

INTERTEXTUALITY IN EGYPTIAN NOVEL WOMEN AT ZERO POINT AND BAPSI SIDHWA'S THE PAKISTANI BRIDE: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF GENRE

Dawood Said¹, Laiba², Iqra Bibi³, Zarhat Ali⁴

Abstract

The present work tends to analyze Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "The Pakistani Bride" (1983) from the perspective of intertextuality. For this purpose, the researchers have taken into consideration an Egyptian novel under the title "Women at Zero Point" (1975) and a Pakistani novel "The Pakistani Bride" (1983), and sorted out the references that Sidhwa has adopted in her work from the selected Egyptian novel. So the the major source of primary data was the texts of the two selected novels. Resultantly, this paper presents various types of oppression like physical oppression, psychological oppression, sexual ill-treatment cultural turmoil, etc as intertextual clues in Sidhwa's 'The Pakistani Bride' (1983) adopted from the Egyptian work Women at Zero Point (1975). The first intertextual clue that was found was the similarity in the main characters i.e. Zaitoon from Sidhwa's novel and Ferdaus from the Egyptian novel. In addition, other references like theme, context, and cultural practices are also used as intertextual clues. The findings of this work reveal that various clues that have been utilized by Sidhwa connecting her work with the Egyptian novel.

Keywords: *Intertextuality, The Pakistani Bride, Women at Zero Point, Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse, Feminism*

Introduction

The term intertextuality was for the first time used by Julia Kristeva in the 1960's. According to Kresteva, Intersexuality is the art of accumulating texts from various sources on a single point. Thus, writing from multiple sources supplements each other and resultantly apprehends meaning (Angenot, 1983). A single text can be seen from multiple aspects. Intertextuality has been influenced by several factors. Such factors include structuralism, post-structuralism, semiotic criticism, and deconstructionism (Nazar et.al, 2022).

According to Deheuvals, et al (2006, as cited in Nazar,2022), three main factors are important for Intertextuality. These factors include; the absent context, the present text, and the entire procession of Interxuality. Rather, the main text is built up based on absent text, while this main text is referred to as "present text" and the inculcation of absent text plays a vital role in the development of the main concepts.

So, the theory of intertextuality suggests that meaning in a text can only ever be understood by other texts. No work stands alone but is interlinked with the tradition that came before it and the

¹ Department of English, Govt. Collage Gulabad Dir Lower

² M. Phil scholar, Northern University, Nowshera

³ M. Phil Scholar, Northern University, Nowshera

⁴ Assistant Professor, Northern University, Nowshera

context in which it is produced. Thus, the idea of intertextuality is of crucial importance for understanding literary works (Allen, 2011).

The purpose of this work is to unveil the similarities between the selected novels. Both works have been produced by female writers and the authors have tried to show female subjectivity and oppression in male-dominated society. Thus, both novels revolve around the central figures who are women and face a lot of difficulties and evil treatment from the male members of society. After an in-depth reading of the selected literary works, it was found that many contextual clues in Sidhwa's work refer to another work of the same genre produced by an Egyptian writer. The researchers, for instance, have taken the context, theme, and cultural practices as depicted in both novels as intertextual clues that have interlinked Sidhwa's novel to the Egyptian novel. Thus it uses these clues to dig out the interconnections found in situations and characters of these novels from of intertextuality point of view.

This work is of considerable importance both for the students of linguistics, and literature and for the researchers as well. Firstly, it will help the students to understand the concept of intertextuality. Secondly, it will also assist them to know about feminism. In addition, they will also have some understanding of the selected novels from a literary perspective. For the researchers, it will pave the way to cite it for relevant literature in their studies. Finally, it will also help them to apply the same concept to other literary pieces.

Literature Review

The concept of intertextuality dates back to ancient times when the first human history and the discourses about texts began to exist. As a phenomenon, it has been defined as a set of relations that a text has with other texts and/or discourses belonging to various fields and cultural domains. Yet the commencement of intertextuality as a critical theory and an approach to texts was provided by the formulations of such theorists as Ferdinand de Saussure, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Roland Barthes before the term 'intertextuality' was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966. (Zengin, 2016).

Intertextuality, in its broadest sense, is a poststructuralist, deconstructionist, and postmodernist theory that changed the concept of text, recognizing it as an intertext owing to the interrelations between texts and texts' absorptions of other texts. Another novelty posited by intertextuality is the distinction between work and text (Bakhtin, 1984). A work, for the theorists of intertextuality, is a product that is consumed and a text is a process that is produced (Zengin, 2016 P. 300).

