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Article:	Impact of Multicultural Diversity on the Gender Stereotyping in Bapsi Sidhwa's <i>The Pakistani Bride</i> through the Deconstructive Perspective
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Abstract:

The article analyzes the impact of multicultural fictional representation of the two female characters on the gender stereotyping in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* (1990) by applying Judith Butler's gender approach. The novelist (1938) is a distinguishing Anglophone, post-colonial and diaspora writer in South Asia (Suleri, 2001) who is known to be the pioneer of Pakistani novel in English. Sidhwa's portrayal of different cultural milieu in the novel under study is to highlight the impact on gender identification through the analysis of the performativity of the two brides, Zaitoon and Carol. The first lady, one of the key characters, confronts and challenges the tribal gender norms of a Pakistani society and the second bride mirroring of an American culture projecting of a diverse identification. The multicultural contextual background of the novel leads the debate to analyze how different gender roles are performed by each of the brides to support the research contention that gender is wrought not by sexual categorization but by socio-cultural stereotyping. Therefore, the cultural differences in the book necessarily require fluid shades of gender identification accordingly. It is the targeted objective of the research framework applied by the study that gender is an action, it is a fluid and instable feature as has been manifested through the performance of the focused characters in the novel.

Keywords: Sidhwa, gender identification, multicultural impact, gender stereotyping, fluidity, socio-cultural norms

Knowledge Background

“The two story lines (Zaitoon's and Carol's), combine to produce a splendid tale – at a level far above that which is familiar in Pakistani Anglophone writing”.

Alamgir Hashmi in World Literature Today

The Pakistani Bride symbolizes multicultural diversity and its impact on gender stereotyping with the manifestation of the performativity of the two key female characters. The plot revolves around their confrontation and resistance against the challenging circumstances. Zaitoon is the symbolic lady from the Kohistani tribal culture and Carol is a next lady, a western woman who has a changed gender role to play that is different from Zaitoon due to their dissimilar socio-cultural gender norms they are born in. The multicultural contextual background of the novel torches the deliberation on how different gender roles are performed by each of the brides to highlight the research contention that gender is wrought not by sexual categorization but by its stereotyping. Therefore, the cultural difference the book by Sidhwa necessarily requires diverse shades of gender identification accordingly. The deconstructive gender approach states that gender is an action, it is to be performed in accordance with the conventional rampant norms. It should be made obvious that gender is not a free choice for a performer to select as one deems (Salih, 2002) because its performance is restrained only by the innate patriarchal norms that are reckoned to be natural. Though gender subversion is a risky and unconventional option yet it is in no way an impossible entity. That is why, Judith Butler (1990) problematizes/challenges permanency and naturalness of the gender assigned roles. She argues that the collapse of gender binary opposition becomes too terrifying to be challenged or questioned (Butler,1990).

The article therefore contents that the notion of gender's fixity and its naturalness is a stereotypical conception that has nothing to explain the gender roles through the analysis of the textual excerpts and discussion of the novel, the performativity of gender construction by different characters strengthens the idea that it has fluid tendency to be conformed as per the requirements of normative structures.

Moreover, the study analyzes the gender roles by Zaitoon from her infantile age to a wedded woman. The bride is one of the three pivotal female characters, the brides after whose name the novel is titled at. The plot mainly is the narration of the resistance of her life against the socio-cultural gender taboos. Her initial entry and appearance in the novel comes before readers' eyes as a tender age baby as she is narrowly escaped from a life-threatening incident during the riots of the partition which took her parents' lives on the spot. Miraculously, she was salvaged by a man namely Qasim. She was running away in the darkness, suddenly in search of her parent, she got hold of Qasim's legs incidentally for rescue. She started sobbing, 'Abba, Abba, my Abba! For a moment Qasim lost his wits. The child was the age and size of his own little Zaitoon lost so long ago' (Sidhwa, 1990, p.22).

1.2.About the novelist and overview of the selected Work

Bapsi Sidhwa (1938) is an acclaimed Anglophone, post-colonial novelist in South Asia (Suleri, 2001). She has a multicultural background to be a Pakistani, Punjabi,Parsi and American novelist who is distinguished to be the pioneer of English novel in Pakistan. Her art therefore reflects the literary color of the diverse and multinational pluralism (Mahesar, 2018). The artist has infused a literary appeal in the diaspora fiction of South Asian which was once supposed to be barren and devoid of an International appeal (Brians, 2003).Her works blend indigenous (Asian) literary contextualization with the global literary horizon comparatively. Moreover, the

artist appears to be a robust voice for women, segregated segments of society and minority (Escherle, 2013). This is echoed by Brians that the two facts, about Sidhwa to be a woman and a member of a minority, don't hamper the reputation (Brians, 2003) of her art.

