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**An Analytical Study of Marginalization of Women in Bapsi
Sidhwa's "An American Brat"**



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Abstract

This paper aims to address and analyze marginalization of women in Bapsi Sidwa's novel *An American Brat* (2012). The undersigned issue in this novel has been highlighted and revealed through some of the main and leading characters such as Feroza Ginwalla, Zareen, Cynus and others. The story revolves around the central character of Feroza who is the heroin of the novel. She suffers at the hands of patriarchy and by the social values first within Pakistan in the city of Lahore and later on in the States by the same parental social and cultural values and mind set up. First she is forced to throw away all her religious conservatism in Pakistan and then she is made compel to adopt it in the later part of her life in America. Thus throughout the novel she is marginalized in one way or the other. She is marginalized outside and inside her home in the shape of patriarchy and social values. It is due to this marginalization that leads her to become an obsessed, independent, secular and experienced human beings. This study is a voice against the dire effects of marginalization on women and an attempt for their emancipation and due place in the society.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to address and to analyze the marginalization of women in the novel *An American Brat* by Bapsy Sidwa (2012). Marginalization according LibertiesEU (2021) is the power that is exercised by the powerful against the powerless. According to this article marginalization refers to the banishment and exclusion of a certain section of the social set-up on historical bias or on the basis of social mind set-up in order to prevent them from excess to certain social spares of life including the socio-economic, education and religion. Ethnicity, disability position, socioeconomic level and age are some of the basic reasons of marginalization. The dire consequences of marginalization include deprivation of good health care, obtaining proper education and employment and availing sound and ample opportunities to lead a good life.

Bipsy sidwa is a female Pakistani English fiction writer. Born in Karachi, she was shifted to USA in 1980 where she wrote just one novel —*An American Brat*ll. She mostly fights for he due rights of women in her novels and is famous for her feminist stance in the literary circle. Her novel *AN American Brat* also deals with the life of a

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parsee gile named —Feroza who grows up in America while confronting with patriarchal and religious standards related to the womanish issues.

In this novel she has compared the differences and similarities between two distinct civilizations namely Pakistani and American civilizations. Being the protagonist of the novel Feroza, the novel is named after her as —An American Brat. She is the leading character and other characters and incidents are linked with her life directly or indirectly. She is religious minded one as she wears scarves and is depicted as a narrow minded and conservative by nature first. She lives in the world of bearers and limitations in which she has to be under a strict code of conduct set by her parents where religion and morality are unquestionable institutions. In this world there is no compromise on two things i-e religion and morality.

Her uncle, Manek, who is just six years older than her has a close relationship with her like that of siblings. It is on account of this close attachment that Feroza is called him by the name —Guardian while he calls her as — Boochinai. It is he who supports her in the USA and to draw her out of the pit of subjugation, servility and covered existence and to be an independent girl of her own choices. After joining a college in Idaho she joins Colorado where she gets to know about the American culture and manners from the fellows like JO, Shabi and an Indian boyfriend David.

David press has a charismatic and attractive personality so much so that Feroza starts taking interest in him. Both of them interact even physically. When she wants to marry an American Jew the whole things turn against her. Her family poses a strong resistance to this union by saying that by doing so her creed and faith will be at stake. It is at this point she raised her objection and take a revolt against the existing norms and traditions where a man's creed and faith is not at stake if he marry with a woman of another culture but it is vice versa in the case of a woman and she is badly criticized. She argues against this double- standards system.

Research Question

How does Bipsy Sidhwa highlights the issue of marginalization of women in An American Brat ?

Marginalization of Women: An Overview

Marginalization, according to Habiba,U, Ali & Ashfaq, A (2016) in their article entitled with -From Patriarchy to Neo -patriarchy: Experiences of Women in Pakistan is a new

form of patriarchy which can be termed as neo-patriarchy. It is experienced internally through socialization in the early stage of women's lives than it is exercised by in-laws after their marriage. It is the process of socialization over socialization that control and maintain the power of men over women. It is usually the older woman of the family who facilitates this process like male –patriarchy for the sake of marginalization of women at the hands of women to sustain and to support the existing power structure.

In this regard the notion of Prividera, L.C & Howard, J.W(2006) in their research work under the title — Masculinity, Whiteness and the Warrior Hero: Perpetuating the Strategic Rhetoric of US.

