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## Oppression of Women in Pakistani Society: A Corpus-Based Study of Patriarchy in Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride

### Abstract:

*This paper deals with a corpus-based analysis of patriarchy in The Pakistani Bride, a novel written by Bapsi Sidhwa. The primary concern of the study is the adjectives used for the sketching of the Pakistani patriarchal society. Computer technology is widely used these days for the corpus analysis of literary texts such as novels, plays, poetry, etc. For this study, the text of the novel was collected from the internet and used for the corpus compilation. The corpus was analyzed using a corpus tool, AntConc. All the adjectives used in the text were analyzed and explained, highlighting the theme of patriarchy in the novel. The findings of the study suggest that patriarchy is a major theme of this novel, and adjectives play a crucial role in the description of gender discrimination, social constraints, and oppression of women.*

### Key Words:

Patriarchy, Adjectives, Gender Discrimination, Corpus-Based Study, Violence

### Introduction

This paper outlines the findings of a corpus analysis of The Pakistani Bride, a novel written by Bapsi Sidhwa. The field of digital humanities exploits computer technology and online applications for the analysis of literary texts. The current study falls under the domain of digital humanities because of the methodology used for the analysis of the text. The novel under analysis deals with the life of a tribal girl named Zaitoon, a girl born and raised in Lahore, who was forced to marry a tribal man named Sakhi by her foster father names Qasim. Zaitoon was repeated by illtreated by her husband, Sakhi. The story mainly deals with the oppression of Zaitoon and Carol, an American woman, in a patriarchal society ruled by men like Sakhi.

The novel focuses on the plight of Zaitoon and how, despite many hurdles and difficulties, she, as a victim of domestic violence, fled Kohistan. The novel essentially presents a strong woman who fights against male domination and how she sets herself free from a patriarchal society. The novel also describes the tragic plight of women's struggles and difficulties in a male-dominated society. This novel presents the image of a woman in a patriarchal society before the reader. To bring the perspective of another world, Sidhwa also introduces the character of Carol in the novel. She was an American woman who had been married to a Pakistani solid. She came with her husband to visit the Karakoram Mountains. She found the place romantic, but during her visit, she also learned about the place

Women hold in this society, and, like Zaitoon, she finally decided to go back to the state. This novel is about the lives of women in a patriarchal society and how they are deprived of their fundamental human rights. This novel presents the difficulties faced by a woman whether she is an educated American woman or an illiterate Pakistani woman. So the main theme of the novel is the oppression and suppression of women in Pakistan.

She is a realist and feminist, as can be seen in her writings. In her novels, she presented to readers the social and political status of Pakistan, the status of women, the subject of marriage, the crisis of division, and the problem of women. She is a post-colonial writer, and her writings are entirely based on the events she has

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witnessed in her life. According to Neluka Silva, Bapsi Sidhwa has focused all her novels on the female body in Pakistani society (Silva, 2003, p. 34).

A patriarchal society is one in which men have supreme authority, and women are treated as subordinates. In this system, men have a level of privilege that women are not allowed to enjoy. If we talk about the role of a woman in a patriarchal society, she is the lady of the house, and her role is limited to taking care of her family and should focus only on the happiness of her husband and children. Women have no right to speak mostly in front of males and are not allowed to express their opinions. Even the decision of their lives is made by the men of the house or society. In a typical patriarchal society, all human rights enjoyed by human beings are snatched away from women. Pakistan's patriarchal society is no different from this, even though Pakistan is an Islamic country, yet women's rights are not preserved. However, our religion has given so much importance to the rights of women, but the illiterate people of our society treat women as their subordinates. Patriarchy is one of the most important subjects of many feminist theories. As in patriarchal society, power rests in the hands of man, and power is deeply intertwined with privileges and respects that are also different for men and women. The novel 'The Pakistani Bride' is a true picture of Pakistan's patriarchal society. In short, this novel highlights the status of women in a male-dominant society and the role of women in a patriarchal society. The story shows the violence, degradation, and oppression faced by women in a patriarchal society and how men see them as a mere territory to rule.