Furthermore, Sidhwa was granted International awards besides receiving the national highest award of Sitara-e-Imtiaz, the highest award of the land. She has authored five reputed novels that have been translated into different languages like Italian, German, Russian, French, and Urdu.

2. The Research Framework applied: An analytical Overview

Judith Butler is a distinguished American post-structural gender philosopher. Her theory of gender deconstruction has stirred a heated debate among gender theorists. She is a challenging thinker of the contemporary world, her works questioned the traditional stances of gender and feminist school of thought. Her works impacted (Butler & Salih, 2004) different fields like gender studies, feminism, literary, ethical, queer linguistics and political disciplines profusely. Salih remarks about her in her book, *The Judith Butler Reader* that to categorize Butler as a post-structural, feminist, Marxist and psychoanalytic philosopher often mix all the elements. (Rognstad, 2012). This marks the dialogic theoretical background of her thought.

The most acclaimed work by Butler is *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity and Bodies that matter* (1990) that caused her repute in the world. Her area of specialization at Yale University during her doctorate helped quench her thirst of (Blumenfeld, 2001) exploration in in the areas of phenomenology and post-structuralism. Her doctorate is literally a significant contribution in the field of post-structural gender. Later on, she worked as a professor at different international American universities.

Butler's the most sever attack on the taken-for-granted notion of 'naturalness' of gender is penned down in, *Gender Trouble* (1990). That was published in 1990 and it has been translated into almost twenty-seven languages of the world to meet the curiosity of readers, critics and researchers. The work is mostly a criticism of, "a pervasive heterosexual assumption in feminist literary theory" (Butler, 1990, p. viii).

Butler's post-structural gender stance is to theoretically highlight the aporias and contradictions in the feminist movement that is aimed at projecting gender discrimination in society and literary works. The feminists emphasized to eradicate the discriminatory practices rooted in a patriarchal culture. They contend that the prevalent patriarchal norms affect women's due participation and equal advancement in a society at par with men. That resultantly provided feminists a motivation to introduce different feminist movements to curtail the segregation of women in all walks of life at equal footing with men. Therefore the issue of gender appeared on the world horizon in which status discrimination and differences were underlined for criticism. But in Butler's view, feminists have projected their perspectives about gender through the erroneous association of gender with sexuality; that is the focal point of difference of Butlerian approach from feminism. Henceforward, feminists struggled for the equality of legal, political and academic right of women with men but through their classification of gender into a binarism that is femininity and masculinity that is the major concern of the post-structural understanding to differ from. Bulerian approach is a review of feminists and gender theorists' status quo stances. Thus, the conventional and stereotypical gender binarism goes eventually to strengthen the conventional concept of gender. The masculinity is always favored and kept on the left side of the binary while femininity is kept on the right side of the binary opposition. All those notions of strength, wisdom, superiority are associated with masculinity to be at the favourable location

of right side. It demonstrates the unfair and imbalanced treatment of femininity in this binary concept of classification due to the mistaken stance of feminism and gender theorists.

The study therefore aims at reviewing and criticizing of the status quo stance taken by feminist theory from the contextualization of *The Pakistani Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa. The trouble with the traditional, cultural construction of gender binary may lead to get rid of gender discrimination by first rectification of the tool used by feminists for a significant cause of elimination of gender inequality.

3. Significance

The study critiques the contemporary issue of gender identity that is misinterpreted and misjudged by following its stereotypical rampant notions. The gender roles and its identification are one of the common issues in today's world of human engage. Therefore, the misconstrued ideas of gender construction is concerned with each sphere of human society and life. That is the reason that the issue of gender identity ever remains present in day-to-day deliberation and talk. It is explained by Barnett and Rivers(2004) that we witness gender differences “in management texts, newspapers and magazine articles, best-selling books—maybe even in chats with your best friend over coffee” (p. 31). So a significant issue is dealt with by following the unfeasible concepts of gender as a natural or binary perception that is to be deconstructed by the present research through the fictional representation of the selected novel.