For Kristeva and the other theorists of intertextuality, meaning is not something absolute and eternal or essential and intrinsic, but rather contingent on the process of reading. Their inquiry

“treats meaning as something produced, something specific to a time and a place, and that emerges out of that context” (West-Pavlov, 2009: 22).

The poststructuralist theories of Bakhtin led to the conception of text in the theory of intertextuality. Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism and heteroglossia lies at the core of Julia Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality, which will be held in the study after giving briefly Bakhtin’s contributions to intertextuality. Though Bakhtin did not use the term ‘intertextuality’, intertextuality was first used concerning his dialogism and heteroglossia. For Bakhtin, it is the dialogic aspect of language that “foregrounds class, ideological and other conflicts, divisions and hierarchies within society” (Allen, 2000).

An overview of the Novel

The novel *The Pakistani Bride* was written by Sidhwa in a weird circumstance. She said that Sidhwa heard a real-life story of a pathetic city girl who was brutally murdered by her husband who was from a different culture. This paved the way for the birth of the most-read and most discussed novel in the name of *The Pakistan Bride*. The novel begins with Qasim a young tribe leaving his village in the remote Himalayas for the plains. Caught up in the strife surrounding the creation of Pakistan, he takes an orphaned girl for his daughter and brings her to the bustling, decadent city of Lahore. Amid the pungent bazaars and crowded streets, Qasim makes his fortune and home for the two of them. As the years pass, Qasim grows nostalgic about his life in the mountains while his hopelessly romantic teenage daughter, Zaitoon, imagines Qasim’s homeland as a region of tall, kind men who roam the Himalayas like gods. Impulsively, Qasim promises his daughter in marriage to a tribesman, but Zaitoon’s fantasy soon becomes a grim reality of unquestioning obedience and unending labor.

The Protagonist Character Zaitoon is married to an older man who was chosen by her father without regard for her wishes or desires, it is a symbol of how women’s lives are controlled by men. To marry a man chosen by the father or family represents the cultural customs and social institutions in Pakistani society, where women had no rights or choice to have any discussion about their own lives. It indicates the male-oriented culture, where limited options available to women in terms of marriage and personal autonomy. It is a traditional patriarchal culture, where men hold all power and rights, and women are denied agency and freedom of choice in such societies (Kolekar, 2023). After her marriage, she is treated cruelly by her husband. She is abused sexually, emotionally, and physically. At last, she manages to escape herself from the cruel behavior of her husband.

Sidhwa’s acclaimed novel is a robust, richly plotted story of colliding worlds straddled by a spirited girl for whom escape may not be an option. Without another option to consider or re-

consider the bewilderments of Zaitoon knew no bounds. Sidhwa has built up the plot with a keen notion that explores the whole story in a way that looks at things through a feministic perspective. It has also revealed the secretive silent sufferings of women whose hands were given in marriage to a man of different cultural background and behavior. It is not that women should not get married to a man from a different culture. It is only to bring to the society's notice that getting adapted to a different circumstance will take some of its own time. The main reason for this is that culture and behavior never remain the same (Geethanjali, 2021).

Methodology

This work is based on qualitative analysis. The researchers were interested in finding out the similarities in theme, context, and cultural practices that interlink the selected novels with each other. For this purpose, the researchers have taken the protagonist female characters from both novels as both characters face similar situations and both stories revolve around these central characters. Thus, the main source of data was Bapsi Sidhwa's novel 'The Pakistani Bride' (1983). The researchers have extracted various forms of abuse that Zaitoon faces through contextual analysis by adopting the close reading technique. Once various forms of oppression and abuse were extracted, the researchers compared it with another central female character from Egyptian novel 'Women at Zero Point' (1975). This novel was used as a reference for intertextuality. After contextual analysis, it was revealed that the first clue of intertextuality between the selected novels is that both of them are based on the theory of feminism. Besides, it was also found that cultural practices, physical oppression, psychological abuse, forced marriages, sexual abuse, and domestic violence are the intertextual clues that interlink both novels. Furthermore, the theory of intertextuality has been applied to this work to find out the linkages of the novel 'The Pakistani Bride' with another selected work of the same genre.

