

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 5. Issue.1., 2018 (Jan-Mar)

ISSN
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

THE TRAUMATIC SAGA OF ZAITOON FOR PERSONAL FREEDOM:
THE PAKISTANI BRIDE

Dr. APPALA RAJU KORADA
Assistant Professor of English
Jazan University, KSA



Dr. APPALA RAJU
KORADA

ABSTRACT

Zaitoon is the protagonist of the novel, *The Pakistani Bride*, written by Bapsi Sidhwa. She was an orphan but adopted by Qasim. As a moral obligation and her courtesy for him, she obeys him with regard to whom she has to marry. Zaitoon agreed to marry the tribal man according to the will of her father as she was brought up in a patriarchal society. This paper explores how the unhappy bride, Zaitoon has escaped from her tribal husband to get free.

Introduction

Zaitoon is the protagonist of the novel, *The Pakistani Bride*, written by Bapsi Sidhwa. She was an orphan but adopted by Qasim. As a moral obligation and her courtesy for him, she obeys him with regard to whom she has to marry. This paper explores how the unhappy bride, Zaitoon has escaped from her tribal husband to get free.

Zaitoon's story reveals us many things. Though the cultural constraints and her own vulnerabilities govern a woman's life, her own will, her exposure with the society, her conscience, her awareness, her realization contribute to emerge as an individual and in course of time she can free herself from the chains. Ultimately, she would be a triumphant personality out from her woes and pains.

Zaitoon agreed to marry the tribal man according to the will of her father as she was brought up in a patriarchal society: Zaitoon said, "I cannot cross my father" (98) when she was persuaded by Miriam not marry him. Her own romantic notions too made her accept Qasim's proposal. She was very much lured of the light skin that she felt a mark of beauty at the same time; she dismayed her own deep brown skin:

"Her young, romantic imagination flowered into fantasies of a region where men were heroic, proud, and incorruptible, ruled by a code of honour 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 hour is, and their bright, rosy cheeked children, lived beside crystal torrents of melted snow." (90)

However, for the first time, Zaitoon realized herself and misgiving about her marriage when she came across some glimpses at Dubair or in army camp. Of course, this was not her fully matured phase. To her, Carol's American socialite, clothing and drinking habits seemed strange. She shared the same piece of idea to Qasim who justified it by saying, "Their ways are different from ours, child." (140) This response triggered her subliminal doubts about her marriage with the tribal youth. She understood Carol's ways were as different as her ways to those of the hill people. Therefore, she questioned, "But, Abba, I am not of the hills. I am not of your tribe. I am not even yours," she said quietly." (140) Her encounter with the mountains and its tribe made

her to understand the life which she would be going to lead. Her unpleasant dream was an example for the ominous presentiment of her future life in the hills with Sakhi. It follows as: "...she had been standing by the river, admiring its vivid colours, when a hand had come out of the ice-blue depths and dragged her in, pulling her down, down ..." (p.156.)

Apart from her predictions, she encountered an incident at Pattan, which made her realize completely how her life would be in the hills. When they were way to the hills, they halted near Pattan where some of the army officers invited them for food. Ashiq was given instructions to see their needs in the kitchen. When they were at mess, soldiers, drivers, overseers and tribals gathered outside the kitchen entrance and peeped her into a window at the back. The cook's shouts "What's there to see? Go on, get to your work!" (151) showed effect on the soldiers who moved away but not on the tribesmen who "hung around the wire-mesh window peering in as at animals in a cage." (p.152) Though they were thrown a bucket full of water on them, they did not give up their effort. After the intervention of Qasim who asserted them that, he belonged to them and she was his daughter, then they asked his excuse that they thought she had come with the soldier from the plains. Being educated and civilized, the soldiers retreated but having absence of these two traits the hills men treated much inhuman. Sexual segregation was more apparent in their terrain.