The issue of gender has significant status across most of the disciplines in contemporary world. Gender roles and its identification earn scholarly heed for its further exploration. The present study intends to investigate the causes of its normative concept. Such an exhaustive body of research can be found on the topic by feminist and gender scholars, however, the present article makes a contribution by applying different research framework that deems gender not as a

fixed entity like sex, and rather it perceives gender as a fluid entity, not a static. Besides, the study applied an innovative approach to study the western theory from South Asian indigenous contextualization. Thus, the research focuses on the following major concerns as its objectives.

1. To critique the traditional feminist and gender perspectives that confine it into a stereotypical box
2. To question the erroneous binary oppositional demarcation of gender into masculinity and femininity
3. To expose the rampant gender stereotyping that restrains the opportunities of progress of in the novel
4. Through the relevant textual and contextual fictional representation of the novel, it is to manifest that gender is not a natural and permanent biological entity but it is a fluid characteristic that changes according to the performativity of characters
5. The research is mainly concerned with its significant objective to problematize the deep-rooted gender discrimination that can be rooted out by rectification of the take-for-granted notions about gender roles.

4. Discussion and Findings

4.1. Impact of Cultural Diversity on Gender identification in The Pakistani Bride

“The two story lines (Zaitoon's and Carol's), combine to produce a splendid tale – at a level far above that which is familiar in Pakistani Anglophone writing”.

Alamgir Hashmi in *World Literature Today*

The novel represents multicultural diversity and its impact on gender stereotyping with the portrayal of the performativity of the two key female characters, the two brides. The plot revolves around their struggle and resistance against the challenging circumstances woven by the

conventional gender culture. The first lady, Zaitoon is the resistant voice from the Pakistani tribal culture whom we meet in the initial pages of the novel as a child and Carol is an American woman who has a different gender role and different challenges from Zaitoon due to her different background and brought-up from a tribal culture. The multicultural contextual background of the novel proceeds the deliberation on how different gender roles are performed by each of the brides to highlight the research contention that gender is wrought not by sexual categorization but by its stereotyping. Therefore, the cultural differences of the two brides in the book by Sidhwa necessarily requires different shades of gender identification accordingly despite the fact that both the brides live and survive in the same culture. The deconstructive gender understanding contends that gender is an action, it is to be performed to conform to the conventional rampant standards. It should be made obvious that gender is not a free choice for a performer to perform as one deems (Salih, 2002) because its performance is restrained only by the innate patriarchal norms that are reckoned to be natural. Though gender subversion is a risky and unconventional choice to do yet it is in not an impossible.

Moreover, the study problematizes the gender's notions by Zaitoon since her tender age of a baby girl to a wedded woman. She is one of the three pivotal female characters, the bride, the novel is named at. The plot mainly is the narration of the resistance of the two ladies generally against the socio-cultural gender taboos. They became the worst victim of the discriminatory tribal environment that defines gender into the binary of masculinity and femininity.

Zaitoon's appearance in the novel at a time when she as a baby has narrowly escaped from a life-taking incident during the riots of the partition which took her parents' lives on the spot. Miraculously, she was salvaged by a man namely Qasim. She was running away in the

darkness, suddenly in search of her parent, she got hold of Qasim's legs incidentally for rescue. She started sobbing, 'Abba, Abba, my Abba! For a moment Qasim lost his wits. The child was the age and size of his own little Zaitoon lost so long ago' (Sidhwa, 1990, p.22).

Her character's manifestation in the novel begins with no gender to be categorized. She is as an orphan child with no identification of her parental background. She was screaming with fear and she started running after Qasim in the pitch darkness in search of her parents. The novelist has beautifully represented that as a cultural tradition for a girl to have her identification only due to her link and relationship with a male member of society. Her performativity therefore reveals her quest for identity of a name and family in the conventional gender culture. Qasim approaches her, "Kneeling before her, he sheltered the small face in his hands. The girl stared at him". However, She remarked, "You are not my Abba(papa). She said in accusing surprise" (Sidhwa, 1990, p.22). One's affinities, one's family name or one's own play a pivotal role in shaping one's gender role in a culture represented in the novel. Qasim wants to know her identity that is the impressive manifestation of gender stereotyping through his first question, "What's your name?" She responded, "Munni" Qasim asks again, "Just Munni? Aren't all little girls called Munni?"(22). Zaitoon is failed to demonstrate those attributes of her persona that can be convincing to meet the stereotypical gender standards devised by the tribal society. Qasim is yet not convinced about Zaitoon's gender identification that lacks of her association with any male member of her family. He rephrases his question again, you should have some other name. Do you remember your father's name? To which she replied that it was Sikandar.