### Problem Statement

The patriarchal system that has been established in Pakistan is one of the most crucial topics of discussion, and this matter must be fully investigated, and so a solution is found to resolve this huge issue. "Culture doesn't make people. People are making culture" (Adiche, 2014). It is important to understand the detrimental effect of patriarchy on our society and how women are mistreated and subjected to injustice and inhumane treatment. The novel 'The Pakistani Bride' is a true reflection of Pakistan's patriarchal culture, and therefore, this novel is a suitable text for the present research. The present study explores how Sidhwa's specific writing style and diction have contributed to highlighting the key issue of male-dominant society and its deleterious effects on women. The main concern of the study is a corpus-based analysis of the adjectives used for men and women in the novel to define the status of men and women in a patriarchal society.

### Research Objectives

1. To find out the most frequently used adjectives for men and women.
2. To examine how adjectives define men and women.
3. To understand the role of adjectives in sketching a patriarchal society.

### Research Questions

1. What are the most frequently used adjectives for men and women?
2. How does Sidhwa's use of adjectives define men and women in Pakistani society?
3. How does the choice of adjectives for men and women signify the theme of patriarchy?

### Significance of the Study

In the 21st century, women around the world work equally with men, so the demand for equal representation in the world and power is both natural and justifiable. Yet the patriarchal system of society can be observed all over the world, and patriarchal society is one in which women are oppressed and humiliated. Patriarchal society is characterized by the subjugation, oppression, and suppression of women by men. It is not wrong to say that women are considered inferior to men in Pakistani culture, and their roles are confined to housework, especially in villages. But the trend is changing in larger cities, and women have begun to get better treatment,

which is probably due to media and education. It is heartening to note, therefore, that celebrated writers such as Bapsi Sidhwa bring such social and cultural issues to the fore. She described in her novels how women stood up for themselves and how bravely women fought oppression and violence. Since Bapsi Sidhwa is a writer of the modern age, the main themes found in her novels are art for the sake of life, human psychology, pessimism, violence, and oppression found in the modern world, which is the main concern of today. Through the analysis of the adjectives used in the novel, *The Pakistani Bride*, this research sheds light on the patriarchal dimension of Pakistani society.

## Literature Review

Patriarchy can be defined as a society where men are decision-makers, and women are treated as subordinates and inferiors. This means that men have the supreme power to control everything according to their choices, and they even have the power to control women. [Walby \(1990, p.20\)](#) defines 'patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, repress and exploit women.' Patriarchy is a society that considers women to be inferior beings and males to be superior beings. It refers to a lack of self-esteem, self-confidence, helplessness, and discrimination. It is essentially the subordination of women to their personal, social, cultural, and public life. It refers to the establishment of a society that lays down its principles and rules based on the belief that women are the weaker sex and that women are powerless and powerless in the face of men. Patriarchy is not limited to specific societies or states; it can be observed in our daily lives. This can be observed in private life, for instance, in the form of domestic violence, sexual harassment at work, lack of property rights, lack of freedom to live life according to personal choices or beliefs. So, in our families, social groups, workplaces, etc., the factors that make any society patriarchal are found everywhere.

Patriarchy was not one event, according to Lerner (1989), but a process that developed over a period of nearly 2500 years and a number of factors and forces that were responsible for establishing male supremacy as we see it today. This states that patriarchy is not created in a day; it is a whole process and very deeply rooted. Women faced difficulties obtaining their due rights from the very beginning. It is not about human sex, whether male or female, but about the society that entitles the two genders, man and woman, to their roles. The functions assigned by society are such that men are dominant, and women are subordinate to them. It was the narrow mindedness of human beings that confined women to their homes and deprived women of their fundamental human rights. "You deserve to be here," quotes Mackenzi Lee. You're deserving to exist. In this world of men, you deserve to take up space. Women are equal in the sight of Allah (the creator of the universe and everything) so that no one can deny the position of women as an equal gender, but it is the people who have made it difficult and arduous for women to live in this world.