Discussion

Exploitation of Zaitoon and Firdaus

Throughout the history of the world, female members of society have always been considered fragile and are given an inferior status in society as compared to men. They are not only considered weak both physically as well as psychologically but at the same time, they are also deprived of their basic rights. Various cultures have different norms and values but the difference between genders is always there. As a result of cultural values, practices, and norms, societies treat male and female genders in different ways. This difference can be seen in various literary works by various writers at different times. Like other works in literature, this work is also an effort to find out the hardships and cruel treatment of men with the protagonist character of Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride*. Zaitoon around whom the whole story revolves, faces

difficulties in various forms. In addition, For the sake of finding connections or linkages among events and characters, an Egyptian novel *Women at Zero Point* is brought under consideration for intertextual elements. Thus, this section deals with the oppression and subjugation of the female characters from the selected novels in different forms by interlinking the protagonist characters from the selected novels. They are discussed in detail below.

1. Cultural Chaos

It is evident from the novel that the central character in the novel *The Pakistani Bride* faces cultural chaos. This situation arises when Zaitoon is brought by Qasim and is adopted as his daughter. Zaitoon was not her original name as it was given to her by Qasim. He gave her this name as according to Qasim she resembled his daughter whose name was Zaitoon. From the context of the novel, we can find that she is neither acquainted with Qasim's culture nor with the culture where she was later obliged to marry. Zaitoon was completely ignorant of the harsh treatment of women in the culture where she was brought up. After her forceful marriage with Sakhi, one of Qasim's tribesmen, her subjugation can be witnessed when Sakhi gripped her harshly at the time of her father's departure. Similarly, His Sakhi's mother also says in a harsh and angry tone "Your father will visit us soon". She pleads to her father "Abba take me back. I will look after you always. How will you manage without me and the food? If I must marry, marry m someone else from the plains. I will die rather than live here" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 173). She refuses to be taken back by her cruel father by saying "I have given my word and it depends on my honor. It is dearer to me than life. If you will besmirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 150). These scenes from the novel showcase the cultural chaos faced by Zaitoon. Her bewilderment, deprivation, and bad treatment by her husband Sakhi could be seen as an elaborate illustration of inequality and subjugation imposed upon women. She is even not allowed to speak in front of her husband.

The aforementioned situation faced by Zaitoon is a reference to intertextuality from the Egyptian novel *Women at Zero Point*. Like Zaitoon, Ferdaus, a female character also faces the same circumstances. Since Ferdaus also belongs to a patriarchal society where men are assigned supremacy whereas females are supposed to follow the rules set by male members of the society. Thus, women are suppressed in forms of physical, emotional, and sexual oppression. Their lives are strictly bound to follow social norms. In her work, Quyyoom (2017), highlighted all the social evils that were faced by the protagonist character in a male-dominated society. She points out that the cultural norms and practices affect the whole life of subjugated women. She has dealt with the evil practices that are dominant in all societies regarding the evil treatment by men with

women. Thus, sexual rapes, early marriages, domestic violence, mutilation, prostitution, and forced marriages are some of the issues that are prevalent in the protagonist characters of the selected novels.

2. Forced marriages

Zaitoon's father agrees to give his daughter to one of his clansmen without ever asking for her consent of wedding to the boy. Her father agrees with his clansman in turn for some money, maize, and goats. This exchange of Zaitoon in turn of the amount displays women as a trading item. Mariam, whom Qasim has considered his sister, says "My brother Qasim, How can a girl who lives in Lahore, how she can be happy in the mountains? She will be miserable among them. Don't you see?" (Sidhwa, 1983, p.93). In response, Qasim says "Sister, you forget I am from those hills. It's my people you are talking of" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 93) To her pleading regarding Zaitoon's future in the hills, he pays no attention and puts his commands "How dare you? You have never been there. You know nothing. I said my words. I know that she will be happy. The problem must end now" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 94). Her consents were never asked. This event is an indication that shows how females are marginalized in male male-dominated society.

After she was taken to the hilly area where she would live her life with her brutal husband, she pleaded to Qasim, "Abba take me back. I will look after you always. How will you manage without me and the food? If I must marry, marry me someone else from the plains. I will die rather than live here" (Sidhwa, 1983, p.173) . But her cruel father responds "I have given my word and it depends on my honor. It is dearer to me than life. If you will besmirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands"(Sidhwa, 1983, p.173).