The gender stereotyping acts as a strong force that determines one's gender status and role .If a girl lacks her relationship and association with her male family member, she is not recognized and identified in the predefined gender categorization in which one is to rule over the

other weaker one. Culturally, a girl has her no identity without her reference to masculinity. It further aggravates the situation if a girl is an orphan as is the role of Zaitoon.

4.2. Comparative Gender Performativity of the two Brides: A challenge to Gender Stereotyping

The comparative gender performance of each of the two brides has much significance to highlight the impact of different socio-cultural standards and cultural backgrounds on shaping of gender construction that keep changing as the circumstances change. It unfolds that gender is not fixed entity, it gets different shades according to diverse social norms. Zaitoon and Carol have different attitudes, exposures and reactions to deal with a question of sex-discussion at the pubertal age. Zaitoon's tribal culture does not permit a girl to discuss sex at this phase of life. While Carol's exposure in the western culture gives her a comfortable position to discuss the subject of sex freely without any hindrance. However sex should be a no subject for (Marwah, 2008) Zaitoon.

Therefore, Zaitoon is brought-up in a culture where these issues are prohibited for girls to speak about. It is a society of sex-vacuum. "Living in 'Muslim seclusion' in a 'sexual vacuum', she is not aware of her instincts because of the orthodox environment. (Marwah, 2008, p.35).The discussion of sexuality so freely as is done by Carol cannot be tolerable in the tribal society where Zaitoon was brought up in. It unearths that different cultures have different parameters and standards

However Carol's assertive and daring performativity can be witnessed as she feels more comfortable to discuss these matters openly. Her attitude (Marwah, 2008) with males of even Pakistani society shows that she is used to deal these sensitive issues. Her exposure in American culture equips her with a conspicuous status not to allow any male member of her family to

decide about her marriage, rather, she considers it her personal issue so she has the right to decide about. Carol's 'manly' identification in the male-controlled culture is wrought by her brought-up in an American culture. Opposite to submissive role of Zaitoon initially, who cannot ask her father about her own marriage, but Carol has resisted against the unwillingness of her parents about her love-marriage and her migration to Pakistani Kohistani tribal society from America. She persuaded her parents to reconsider their decision and finally they let her marry Farukh and even let her accompany her husband to Pakistan. Despite the fact that Carol's parents were certain that her husband would force her to convert to Islam. Sidhwa described this scene that at last her family showed its willingness for her marriage. "the young couple had left for Lahore" (p.91). Sidhwa has portrayed an assertive lady in Carol's character as she did not show any hesitation to do the risky job of going to the clannish area for her choice and love where no other western woman has ever supposed to take such a risk.

The novelist's portrayal of Carol's 'manly' role with these words, "In the area of sex, however, she had moved timorously. Her conventional upbringing, though modified by California liberality and the relaxed morals of an affluent neighborhood" (Sidhwa, 1990, p.90). Carol's daring gender performativity proves that it is the culture that determines one gender's role, not the sexual categorization. Her such actions which are hard to be expected of a lady in the tribal culture, are confidently done by her, she smoked openly, and she did not hesitate to use marijuana. No woman in the tribal society can think to smoke where carol is using the marijuana.

Carol's such a freedom distinguishes her to be a bold character, however it created suspicions and doubts in Farukh's mind about her wife. Therefore, Farukh takes the recourse of cultural sanctity and standards set for gender. He warns his wife not to violate the cultural drawn lines set by the patriarchy. He expressed his reservation in the words that it is not permissible for

you to be at heels for all types of men. (Sidhwa, 1990). Later his tone gets hard when he forbade his wife to step out without his permission. It should be a last warning. (91). This resulted in waning her love for Farukh who is becoming suspicious and critical of her actions. She started hating her husband due to her uncontrollable suspicion and jealousy about her free-mixing with her husband's friends.

