

Interdisciplinary Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's '*The Pakistani Bride*'

Miss Swati Suresh Kolekar, (Asst Professor, Department of English, Arts and Commerce College, Belapur Tal- Shrirampur, Dist- Ahmednagar. Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University)

Article Received: 12/06/2023

Article Revised: 20/07/2023

Article Accepted: 21/07/2023

Published Online: 22/07/2023

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.07.73

Abstract:

Interdisciplinary approaches in English literature have gained significant attention in recent years. It became an important part of the study of English literature, in order to go in depth and to enrich our understanding of literary text. This article discusses the insights of interdisciplinary approaches in English literature, drawing on examples from fields such as psychology, cultural, social, history, political and cultural studies. It provides an overview of study with reference to Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*. Basically Sidhwa's works deal with the past and present scenario, attempting a feminist approach by raising the voice against the women's oppression and subordination in various social, political, historical and cultural contexts. Here, researchers explore the various interdisciplinary approaches in *The Pakistani Bride* including cultural, feminist, regional, psychological etc. It highlights the importance of exploring the intersections between different fields of study in the analysis of literary texts. To conclude, interdisciplinary approaches are essential to enrich understanding the complex and multi-layered nature of Sidhwa's work. It provides readers to gain a deeper understanding of the novel's themes and issues, such as gender relations, identity, power, migration and the complexities of identity and cross-cultural encounters.

Keywords: interdisciplinary approach, English literature, cultural approach, psychological approach.

Introduction:

Interdisciplinary refers to the integration of various academic disciplines, fields of study, or areas of expertise to solve complex issues or problems, address challenging issues, or gain a more comprehensive understanding of a particular topic. The term has been defined in different ways by scholars from various disciplines. Interdisciplinary studies are defined as "a process of answering a question, solving a problem, and addressing a topic that is too broad and complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession. It draws on disciplinary approaches and integrates their insights through construction of a more

comprehensive perspective" (Klein and Newell 393). It involves combining knowledge, methods, and perspectives from different areas to generate new insights, theories, and solutions that cannot be achieved through a single discipline alone.

The concept of interdisciplinary has gained importance in recent decades as many of the challenges we face as a society are complex and require multiple perspectives to address. Interdisciplinary (ID) is typically characterized by integration of information, data, methods, tools, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge (Klein 15). The Interdisciplinary study entails integrating disciplinary insights in order to better identify and understand multifaceted phenomena of a complex system (Klein 50). Interdisciplinary study can take many forms such as teaching, research, and policy development etc. The study may require more resources and time than traditional disciplinary research, as it often includes gathering and synthesizing data from several sources. It requires individuals to step out of their comfort zones and to be open to new sights, ways of thinking and problem-solving.

There are various aims of interdisciplinary studies such as to move beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries, drawing on diverse perspectives, and theories to address complex problems or questions. It can promote critical thinking and intellectual flexibility. It helps to bridge disciplinary gaps and encourages mutual understanding and respect between different disciplines. To promote collaboration and exchange of knowledge among scholars from different disciplines, to create new theories and areas of study that cross disciplinary boundaries.

Interdisciplinary has become increasingly important in many fields, including literature, as it allows us to explore topics and issues from different perspectives. Literature is a best example of an interdisciplinary field of study, as it draws on a wide range of disciplinary perspectives to enrich our understanding of literary works. It involves combining literary analysis with other disciplines such as history, linguistics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, gender studies, and cultural studies, etc. Interdisciplinary study can enhance our understanding of the diversity and complexity of literary traditions, as well as the cultural and historical contexts that shape them. Some prominent objectives of interdisciplinary study in literature as, to study the relationship between literature and society, to examine the psychological and emotional dimensions, to provide a comprehensive understanding of literary texts etc. For example, feminist literary criticism is an interdisciplinary approach that combines literary theory, sociology, and political science to explore the relationship between gender and supremacy. It focuses on the ways in which gender and power are represented in literature and society as well. Feminist critics have used literary texts as a means of criticizing and challenging male-oriented culture, patriarchal structure and gender norms, while psychologists have explored the psychological dimensions of gender and sexuality in literature. Further, sociologists analyzed the social and cultural factors that shape gender identities and relations in literary text. The scholars from different fields have examined the ways in which gender roles, stereotypes, and identities are constructed, and transformed in literary text from different periods and cultures.

An internationally renowned feminist author Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* (1983) is well known as feminist literary text. Basically, feminist theory is used to scrutinize how literary works represent and challenge gender roles, patriarchal culture, set value for women, male dominated culture, and predetermined patterns of society etc. The novel represents the various interdisciplinary fields to explore various themes and issues related to Pakistani society such as gender roles, religious, socio-political culture, political clashes, and migration etc. In order to analyze and fully understand the novel, it is important to employ interdisciplinary approaches that draw from multiple fields of study. It helps to increase the complexity and richness of the narrative.

The Pakistani Bride, a journey of a young teenage girl, Zaitoon became the victim of patriarchy system and terribly harassed by society. She has willpower, courage and caliber to fight against such patriarchal norms and man-made laws, as she formulated her escape from her oppressive and cruel tribal husband, Sakhi. In doing so, her feminist attitude is clearly seen as she challenges the traditional gender roles and expectations imposed upon women in Pakistani society. Sidhwa shows that women have the power to resist and abolish the patriarchal systems of power.

Cultural approach is an interdisciplinary field that analyse the cultural practices and social beliefs. *The Pakistani Bride* emphasized the role played by culture and social institutions like marriage, along with the culture customs and tradition, in establishing and sustaining male hegemonic control over the women's lives and her bodies (P 1). It is a story of two brides Zaitoon and Carol. The story takes place in both Pakistan and America. It shows the culture clashes between both Eastern and Western culture. The characters navigate the differences between the two cultures, including customs, traditional values, rituals, structure of society and language. Sidhwa describes the impact of cultural differences on the characters' identities and their relationships with others.