"I am not free when any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own," says Lorde (1981). We agree with the declaration that one woman's suppression is the suppression of all women in the world. If even one woman is deprived of her basic human rights, then it is necessary to improve the world. In this modern world, there is no place for women to be controlled, and it is time for the whole world to work to eliminate this unfair system where women are mere marionettes in the hands of men. Modern women are strong and bold ([May Alcott, 1869](#)). Modern women do not accept a system that treats women as a body having no opinions and beliefs. One of the most important demands of modern women is that they have the same status as men in society.

## Methodology

This study is mixed-method research involving both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, but the qualitative methodology is dominant in this paper. This paper uses the tools of Corpus Linguistics to analyze the novel "The Pakistani Bride" authored by Bapsi Sidhwa. First, the novel was obtained in a PDF format, and then it was converted into a text file. The text 'Antconc Software' ([Anthony, 2007](#)) was used for analysis. The

text file of the novel is then opened in Antconc to analyze the text's lexical elements. This study analyzes the adjectives used for men and women in the novel 'The Pakistani Bride' which presents the patriarchy found in Pakistani society to readers. The detailed study of adjectives shows the social constraints that women face in a patriarchal society and how difficult it is for women to fight for their rights and gender equality. For the better understanding and interpretation of the themes in the text, the adjectives of the novel are taken into account in this study. Adjectives related to man and woman have been presented in the form of graphs, and concordance lines are also mentioned in order to get a clear perception and concept behind the use of adjectives.

## Data Analysis

In order to analyze the text and to get an impression of the author's writing style, the article takes into account adjectives describing both male and female. The aim of choosing adjectives is to know and understand the position of men and women in a patriarchal society. The aim of this paper is to gain insight into the author's word choice and how her thoughts are reflected in her diction. The novel is about the patriarchal system found in Pakistani's society; therefore, the purpose is to highlight the elements of the novel which portray patriarchy. To this end, adjectives describing both men and women are analyzed, and their concordance lines are also mentioned to explain the significant position of man and the inferior role of women in Pakistani patriarchal culture.

### Adjectives used for Men

The most frequently used adjectives for men are arrogant, bloody, cold, cruel, crazy, dangerous, desperate, dominant, ferocious, fierce, inhuman, strong, stubborn, and tall.

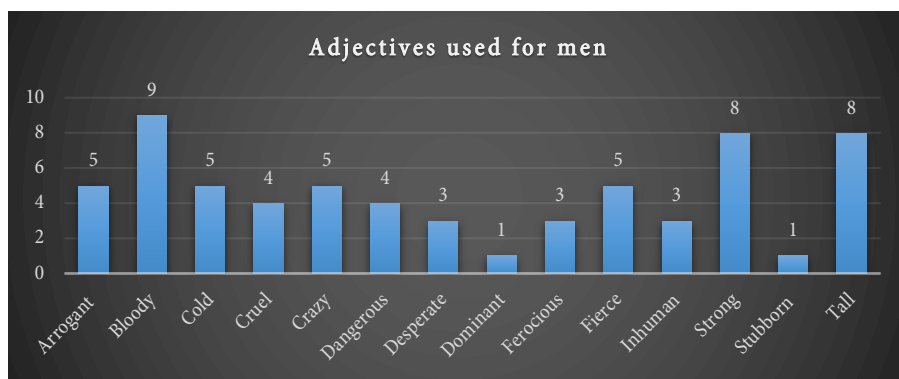


Figure 1: Adjectives used for men

The portrayal of men as inhuman, arrogant, and cruel are also supported by the concordance lines extracted from the text with the help of AntConc using the concordance function.