In the knolls, Lahore breed Zaitoon was anxious of the uncivilized world, which enwrapped with poverty and people's harshness. For the first time, she pleaded her father not to let her get married to his clansman. She told him that she could not adjust with Sakhi. She asked him to allow her to get married to Ashiq, the soldier at the camp or someone from the plains instead Sakhi if he would feel marriage was a necessary event in her life. She even asserted that she would die rather than live in the hills. However, he with his patriarchal authority curtailed her attempt of choice making by saying:

"A decent girl doesn't tell her father to whom he should marry her....I've given my word. Your marriage is to be a week from today. Tomorrow your betrothed goes to invite guests from the neighbouring villages. I've given my word. On it depends my honour. It is dearer to me than life. If you besmirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands.' " (158)

The resultant marriage let Zaitoon bump into her husband Sakhi's cruelty. On the day of their wedding, he tore her veil from her head and gripping her hands harshly. Zaitoon's "screaming", "panting" and "trembling" were the resultant acts of Sakhi's "dragging", "tugging", "lifting" and "kicking" her. (p.160) Her physical desires were fulfilled but her emotional needs were not. She craved for his tenderly touch and soothing words.

After the marriage, Zaitoon felt contended and wanted to surrender herself to him: "Though he was asleep, her smile was shy and tremulous in alternating waves of tenderness and passion. She wanted to touch not his face but his feet, to rub her lashes on the soles of his feet and kiss them; to hold his legs to bosom in an ecstasy of devotion." (164). However, her conscience showed the way to defend the ruthless actions of Sakhi. With her commonsensical attitude, she shook the roots of rootlessness behaviour of men. She implored her father to take her along with him when he set off to Lahore after the second day of her marriage. She could not tolerate Sakhi's insulting remarks for her intimacy with Ashiq and Major's job offer. Therefore, she even asserted, "I don't know, Abba . . . I don't know him. Why must you leave so soon?" for Qasim's question, "Haven't you liked him?" (167) Her plea was thrown away by him by convincing that she was not a child but a married woman, her place was with her husband, and her husband's home was ultimate abode.

In the episode of Qasim's departure brought some issues related to women in lime light. The women who came to bid farewell to Qasim looked at Zaitoon in expecting a scene reminiscent of their own marriage parting moments. They were satisfied by seeing her crying. They were seen whether she was followed their tradition or not. Hamida pulled her away from Qasim with a gesture that now she belonged to mother's-in-law or husband's property but not her father's. Qasim promised her that he would take her to Lahore if she would have a child in her womb. This showed her parental care was permitted only such occasion. Zaitoon's act of running to her father and clinging, and presenting herself in front of all his folk men with bear head made Sakhi feel affronted. In his tribe, keeping his wife under control was the man's honour. His brother Yunus Khan taunted him: "How is your wife from the plains? You know, she requires a man to control her..." (170) This illustrated the conviction of a man's ownership and dominance over his wife. Moreover, others interference

for these issues seemed as they were the unacknowledged promoters to see whether the set convictions and principles went smoothly or not.

Though Zaitoon was succeeded at some point

She was dictated and given 'animal-trainer treatment'.

In another time she was intimidated by her husband for her probable attempt of fleeing: she had waved to the men in passing jeep by fancying that they were Ashiq and the Major who showed great concern towards her and her safety. This incident was seen by Yunus and told Sakhi. Sakhi warned her not to go to the river. However, she revisited it and waved at the men in the jeep on an impulse. It demonstrated her longing for freedom where she could behave as per her wishes and demand, and her people who could understand her much and show affection. As soon as she did it, she received stones on her spine and then on her forehead. She felt he was an 'inhuman' and 'avenging' figure. His assault, rage and grubby language on Zaitoon were described as follows:

Skimming the boulders in vast strides, Sakhi seized her. He dragged her along the crag. 'You whore,' he hissed. ... He cleared his throat and spat full in her face. 'You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs...' Gripping her with one hand he waved the other in a lewd caricature of the girl's brief gesture. 'Waving at that shit-eating swine. You wanted him to stop and fuck you, didn't you!' (TPB, p.185) and