Carol's gender delineation is the cause of cultural construction that is shaping for her new and complicated roles to perform. Now the new orthodox tribal culture demands her of a role that is quite opposite of a role in a western culture where she was born in. When she violates the pre-defined rules, she is ultimately threatened by her spouse. It unfolds that her liberal identification in the western society confronts resistance now in a new culture. It shows therefore that gender is not a permanent and natural concept, it is caused by socio-cultural norms. The clash between the two different cultures of Pakistan and American is an effective representation by the novelist. Farukh doesn't tolerate his wife to violate the cultural gender limits by his society. He utters, "I'm so ashamed of you! Displaying your honky-tonk pedigree! You laugh too loudly. You touch men" (Sidhwa, 1990, p.92). Carol replied that you are suspicious of your friends and your talk seems to be ridiculous. The suppressive and authoritative attitude of Farukh caused hatred in his wife's mind and heart because she is not used to such a culture of dominance and discrimination. She appears to be a symbolic character who resists and challenges this environment of restraints, ultimately she gets angry with her husband. She reacted that to hell with your suspicion and stupidity. This is waning our love. (1990, p.94). Consequently, this caused her to be inclined and tempted towards major Mushtaq for sexual needs.

Transformation of Gender Identity: A shift

It is thus the focal point here that Zaitoon's identification shows swinging throughout the plot. Although Carol is an overwhelming female character in the tribal society of Pakistan, yet her role remains arguably consistent and it does not mark such a quick change of her identification comparably. However, Zaitoon's role has undergone a rapid transformation in accordance with the circumstances, it is not stagnant and constant role rather it is a volatile and fluid performativity manifested from the initial scenes of the novel to the very end of it. From her long struggle for her survival in the incident that took her parents' lives as an orphan girl to her resistance and confrontation against the gender stereotypical standards as a bride in the tribal society of Kohistan marks a series of shift and transformation of her gender identification. Then, she appears to be a strong challenging voice against the tribal traditions. Zaitoon symbolizes not only as an assertive woman struggling against the repressive Pakistani culture but she is the representative of human spirit against all discrimination for women's survival. She appears to be an indefatigable and indomitable persona. (Dull,2010)

The shift of Zaitoon identification from a meek girl to a challenging lady signifies the fragility of gender stereotypical norms that are deconstructed by her actions in the novel. She primarily appears to be a beseeching lady to register her protest in the soft tones, "Abba, take me back... if I must marry, marry me to someone from the plains...I will die rather than live here"(Sidhwa,1990,p.136). Her questions made her father angry, "Hush, Munni, be quiet" (136). Now she unexpectedly appears to be a repelling person, she objects the decision of her father in her words, my father, please listen to me, I don't wish to marry. The differences of life-style, eating-habits etc. are hard to be adjusted with. "Dirty maize bread and water! My stomach hurts"

(Sidhwa, 1990, p.136). The idea of ‘hurting of stomach’ is the first answer against the unilateral decision of men about the fate of women symbolically.

To cut the matter short, the stereotypical gender taboos in Pakistan as has been painted by the novelist supports the argument that gender is taken as a natural characteristic of human beings like a sexual categorization. The association of gender and sexuality has caused the repressive gender notions that lead to discrimination and repression of the weaker ones.

The gender stereotyping painted in the novel causes the overriding roles of husbands over their wives but these inequitable and partial gender powers are resisted by the daring roles done by Zaitoon and Carol. The normative conception of gender identity (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018) is a consequent of a traditional patriarchal society. Therefore, the research aims at deconstructing the gender-matrix that causes persecution of those who don’t follow the taken for granted gender norms.

Conclusion:

The diverse gender performances of the two characters in the novel reveal that gender stereotypical standards have a significant role in determining the flawed notions of gender identity in a tribal society. The work unveils the diversity of socio- cultural gender standards and their impact on gender roles. Most considerably, the two female key characters, Zaitoon and Carol experience different shades of gender assigned roles to play in the orthodox culture of Kohistan. The plot reflected the clash of the stereotypical norms that have much importance for determining one’s gender role and identification of the two brides who have to survive in. A woman has no identity unless she succeeds in establishing her association with a male member of her family. Any identity other than the defined gender categories is believed to be odd, and unnatural. For example a woman has her identity but through her relations to men.

The multicultural contextual background of the novel leads the debate on how different gender roles are performed by each of the brides to support the research contention that gender is wrought not by sexual categorization but by socio-cultural stereotyping. Therefore, the cultural differences in the book by Sidhwa necessarily require fluid inclinations of gender identification accordingly. It is the contention of the present research that gender is an action, it is not a natural or fixed entity; it is a fluid and instable feature that has been manifested in the novel.

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