Nationalism and the Marginalization of women is also worthy to be mentioned here. According to them patriarchy and whiteness are the two dominant factors that always co-exist as a result of a dominant ideology that also leads towards marginalization of women in respect of military opportunities for female soldiers whereas according to Onwutuebe (2019) in his research work under the title — Patriarchy and Women Vulnerability to Adverse Climatic Change in Nigeria, states that it's patriarchy that provides the basic power of adaptive skills to men which they use against women in return. Some of the scholars are of the opinion that marginalization can be attributed to some section or communities of the society. In this regard the words of Nagra(2018) are worthy to be noted. She argues in her research treatise under the title —Cultural Explanation of Patriarchy, Race and Everyday Lives: Marginalization and —Othering Muslim Women in Canada that that it is a wrong conception that Muslims women are regarded as oppressed and passive victims of their cultural and communities which has led to the marginalization of women and has strengthened the image of women as —Othering in the mainstream Canadian society. Gilarek,A(2012) also explain this notion of —Others in his research study under the title — Marginalization of — The Other Gender Discrimination in Dystopian Vision by Feministic Science Fiction Authors that it's the notion of —Other led by patriarchy on account of which they always become victims of discrimination and marginalization in the social set-up.

Purkayastha, D (1999) in his research work entitled with —Patriarchal Monopoly and Economic Development declares marginalization of women to be mainly responsible for the low economic status in the society as they are not paid full for the household

work in the general society.

Bakoand (2018) and others also hold the same views in their research work — Women's Marginalization in Nageria and the Way Forward. According to them marginalization of women is a world-wide phenomenon especially in the economic and socio-political development is concerned.

Marginalization according to Jaiswal(2023) in his research work under the title —Portrayal of Women Characters and Their Socio- cultural Roles by Anita Desai: An Inner Feeling on Marginalization of Women in the Society the main cause of stress and strain between the families in Indian society is marginalization that exercised by men due to lack of quintessential ideologies of the West and the death of the Indian traditions and customs.

According to Hasan (2012) in his research study under the title — Marginalization of Muslim Writers in South Asian Literature states that there has been a constant trend of depicting the marginalization of women in South Asian Muslim writers such as Rokaya Sakhawat Hussain. In the same way Kvsatish and M.M, Madhavi(2012) has also shed light on marginalization of women in their research study entitled with — Marginalization in Indian Diasporic Writings: A Study of Select Novels of Kamala Markandaya and Bharty Mukherjeel according to the the theme of marginalization of women has got immense attention from the Indian women writers. It is this treatment of marginalization that gives special effect to their work of art.

Theoretical and Analytical Perspective: M.M Lazar's Version of Feminism

Discourse according to Fairclough (2005) analyzes the distinct forms of injustices and inequalities. As there is a close relationship of marginalization with women as often they are victimized by it, therefore, Lazar's (2005) version of feminism can also be utilized for the study of marginalization of women. According to Lazar(2005) the term — Feminist has defined differently by various scholars such as Mills(1995),Christie(2000) and Kittzinger(2000) on various occasions, the present paper aims to analyze and to address the issue of marginalization of women in the novel An American Brat by Bipsy Sidhwa. So, the researcher has used M.M Lazar's(2005) version of Feminism as a theoretical and analytical framework in this research study. Lazar's version of feminism highlights the concepts of the complicated relationship of power, gender and ideology in the discourse within a given social set-up. —Power

according to Lazar(2005,p.32) is the skill of a person to control and influence other and which is considered as his own domain by a him and which he is not ready to share with anyone especially with the opposite sex. He used this power in decision making process and marginalization of women.(Lazar, 2005,p.243). In the same way the concept of ideology is also harmful in respect of marginalization of women as it is a combination of various practices that is mainly responsible for the division of the people within a society in the shape of men and women. Moreover, the concept of gender also divides the society in to a group of man and woman in an ideological social set-up which can be defined as a hierarchical connection of subordination and domination(Lazar, 2005, p.148).

Research Method for Data Analysis: Textual Analysis

The researcher has used the textual analysis for the analysis of the issue of marginalization of women in the novel under study. He has used its analytical tools for the evaluation of the issue under the study. Textual analysis involves the textual features analysis such as grammar, words means vocabulary and textual structure. These textual features are of crucial importance for the analysis of the text. According to the context of textual analysis meanings of a text are multiple in nature as these are not final, fix or single. A text is a matter of analysis. It can be interpreted and explained in many ways. The reader or the analyst is free to take the meaning of his choice according to his own perception and understanding.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Bipsy Sidhwa has presented a girl name —Ferozal as the protagonist of her novel —An American Brat. In fact the very name of the novel —An American Brat is named after her name. it is her character that all other characters connect with each other and most of the characters an incident also revolve her character. Bipy Sidhwa has used this character as her mouth piece for the expression of her feminist views and perspectives. Her character reveals some of the basic concepts and themes such as women identity, post colonialism and the issue of gender discrimination and other related issues of women etc. the theme of marginalization of women is also revealed and highlighted through her character mostly as she has been depicted as a victim of patriarchy, marginalization and gender discrimination first within her home and later on in The USA as well one way or the other way. . Below are some of the important passages,

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events and character study which highlight the issue of marginalization of women which is the aim of this research paper.