"He slapped her hard, and swinging her pitilessly by the arm, as a child swings a doll, he flung her from him." Then, "He aimed a swift kick between her legs, and she fell back. Shaki kicked her again and again..." (TPB, p.186)

Zaitoon's transformation as a complete individual and a liberated soul did not occur suddenly. She was under gone into many changes. Her acceptance of life was seen until her encounter with its pessimistic side. Her self-realization made her view what sort of life she would be going to lead before her marriage with Sakhi and how exacerbate was it to live after the marriage. It compelled her to make some pleas. As her father refused her attempts of pleas, and her husband trampled her individuality and personality, she sought her own choice. She was determined to execute her plan of action i.e. fleeing which finally facilitated her to attain freedom.

- a) She was hurt when he was made the insulted remarks for her intimacy with Ashiq and the Major's job offer. She tried to move away from the hills with her father when Qasim set off to Lahore. Though he felt shame for "his bride's tempestuous display before all his kinsfolk" (p.168.) i.e. "...bear-headed, brazenly running to cling to her father – exposing herself to the stares of all his clansmen" (p.171.), he tried to appease her. However, he abandoned his tender feelings towards his wife by listening to his brother's taunting, "How is your wife from the plains? You know, she requires a man to control her..." (p.170.) With outrage, he beat her severely for small issues. This led her flee from hills.

Physical violation on Zaitoon by the two strangers when she tried to cross the river alone was one such incident.

Women's liberation

Sidhwa won Germany's Liberrateur Prize for writing on women's liberation. According to me, the signs of the women's liberation in the novel are shown through the following stages:

Acceptance: Self-realization: Seeking Choice: Resolution: Zaitoon was discouraged her attempt of seeking choice. She was sought to be a subservient creature at every stage of her life especially whenever Qasim took the decision to Zaitoon's marriage with Sakhi. She was forced to obey them. However, she tried to put herself away from the restrictions, brutality and torture by escaping. Her flee to plains showed her great determination: "That night Zaitoon resolved to run away. Her sleepless eyes bright with shock, her body racked by pain, she knew that in flight lay her only hope of survival. She waited two days, giving herself a chance to heal." (TPB, p.186)

Execution: Zaitoon set off to plains by taking the bundle of maize bread and a blanket.

Sakhi was furious and filled with resentment because "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!" (p.147)

In order to please his tribe men,
Women's compromise was obvious.

- Zaitoon's wish to have reconciliation with her husband even when she was in her flight
- The trait compromise among the womenfolk found in different situations – ignorance, affection, diffidence, the veil under tradition
- The matured woman tried to ignore the men who harmed and hurt her feelings physically and psychologically. She prevented further confliotions and complications. And felt decision making and its implementation was final or ultimate.
- Realization about their lives and attitudes made Zaitoon and Carol to behave maturely. Carol's affair with Mushtaq was an act of her husband's suspicious nature and Zaitoon's initial consent for marriage with Sakhi was her ephemeral passion on beauty and romantic notions.

Though cultural conflict is a matter to arouse separation between two married couple: Zaitoon-Sakhi and Carol-Farukh, it's not the true rationale. Hamida was a tribal woman who married to her clans man Mishri Khan. Though she was less than forty years old, she seemed as if she was very old.....She was abused, lost, victimized, emptyhearted.....

Though Mushtaq had a wife who was his cousin (he married a woman from same nation, same culture and same family), he was attracted towards Carol for her beautiful skin texture and bodily grace. His sense of fears for loosing social status and threat of ostracism from his kinsmen made him not to get divorced from his wife and married to Carol, but, not his love towards his wife.

- b) Struggle and flee through Zaitoon's point of view, protest against the evils done to women by men through Carol.