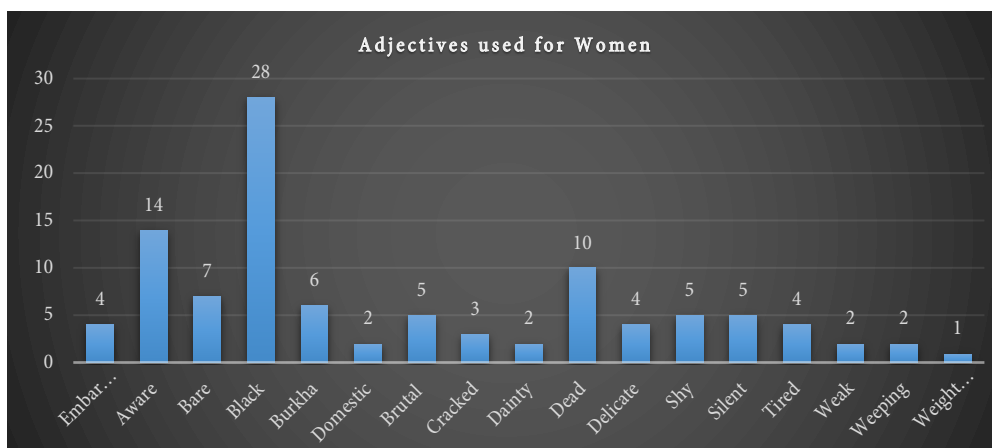
- Paisa, he demanded in a hoarse **inhuman** whisper. (Page 93)
- He appeared self-assured, hard and **arrogant**. (Page 154)
- He tore the ghoongat from her head and holding her arms in a **cruel** grip. (Page 160)

The adjectives used for man and the few instances of concordance lines signified man as the dominant figure. In fact, Pakistani society is a male-dominant society, and there is a common demand for courageous and merciless attitudes. He enjoys a great deal of protocol and respect in our society just because of being a man. He is free to do all the things that he desires. In the novel, which explains the harsh and unacceptable behavior of men towards women, the same theme is reflected. The theme of male domination, violence, and exploitation of power are the major themes of the novel, which can be witnessed through the depiction of men

in the novel. Through the description of men with the help of adjectives, the author illustrates how powerful and strong men are compared to women. Adjectives such as dangerous, cold, dominant, stubborn, etc., for instance, describe men as strong and arrogant. The adjectives used by the author demonstrate the tragic plight of women in a patriarchal society and shows how difficult it is for women to fight against this male-dominant society.

### Adjectives used for Women

The most frequently used adjectives for women are embarrassed, aware, bare, black, burka, domestic, delicate, weeping, time, weak, etc. The adjectives suggest that women are weak and inferior.



**Figure 2:** Adjectives used for women.

Some of the examples given in the table describe that women are weak, delicate, and are controlled by men.

- Startled and **embarrassed**, Zaitoon crouched body stiffened. (Page 136)
- The **weeping** bride, supported by the **weeping** bride (Page 91)
- Hamida's **weak** voice thrilled behind her. (Page 186)
- This is why I wear a **Burkha**. (Page 55)

The adjectives used for women represent a realistic image of women's status in a patriarchal society. The adjectives describe how men in a patriarchal society maltreat women. This also states that those women endure everything silently and cannot even protest against it. For them, there is no law, and if there is one that does save them because of cultural reasons. Men treat women according to their moods and wishes, and women are mere stooges in their hands. It is considered that they are frail and timid beings. Women have no right to live according to their preferences and decisions. Most of their lives are miseries, sorrows, cries, agonies, tears, and moans. Men in patriarchal society consider it their fundamental human right to rule over women. They think that the only purpose of a woman is to serve the men of her family sincerely and devotedly. Nevertheless, the male members of the family are given preference. Women in a patriarchal society never enjoy the place and the respect that men are given. The above-mentioned adjectives and concordance lines explain and illustrate that Pakistani society is a male-dominant society, and the main factors leading to the creation of this unfair system, we think, are illiteracy and ignorance. These adjectives show that the author is well aware of Pakistan's patriarchal society.