—Even Ayah and the sweeper's wife asked, _what are these women's rights.
(Sidhwa, 2012)

&

—For the first time I felt, it didn't matter that I was not a Muslim, or that I was a woman.
(Sidhwa, 2012)

&

—Mummy, please don't come to the school dressed like that.' She objected to my sleeveless sari blouse! Really, this narrow-minded attitude touted by General Zia is infecting her, too. I told her:

'Look, we're Parsee, everybody knows we dress differently' (Sidhwa, 2012).

Description: the discourse highlights the narrow mindedness of the marginalized powers discursively. Feroza does not like her mother modern fashionable and sleeveless sari when she visits her school. The setting of the novel is the last stage of Bhutto and the beginning of the Zia regime. In this are President Zia was introducing the Islamic values and Shari Law in the constitution in order to show his Islamic ideals and views and perspectives. In these reform the rights of women were also included and the law of —Purdah and a ban on all the vulgar and obscenity on media was also imposed. Nobody could dare to deny it. Some of the sections of the society was liking it while some were against it. These laws were opposing by the feminist by saying that these laws have been charted only for the marginalization and entrapment of women only. This is the first evidence in this novel that highlight the issue of marginalization of women as these laws are referred again and again in this novel as revealed in these lines.

"She won't even answer the phone anymore!' What if it's some-one I don't know?" Zareen mimicked her daughter in English. I told her — don't be silly. No one's going to jump out of the phone to bite you!" (Sidhwa, 2012)

Description: The discourse highlights the marginalization of women at home by Patriarchy at the hands of women. Zareen. Feroza _s mother, is snubbing her daughter for her —purdah as she does not like to attend the phone and to talk with stranger as she is a religious minded girl and talking on phone with stranger is against the Islamic views and values according to her. Her mother does not like her religious ethics and

called it as religious conservatism. In fact she is doing so in order to subdue her, to control her behaviour and to force her to follow only her rules of conduct. Feroza is not allowed to go against the rules made by the patriarchy in home. She has to follow and obey these rules inside home at any cost.

—“I’m really worried about Feroza” (Sidhwa, 2012).

&

—“She’s becoming more and more backward every day”. (Sidhwa, 2012).

Description: the discourse above demonstrates the marginalization and entrapment of women at the hands of women. Zareen, Feroza’s mother is again criticizing her daughter for her religious behavior and values. As Feroza is religious minded and observes the religious ethics strictly due to which her mother is extremely worried about it. She terms it as backwardness and extremism on her part. By doing so she wants her daughter to follow only her rules and not to lead a life of her own choice. In fact the discourse clearly reveals the marginalized attitude of the parents towards their children. Feroza’s religious attitude and religious mind set-up is not liked and acceptable to her parents. They are not ready to accept any opposition to their social code of conduct and social identity as well.

—“Women mustn’t show their legs, women shouldn’t dress like that, and women shouldn’t act like that. Girls mustn’t play hockey or sing or dance! If everything corrupts their pious little minds so easily, then the mullahs should wear burqas and stay within the four walls of their houses”.

(Sidhwa, 2012)

Description: The discourse above highlights the double standard of the patriarchy (marginalization) discursively. The discourse producer here wants to reveal that the patriarchy always tries to manipulate power in its own interest. It always wants to change and utilize the conditions for its own interests and benefits. Cyrus, Feroza’s father here expresses his marginalized views regarding women. According to his views women should not wear short dress and should not show their body parts also. In the same way singing and dancing and playing hockey are all related to men therefore, women should not try to do all these activities.

Again it’s reflection of his ill mind about women as he recommends all these activities for himself but is not ready to attribute to women also.

It's absurd how things have changed. I was really hopeful when Bhutto was elected. For the first time I felt it didn't matter that I was not a Muslim, or that I was a woman. You remember when he told the women in Peshawar to sit with the men? That took guts!(capt #1)

Description: The above discourse highlights the issue of expression of women liberty and their happiness at this. Zareen is exalted at the time when Mr. Bhutto expresses his own concerns about women's liberty and freedom when he tells the women in Peshawar to sit near men. Zareen is expressing her sadness at the news of Mr. Bhutto's death in front of her husband as he seems to be the chieftain of women's rights and freedom. With his sudden death now the dream of women empowerment and liberty seems to be unattainable and absurd.

Don't worry, Cyrus said. —When the time comes, they'll learn in two minutes. Everybody's feeling frustrated, not only women. Your Bhutto also let us down.