Like Zaitoon, Firdaus also copes with similar situations. After her mother's death, she goes to Cairo with her uncle who also abused her. When her uncle marries a young beautiful girl and intends to get rid of firdaus, she is compelled to marry an aged man who is over sixty. He does so on the advice of his newly married wife. After marriage to the aged man, Ferdaus is still not free of various types of abuse and torture. Her husband uses abusive language and beats her on trivial issues. From the very beginning, he used to beat her taunt her, and consider her just a sex doll. Since he is a retired man, he spends his time inside the house all day long and never lets her free from his evil thighs. Thus, here Ferdaus is considered as a sole property and the purpose of her presence is just to get lustful desire from her feminine body. Since it is an enforced marriage along with rough treatment in daily life, she eventually decides to elope and thus free herself from the clutches of the aged man.

Thus, in both cases, Zaiton and Ferdaus are obliged to marry men without their consent and therefore, face sexual, physical, and psychological abuse from their husbands. Resultantly, both

of the female characters elope after bearing the cruel treatment from their husbands for a long time.

3. Sexual Abuse

In *The Pakistani Bride*, Bapsi Sidhwa Pen points out the sexual abuse of the central character of Zaitoon. First of all, she is married to a man from the hilly areas of Kohistan without her consent. Besides, she is treated in such a way as if the only purpose of her existence in this world was just to be a source to fulfill the lustful desires of her husband. It is evident that on the very first night of their marriage, Sakhi turns deaf ears to the humble request of Zaitoon and satisfies his lustful desires though she tries to stop his brutal treatment of her. He tortures Zaitoon physically by patting her thighs and head and shouts “You are my woman. I’ll teach you to obey me (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 173).

On the first night of their marriage, Sakhi tears the ghoonghat from her head and holds her arms in an unfeeling tight grasp. He pulls her shiny silk shirt over her head. Her arms stream to protect her breast then he quickly pulls the rope off her shalwar and the silk falls to her legs. He seems jealous of her shocking desires for femininity... round out ..pushing bosoms. Zaitoon tries to resist but Sakhi continues his claim of her body and says “Why not? It’s my cunt” (Sidhwa, 1983, p.163). Zaitoon tries to stop his brutality but he satisfies his lustful desires from her turning a deaf ear to her pleas and requests.

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Here again, the harsh treatment of Ferdaus and her sexual abuse is used as a clue of intertextuality from the selected novel “Women at Zero Point”. Ferdus as a pure girl and unaware of the crafty nature of men, believes in her uncle’s chastity but like the rest of the male members he is also of a cunning nature. He always tries to find the secret organs and thighs of the little innocent girl.

“I would glimpse my uncle’s hand moving slowly from behind the book he was reading to touch my leg. The next movement I could feel it traveling u my thighs with the cautious and trembling moment” (Saadwi, 1975, p. 47-48).

When Ferdaus flees from her aged husband’s house and treats her harshly, she meets the owner of the coffee shop. She has a firm belief in his chastity but he is no more than a man towards her. He rapes her in the darkness of night, beats her, and fulfills his sexual desires for her. Besides, he uses her as a prostitute to make money. She says “ He would come back at night, pull the cover away from me, slap my face, and then bear down on me his weight. I kept closed my eyes and abandoned my body. It lay there under him without movement, emptied of all desires or pleasure or even pain feeling nothing” (Saadwi, 1975, p. 75).

On her escape from the brothel, she faces a policeman who threatens her to have sex with him and then attacks her private organs forcefully. He says “Don’t play games with me or I will take you to the police station, said the policeman. Why? I haven’t done anything, I said. You are a prostitute and I must arrest you and of your kind” (Saadwi, 1975, p. 78).

4. Domestic Violence

In the novel Women at Zero Point, Firdaus faces the cruelties and torture from her parents along with other relatives. She is physically beaten especially in her childhood. She is exploited by her family members and thus, is deprived of her basic rights. She says about her mother “First she beat me. Then she brought another woman who was carrying a knife or a small razor. They cut off a piece of flesh from my thighs” (Saadwi, 1975, p. 112). Ferdaus once demanded a coin from her father for which she was beaten brutally. On her insistence from the coin, she was obliged by her father to do twenty-four hours of labor work in the field.

After her marriage to an aged man, he starts beating and taunting her and considers her a sex doll. Since he is a retired man, he remains at home all day long and never lets Ferdaus free from his thighs. He considers her a slave and tortures her for tiny mistakes. She says “All day long he remained by my side, watching as I cooked or washed. If I dropped the packet of soap powder and spilled a few grains on the floor, he would jump up the chair and complain at me for being careless” (Saadwi, 1975, p. 124). Thus the text reveals that she is tortured physically as well as emotionally. On another occasion, she says “One day he discovered some leftover scrap of food,

and he started yelling at me. After it, he got into the habit of beating me whether he had a reason or it or not". When she complains about the harsh treatment of her husband, the family members say "A virtuous woman was not supposed to complain about her husband, her duty was perfect obedience" (Saadwi, 1975, p. 125). Thus, women must follow the rules made by patriarchal society strictly.

