge on her in her way just as Zaitoon flees due to her husband's cruelties. Just as colonizers revolt against the colonizers when they cross their limits, Zaitoon revolts against her husband's cruelties. Sakhi plays the role of a colonizer who forcefully tries to take charge of other's places. Like colonized unite themselves and stand against the colonizers, Zaitoon musters up the courage to go against her 'colonizer' husband. A critic defines the condition of women in these words: "Woman is shown as a territory to be conquered by men. The relationship becomes one of colonizer-colonized type the colonizer wherein as if on an imperial offensive tries to possess and extend his powers to use and abuse his occupied territory" (Ahmed,2013, p. 3). We also witness Zaitoon being raped by two guys, demonstrating the deplorable status of this creature in the eyes of males who prey on vulnerable women. But she rejects how a "woman" is defined by the patriarchy.

Zaitoon is viewed as "a challenge to Indian Pakistani society's patriarchal culture and norms" (Ross, 1991).

Zaitoon stands for all the women who are speaking out against the injustices of the patriarchal system in order to carve out their own identities and win their rights. An Indian critic Kavita Dhull says: "Zaitoon becomes a symbol not only of Women fighting against oppression in Pakistan but of the human spirit struggling against all physical odds to survive and maintain its integrity. Zaitoon represents Khudi or the mental and spiritual strength of humankind, indefatigable indomitable and irrepressible" (Dhull, 2010). She accepts her marriage to Sakhi not just because of obedience but also because she has a romantic view of the people of tribal areas. After marriage, she tries to gain her husband's affection, which is a sign of strength, despite his cruelties. However, she quickly decides to leave this tribe and lead a life on her own after realizing that she cannot change his character. She does not wish to endure these injustices like the other marginalized women in that region. Only with a few pieces of bread and a small blanket, she wanders in the hills for ten days. Despite all the difficulties of her journey, she does not lose hope, and in the end, she succeeds in reaching safe hands. Her revolt and escape against the male chauvinistic system prove her to be a strong and courageous woman. The way she escapes from tribal people is truly remarkable. She attempts to escape the culture of violent and vicious people when her stomach is empty. "She sat up blinking in the dark. Holding her breath, she listened intently. Again she plugged her ears, and the hum returned when she removed her hands. Turning her head, she tried to follow the sound. Through the grey film tinting the air, touching the dew-drenched tree trunks, she groped her way, but it was as yet too dark. She sat a while waiting for dawn" (pg.185). Men of Cheerful also rape her. "Cold, speculative eyes measured her wet body. They took in the outline of her ribs, the panting swell of her damp shirt, and the mud in her hair and on her small, terrified face. Zaitoon knew the madness of the still eyes. She stood up hesitantly and started to walk away" (pg.186). When Mushtaq discovers Zaitoon along a river and finds her half dead and half alive, he brings her to the army camp, putting an end to her fight for freedom from the cruelties and oppressions of the patriarchal system. "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 and covered the front of her shirt. She closed her lids, and her fingers flew up to push the hair from her face. Instead of falling back, it stood round her head in a stiff tangle" (pg.201). *Sakhi and his companions are convinced that Mushtaq will kill her. Upon learning about Zaitoon's passing, "Misri Khan's massive shoulders straightened. He thrust his chest forward, and his head rose high. It was as if a breeze had cleared the poisonous air suffocating them and has wafted an intolerable burden from their shoulders."* (pg.224)

The book The Second Sex details several examples of females participating in their "Otherness," particularly concerning the institution of marriage. Women struggle to shed their "femininity" since doing so requires giving up their comfort and security in the name of some misguided notion of "equality." It makes women embrace their traditional responsibilities as mothers and wives. De Beauvoir (1949) thinks that the economy is the primary cause of Woman's subordination to men. She can achieve autonomy only if she can work like men. A woman can achieve liberation if she can economically support herself. Zaitoon does not get

any security or comfort in the name of marriage which she can sacrifice for being 'Self' from 'Other'; instead, her life gets more difficult after marriage. She flees from her husband and his tribe to get a life of her own. Her sacrifices are the difficulties she faces during her escape from her husband. After facing many difficulties and hardships, she reaches the level of 'Self' where she can live her life in the true sense of existence. "Now she is calm. She also knew that what she had experienced was not a dream. Then what was it? A premonition? She was suddenly aware she had been given an unexpected insight. She was certain that in these very moments, she had lived through one version of her destiny and that somehow she had escaped it, though at a price." (pg.206) Zaitoon pays the price for getting herself the status of 'Self.' Her new life awaits her, and she can set her own goals of life to find the true essence of her life. She lived one phase of her life as another and now can live the other as being 'Self.' Sakhi's violent actions and brutalities make Zaitoon strong enough to react against him and run away. Her escape from this tribal area is not only a slap on Sakhi's face but also a shame for the whole 'male-dominated' tribe. This is a reaction against all men who consider women property and have every right to inflict pain upon them. Sartre, an existentialist philosopher, admires the man 'who has the nobility to use freedom for the betterment of his life.' He further says that some people deny one's existence and freedom by treating them as 'others' or objects, and one should fight against these people to reclaim their existence and freedom. This is what Zaitoon does, fights against male chauvinist society, reclaims her existence and freedom, and becomes 'Self.'

Conclusion

In a culture where women are seldom acknowledged as individuals, "The Pakistani Bride" whimpers over the landscape. One may claim that women are portrayed as fearful and vulnerable compared to males, whereas men are shown as strong and courageous people. Pakistani writers characterized Pakistani women's lives as constrained by social, economic, and religious norms. Women are typically represented as spherical figures and continually evolving and changing. Bapsi Sidhwa has provided a source to expose the insecurities, heartless and manipulative image of men, the demeaning, objectifying, and marginalized position of women in a male chauvinistic society, and hints of benevolent, hostile, and internalized sexism along with the description of female sufferings. Women are viewed as outcasts and labeled as "other" in our patriarchal culture, while males are frequently born with brilliance, acceptance, and respect. Men are accepted as persons, while women are accepted as bodies. It also serves as an example of the suffering, anguish, and sadness experienced by women in a traditionally patriarchal culture.

Zaitoon, the protagonist of *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), represents the human soul as it strives and endures with integrity. She intervenes to stop Sakhi from slapping her hand to halt this domestic abuse. She tries to combat a society that judges men by controlling women. She is required to do anything her father commands. In her research, De Beauvoir depicts women as both repressed and accessible, as well as the feminine body as both positive and negative. Women "may utilize their bodies as a tool for their independence and feel enslaved by them," she claims.

There is no fundamental truth to the topic; rather, it depends on how much a woman regards herself as a free subject as opposed to being the focus of society's attention. Therefore, it is

impossible to say if Zaitoon struggles harder to become his true Self or does so by the book's finale. The only thing this research aims to demonstrate is Zaitoon's awareness of her place in society and her battle to become "Self."

By the book's end, a girl who is first shown as being weak and reliant grows to be bold and powerful. Due to the difficulties of escaping "femininity," which necessitates sacrificing stability and comfort for some misguided sense of "equality," many women embrace the traditional unfulfilling roles of wife and mother (The Second Sex). However, women are capable of being independent and providing for themselves. If she can work for herself, she can have some liberty.

Zaitoon's experience of becoming a 'Self' can be summed up as "a symbol of the human spirit which struggles against all odds but exists with integrity. She is a representative of the strength of a woman, in fatigable, unyielding, and irrepressible."

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