Description: The discourse above demonstrates the joy of Mr. Bhutto's sudden death who was a champion of liberty and freedom of women and their due rights in the society which was a serious threat for the prevailing and dominating patriarchy in the social context of Pakistan. Cyrus expresses his own views about Bhutto that he was not only bring down patriarchy in the society but was also devaluing women and that there was a special concern about him in patriarchy. The discourse shows that patriarchy always opposes the forces who work for the interests of women in the society and who want to award them with their basic rights and place in the given social context. Surprisingly, the enforcement of prohibition was also a sore point with the wives in their intimate circle of affluent Muslim friends.

Unable to congregate over drinks at the Punjab and Gymkhana clubs, the men drank instead at each others' homes. Since the men didn't drink after dinner, the food was served late — around midnight. The resentful wives sustained themselves on juices,

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sodas, and soup until then. Like Zareen, they felt they were forced to chaperone their men on an endless round of evening binges.”

Description: The discourse highlights the devastating and marginalization of women in the society. It is the expression of the deplorable conditions of women as they are not allowed to eat the dinner before their husbands. They have to wait and wait till their consent in this regard. Men enjoy themselves in the parties with drink and use to eat dinner after the drink late at night. In response to this women have to take some soft drink and juices in order to satisfy their appetite. It is a clear indication of the marginalization of women at the hands of patriarchy and its self made values and rules. Moreover, it also describes that selfishness and orthodox perspective of patriarchy through which they govern and subjugate women in the society.

It’s okay for you to run around getting drunk every evening, but I must stop wearing sleeveless blouses.¶ Zareen’s voice sawed like an infuriated bee’s. She would have much preferred to shout, but she was conscious of the servants in the kitchen.”

Description: The discourse above describes the humble and well considerate attitude of women in general who remain silent because of the social norms and constraints which they have to observe at any cost at the face of marginalization who control and govern all the aspects of their lives. Drinking is a bad habit whereas Cynus is addict to it. His wife tolerates this bad habit instead of shouting at him. she is so much considerate towards him that she even does not want to shout at him in the presence of servants in the kitchen nor she wants to embarrass him for this bad habit. She is either forced by the patriarchy not to do so as she does not have the right to speak against the social conduct of patriarchy in front of the people.

I think Feroza must get away,¶ Zareen continued. —Just for three or four months. Manek can look after her. Travel will broaden her outlook, get this puritanical rubbish out of her head.¶

Description: The discourse highlights the weak and deplorable condition of women

due to marginalization. The discourse producer clearly shows that how the opposite forces paly and exploits women in the society. Their religious attitude and behavior is termed as useless and religious conservatism by them only to pertain and maintain their control on their lives. Parents in trhe shape of marginalize forces want to assert its power like the one been expressed in the lines. It is the advice of zareen to her husband to send Feroza to US for a few months so that her religious attachment may come to an end due to the modern life style of the west. Again it describes the harsh attitude of marginalization towards women in the shape of Feroza who is reluctant to go abroad as she does not like the western liberal norms and traditions which will influence her own norms and customs as these are totally against her existence and entity. She is force to obey the order in order to sustain he in the family.

What with theonslaught of television and the American and British videos, it was hard to keep young girls as innocent as one might wish. Despite all their careful indoctrination — Zareen's, her grandmothers', her aunts' — it would not be as easy to keep Feroza out of harm's way as they had presumed when, in keeping with the times, they had decided to let Feroza graduate before getting her married"

Description: The discourse above highlights the narrow-mindedness of patriarchy in the case of women's education and freedom. According to it the modern technology in the shape of electronic media is liable to influence the lives of women who can be easily trapped and deceived one way or the other way in spite intense care and prohibition in this regards. Therefore, education is necessary to do away with these menaces of the modern time. Even education is look for its social and cultural benefits by the patriarchy 'the discourse also demonstrates the worldly and utilitarian attitude of patriarchy towards it opposing power and opposite sex.

Nevertheless, the schizophrenia she perceived at the core of America's relationship to its own citizens and to those in poor countries like hers continued to disturb her. She eventually came to the conclusion

that it troubled her because America was so Consummately rich and powerful, and the inconsistencies of its dual standards, the injustices it perpetuated, were so cynical and so brazen. Not that Pakistan or other countries were paragons, but then no one expected any better of Pakistan — it laid no claim as the leader of nations, the grand arbiter of justice and human rights.

Description: The discourse above demonstrates the influence of foreign state on the lives of the native women. Feroza thinks that even USA is not free of women's exploitation, suppression and oppression. Marginalization is prevailing everywhere. It is present in the poor Third World countries as well as it is there in the US. Though the US government is trying to show a better view of its citizen to the poor and exploited nation of the world but as a matter of fact it's not true. Even US has maintained a kind of double standards in this regards; man is powerful and the ultimate master of all power. Women are their subject and unquestionable servants. They are as exploited in US as they are being exploited in Pakistan. In fact they are in devastating and deplorable conditions everywhere.

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