The author has very realistically, and truthfully painted the image of women in a patriarchal society. The character of any woman found in any patriarchal society is explained by adjectives such as crying, tired,

delicate, silent, and shy. Pessimism, loss of faith, forced marriage, oppression, and anxiety are the main themes reflected in the treatment given to female characters in this novel. By using simple adjectives, the author introduces to her readers the oppression and violence faced by women in their lives in a patriarchal society and how they are deprived of their fundamental human rights. Zaitoon (the female protagonist) ran away at the end of the novel, despite many difficulties and hurdles in her path, but her fight did not end here. In the end, during her escape, she was raped by some random tribal man. The author's events, diction, and writing style illustrate the tragic situation of women and how much effort women need to put into obtaining their basic human rights (freedom). Zaitoon was beaten, raped, and had to remain hungry for days and weeks just to get free from the shackles and constraints of a patriarchal society. The novel clearly explains that women are exploited for their satisfaction by men, and women are victims of man's lust and pleasure.

### **Adjectives And The Major Themes**

The above-mentioned data and analysis of adjectives demonstrate that the language used by Bapsi Sidhwa in this novel is very simple and easy to understand. She is a modernist writer and the vocabulary used in the novel is modern, enriched, and refined. The major and important themes of this novel are pessimism, melancholy, and disillusionment. The novel begins with a sad and depressed tone, ending in a painful state and distressing mood as well. There are multiple sad moments in the novel. During the partition, Zaitoon lost her parents. Due to an incurable smallpox infection, Qasim lost his whole family. With her marriage, Zaitoon was not satisfied. There is a melancholic mood in the whole novel.

This novel highlights women's pathetic and miserable lives. The novel shows that, whether the women are from Pakistan or any other culture, both are badly treated and have no choice in their lives. Carol and Zaitoon were both victims of the oppression found in the patriarchal society. Although Carol is portrayed as an educated American woman, she was not able to save herself from the shackles of a patriarchal society and eventually had to flee back to the states. The disappearance of both women shows how difficult or almost impossible it is to overcome cultural obstacles.

In modern literature, psychology is the key element of the novel. She highlights the many psychological problems in the novel, such as homesickness, migration hardships, mob attacks, tribal men's typical mindset, women's problems, jealousy, trust issues, women's miseries, and sorrows, all of which are the psychological issues discussed in the novel. Oppression and depression are also part of this novel. The central theme of this novel is male dominance in society and female repression in the Pakistani tribal regions, which is even reflected in the novel's language and characters. In a patriarchal society, the adjectives used in the text also reflect the dominance of men and the subordination and inferiority of women.

### **Conclusion**

This is a corpus assisted study of the representation of Man and Woman in the novel 'The Pakistani Bride'. This study focuses on the adjectives used in the text to get an insight into how men and women are treated in a patriarchal society. The analysis of the adjectives shows that the major theme of this novel is patriarchy. The study demonstrates that men are dominant beings, and females are weak and oppressed. After the analysis of adjectives and concordance lines, it can be argued that men are presented as powerful and fearless beings and women as timid and weak compared to men. The adjectives of the novel also explain the predicament of gender discrimination found in Pakistan. It also illustrates the miseries, agonies, and sorrows of women in a typical patriarchal society. The study aims to shed light on an unjust situation (patriarchy) and how crucial it is to remove this unjust system from the world and how difficult it is for women to survive in this system.

The findings of the study also demonstrate the major themes of the novel, which are loss of faith, melancholy, oppression, fragmentation, anxiety, pessimism, and human psychology. The study of only one lexical element (adjective) leads to an in-depth analysis of the text, the writing style of the author, and the major themes of the novel.

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