Critical comments

Zaitoon cannot adjust with her tribal husband, who was the blind follower of the Kohistani tribal norms. These tribesmen have set of rules for their honour. Keeping promise or standing on the given word, keeping his women under full control were some among them. A woman was treated as a possession, an entity and an animal.

Zaitoon was a refined Lahore Punjabi breed. Her civilized and sensitive ways enraged him. She was treated with repugnance. Her plight from one such tribal areas of Pakistan was really horrific. The penalty of such act was death.

"Once a woman marries a tribal man, there can be no escape except death. In a tribal family, if one's wife is not happy, she cannot think of divorce because it will raise a question of the tribal husband's honour. Strangely enough for the so-called honour sometimes entire tribal community is united to do away with the woman who tries to free herself from the clutches of her brutal husband." (Dodiya, Jaydipsinh. *Parsi English Novel*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006. p.84)

Commenting on the treatment of Women in a Patriarchal society in this novel of Bapsi Sidhwa, Indira Bhatt states:

"Zaitoon's odyssey from the plains to the snow mountains and back to the plains is symbolic of the inner journey of the young woman from the fantasy world of love, romance and heroes to the harsh and hostile realities of life, where man is the hunter and exploiter, cruel and inhuman treating woman and animal alike. It is a barbaric world of uncivilized people that Sidhwa brings to life and light." (Indira Bhatt. "The Pakistani Bride: From Fantasy to Reality." R. K. Dhawan and Novy Kapadia eds. *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*. P. 157)

- The above illustrations provide the tribal society as a paragon of patriarchal existent culture which expecting man's dominance towards his woman and woman's modesty in presence of her man. she was struck on her slightest pretext, she was hit with stones, she was abused with filthy language, and she was kicked between her legs.
- Her escape – shame, He felt that he should have taken measures to prevent, he wanted to go after her for taking revenge, He took up his ancient Lee-Enfield. 'I'm going after her,' he said raising his eyes to meet his brother's in a haze of distraction. One behind the other, they emerged, eyes ablaze in

fanatic determination. The crowd of tribals dispersed in a hushed understanding, each to get his own gun and prepare for the hunt. Not a word was said. They identified with the man's disgrace, taking the burden on themselves. Collectively, they meant to salvage the honour of the clan. The runaway's only route lay across the river. Once across, she was lost to them forever. How then would they hold up their heads? The threatening disgrace hung like an acrid smell around them. It would poison their existence unless they found the girl." (TPB, p.190)

- Inferior status:
- Women's Duties: Subsisting on baked maize and water, supplemented
- Hamida lost her sons men's process of restoring their honour. They acted as if they born for revenge: "The set faces of the men, their eyes burning with hate and a lust for revenge, their old make-shift guns forever loved and polished, the leather slings decorated with coloured bands and tassels, cherished even more for the men they killed." (TPB, p.191.)
- She was terrified by Sakhi's (her husband) act of pulling her veil from her head and gripping her hands harshly. She also noted his apathy towards her.

Conclusion:

Zaitoon's story had a great impact on her psyche. Though Zaitoon had no control over her life, she tried to preserve her self-esteem with her willpower. She was endeavouring to get rid of the traps and threats in her marital life. Though she knew that such an attempt would cost her dearly, her craving for independence triggered her flight.

Works Cited

- Bhatt, Indira, *The Pakistani Bride: From Fantasy to Reality*. R. K. Dhawan and Novy Kapadia. Eds. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1996. Print.
- Desai, Anita. <http://www.bapsisidhwa.com/downloads/Pak%20Bridei%20Desai.pdf>/ Anita Desai, August 5, 2007: 1-5.
- Dodiya, Jaydipsinh. *Parsi English Novel*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006. Print. Sidhwa, Bapsi. *The Pakistani Bride*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1983. Print.
- . -Why Do I Write? *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*. R. K. Dhawan and Novy Kapadia, ed. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1996. Print