Similarly, Zaitoon, a female character in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "The Pakistani Bride" also faces domestic violence at her in-laws. Her husband Sakhi beats her severely without any reason. He wants to torture and humiliate his wife as according to him, she humiliated his name and his clan when Qaism, her father left for Lahore and left her with her in-laws. Thus she cries "Abba, don't go. Don't go, Abba. I am coming with you Abba, Wait for me" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 167). Once meeting with Yunus Khan, he asks Sakhi "How is your wife from the plains. You know she requires a man to control her" Thus he comes home and beats her shouting "I will teach you. I will make you follow me. Do you think you can make a fool of me. Don't you ? Further he bangs on her thigh and shouts "you are my wife. I'll teach you to obey me" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 173). In addition, on another occasion, he humiliates Zaitoon by beating and abusing her "You whore ... he dares his throat and spits full on her face. You dirty, black little bitch" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 174).

5. Physical oppression

When Sakhi gets married to Zaitoon, he acquires her as his property. She knows no affection regarding his wife Zaitoon. On the very first night of their marriage, Sakhi turns deaf ears to the humble request of Zaitoon and satisfies his lustful desires though she tries to stop his brutal treatment of her. He tortures Zaitoon physically by patting her thighs and head and shouts "You are my woman. I'll teach you to obey me" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 173). Similarly, once meeting with Yunus Khan, he asks Sakhi "How is your wife from the plains? You know she requires a man to control her" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 171). Thus he comes home and beats her shouting "I will teach you. I will make you follow me. Do you think you can make a fool of me? Don't you? Further, he bangs on her thigh and shouts "You are my wife. I'll teach you to obey me" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 168). In addition, on another occasion, he humiliates Zaitoon by beating and abusing her "You whore ... he dares his throat and spits full on her face. you dirty, black little bitch" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 185) Her slaps her again and swinging her pitilessly, throws her away 'He aims a swift kick between her legs and she falls. Sakhi kicks her again and again and pain stabs through her" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 186).

Regarding the physical abuse that Zaitoon faces daily from her cruel-natured husband, references can be interlinked with the protagonist character of Ferdaus. Ferdaus, in the first stages of her life, is beaten by her parents. As is evident from the novel that Ferdaus once demanded a coin

from her father, she is refused and abused but, on her insistence, she is given a coin on the condition that she would work in fields for twenty-four hours. Similarly, she says about her mother's harsh treatment that first she beat me then she cut a piece of flesh from my thigh with the help of another woman.

Moreover, after her forced marriage to an aged retired man, she was verbally abused and beaten by her husband who would sit all day long inside the home and abuse her emotionally and physically on small issues.

6. Psychological torture

Sakhi being a member of male male-dominated society insults and tortures his wife. When he recalls that Zaitoon was talking to an army man, he grudges and abuses her. "I saw the jawan holding your hand all the way long to the river. Zaitoon was very surprised to see his behavior. She felt stricken, bowed her head and her lips quivering in subdued weeping"(Sidhwa,1983, p.163).

Ferdaus in *Women at Zero Point* also suffers from psychological torture. She is teased by her aged husband as he would sit beside her even in the kitchen and use abusive language on trivial mistakes committed by her.

Conclusion

This work sheds light on the concept of intertextuality present in the selected novels. It highlights the presence of intertextuality through the protagonist characters I.e. Zaitoon and Ferdaus events taking place in various scenes of the novel. Accordingly, the researcher has tried to interlink the situations, events, cultural norms and practices present in the selected works through the lens of intertextuality. After, the careful analysis of the novels through close reading technique, findings reveal that Bapsi Sidhwa has uncovered the brutal and harsh treatment of her protagonist character Zaitoon that she faces in various forms. She, therefore, has taken various hints that show women's subjugation in almost all fields of life in male dominant society from another novel "*Women at Zero Point*". In both novels, for instance, female characters face bad and cruel treatment from their husbands. They are not only cruelly treated by their husbands but also cope with wicked and painful situations due to other male members of society. In both cases, they are obliged to marry forcefully, Zaitoon to a cruel man from her father's tribesmen and Ferdaus to an aged man, without their consent. In addition, both of them face harsh treatment in the forms of physical, social, psychological, and sexual abuse.

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