Protagonist, a young girl named Zaitoon's, arranged marriage to an older man that was chosen by her father without regard for her own wishes or desires, it is a symbol of the way in which women's lives are controlled by men. To marry a man chosen by father or family, it represents the cultural customs and social institution in Pakistani society, where women had no rights and choice to take any discussion about her own life. It indicates the male oriented culture, where limited options available to women in terms of marriage and personal autonomy. Its traditional patriarchal culture, where men hold all power and rights and women are denied agency and freedom of choice in such societies. Similarly, another woman character, an American girl Carol, who married a high profile man, Faruk. Her husband feels jealous, yet gives her social security. She faded up to live under someone's control and restriction. She permits herself to fall in love with a Pakistani soldier, Major Mustaq, and stay with him against her parents' permission. But he too is not faithful to her, she is terribly sexually harassed by him.

Zaitoon and Carol find themselves in the predicament as they are tortured and persecuted by their groom. Even though Zaitoon's marriage is arranged by her father, she finds herself unable to adjust just like Carol in this discriminative and oppressive culture and

tradition, whereas Carol fail to understand this distinction of gender and culture difference and keeps on following her western way (P 2). It reveals the actual women's condition in Pakistani society. Not only low caste women but even the high caste women are also persecuted, exploited, and marginalized by men and society as well, in the name of tradition and predetermined culture. Zaitoon and Carol both were struggling to escape themselves from male-rooted oppressive tradition and culture of Pakistani society.

Further, the novel show different religious culture, practices, and traditions in the Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh. It shows how religion can be used to justify oppressive practices and traditions. Zaitoon's close friend Nusrat's wedding ceremony author shows the Hindu traditions, such as the mehndi ceremony, where women come together to decorate the bride's hands with henna. On the other hand, Islamic characters as Miriam follow Islamic practices and beliefs, including prayers and fasting during Ramadan. The lines, "Oh, let me stay in purdah—don't lift my veil. If my purdah is removed ... my mystery is betrayed" (Sidhwa 66). It is observed that, Purdah system abundantly exist in Pakistani society, where women are strictly follow it, in the name of cultural and tradition. Purdah, is a sign of patriarchal culture, it represents that women who wear purdah, they are slave therefore no one can see, talk, touch her and no right to take any decision instead of her husband. They hide themselves, even though they are uncomfortable to wear purdah. And it's a one kind of oppression and exploitation of women in the name of religious culture.

Another interdisciplinary approach in the novel is the use of psychological analysis to explore the trauma, behaviors, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and emotional struggles faced by the characters. Protagonist Zaitoon's, became a victim of child marriage, domestic and sexual abuse, and experiences of multiple traumas in her life including sexual abuse, forced marriage, and displacement. The line, "Abba, take me to the plains when you go. Please, don't leave me here. Take me with you." (Sidhwa 132). It is observed that Zaitoon seemed in trouble, and did not want to stay at her husband's home. As per the predetermined institution of marriage the girl who got married must stay with her husband's home, therefore Zaitoon's father forced to stay with her curial tribal husband, Sakhi, even though she was physically, mentally harassed by him.

Further, Zaitoon's mother-in-law, represents the strict gender roles, set value for women and patriarchal values of the society. She expects Zaitoon to conform to her expectations of a good woman, wife and mother, who strictly follow all social beliefs or norms, which often clash with Zaitoon's own desires and aspirations. From her childhood Zaitoon got treatment as how should be a good and ideal woman, who sacrifices or devotes everything for her husband and society as well. The trauma she experiences has long time psychological effects on her, such as depression, anxiety and alienation. Her traumatic experiences shape her personality and behavior, and she struggles to deal with her grief and fear, which often manifest in her dreams and flashbacks.

Thus, Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* is a complex work that can be approached through an interdisciplinary lens. It draws on multiple fields of study to explore the various complex social, psychological, regional, political and cultural issues in Pakistani society. It is

a best example of an interdisciplinary approach to literature. Therefore, the novel is seen depicting the cultural, religious and psychological interdisciplinary approaches to enrich our understanding of literary text and their historical, psychological, social, political and cultural contexts. Interdisciplinary studies in English literature looking for the broader social, historical, psychological, and cultural contexts that inform literary works. *The Pakistani Bride* demonstrates the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in English literature to enrich and deeper understanding multi-dimensional perspectives on issues such as gender, power, migration, social and cultural identity. The text studied through the lenses of various approaches and disciplines that observing deep into the text. By drawing on insights from multiple fields of study include history, sociology, cultural, psychological, and feminist approach, Sidhwa established a rich and detailed picture of the lives of her women characters and the societies in which they live.

References:

- Klein, Julie Thompson. *Interdisciplining Digital Humanities: Boundary Work in an Emerging Field*. US: University of Michigan Press, 2015.
- Klein J, Thompson, and William H. Newell. "Advancing Interdisciplinary Studies." *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, Practices, and Change*, edited by Jerry Gaff and James Ratcliff, Jossey Bass, 1996, pp. 393–415.
- Klein, Julie Thompson. "'Advancing' Interdisciplinary Studies: The Boundary Work of Integrating, Complexifying, and Professionalizing." *Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2018, pp. 45–67.
- P, Amuthspriya. "Cultural Conflicts in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*." *MVM Journal*, vol. 04, 2018.
- Sidhwa, Bapsi. *The Pakistani Bride*. Haryana, India: Penguin Books, 1990.