

VOICES OF VOICELESS IN *THE BRIDE* BY BAPSI SIDHWA AND *THE WANDERING FALCON* BY JAMIL AHMAD

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the representation of tribal women as subalterns in *The Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad. It explores how patriarchal customs, tribal traditions, and socio-cultural practices relegate women to a voiceless, oppressed status within Kohistani and Balochi societies.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Employing a qualitative approach, this research utilizes textual and content analysis of the two primary literary texts through the lens of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Subaltern Theory. The analysis focuses on how tribal norms particularly bride price (Walwar), honour (Ghairat/Nang), and property denial (Miratah) affect women's agency and resistance.

Findings/Results: The findings reveal that patriarchal authority and tribal customs render women voiceless and subordinate, denying them fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, autonomy in marriage, and inheritance. Yet, women like Zaitoon and Shah Zarina resist male dominance through acts of defiance such as elopement or escape, although their voices remain overshadowed by patriarchal decision-makers. The study also highlights the irony wherein women's resistance is absorbed back into patriarchal systems through male figures who continue to control their destinies.

Research Limitations/Implications: This study is limited to two literary texts and specific tribal contexts in Pakistan. Broader generalizations require further comparative studies across diverse tribal and cultural settings. However, the research offers critical insight into the intersection of gender, culture, and power in literary representations of tribal life.

Originality/Value: The paper fills a notable gap in the existing literature by connecting tribal women's subaltern status with literary depictions of silence, resistance, and patriarchal control. It provides a nuanced, theory-driven analysis that deepens understanding of how literature can serve as a medium for voicing the otherwise voiceless.

Key Words: Patriarchy, Subaltern, Tribal Women, Tribesmen, Tribal Customs, Violence

Introduction

Male dominance, or patriarchy, is the rule of a man over a woman. In a more general sense, "patriarchy refers to male domination, to the power relationships through which men govern women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept submissive in a number of ways" (Bhasin, 2006, p. 3). The patriarchal system, which consists of societal institutions and

behaviors in which men govern, marginalize, and exploit women, is characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy, and rivalry. According to traditionalists, patriarchy or hierarchy has existed since the beginning of time and will endure as long as there is life on earth. As with other natural laws, the natural order of things dictates that men should govern over women and vice versa. Others, however, disagree, arguing that patriarchy is a human invention rather than a universal law and that man-made law can be altered. According to some of Aristotle's views, women are passive while men are active. Aristotle (1969) writes in his book *Politics* "As regards the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female is lower, the male ruler and the female subject," (Smith, 1983, p. 467). For him, a female is a "mutilated guy," the one without a soul. Biologically speaking, women are inferior, and as a result, they are less capable, have less capacity for reasoning, and have less capacity for making judgments. Frederick Engels (1940) writes in his work *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, The subjugation of women is a historically evolved phenomenon that started when the concept of private property emerge. Lerner (2015) argues that, the development of class society and private property came before patriarchy. Although there are biological differences between men and women, these differences do not serve as a foundation for the sexual hierarchy that determines male dominance and female inferiority. Patriarchy was only made by historical events, and it is human-made.

In the Kohistani and Balochi tribes depicted in *The Bride* (1983) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad, men rule the home and decide what happens to women. The elements that ruin the lives of tribal women include a patriarchal attitude, tribal customs, imposition of men's will on women, men's honour, an unstable society, and physical abuse. Tribal women demonstrate opposition to patriarchy and violence. American novelist named Bapsi Sidhwa is one of the top English-language novelists from Pakistan. Her novel, *The Bride* (1983) has its foundation on an actual tale told to Bapsi Sidhwa by military personnel after she and her family participated in an army campaign in the farthest reaches of the Karakoram Mountains. Her thorough familiarity with tribal cultures in Kohistan is shown throughout the novel. She observed the traditions and way of life of the Kohistani tribes; also she understood their culture and adhered to their accepted beliefs while staying at an Army camp in the Karakoram Mountains. A young woman from the plains was transported up the mountain by a tribesman, who later married her to another tribesman, according to a genuine story told by Army personnel. Following a month of marriage, the girl flees and spends fourteen days in the Karakoram Mountains while attempting to find her way to the plains. She was discovered by the tribesmen next to an Indus River bridge. Her head was severed, and her husband dumped her into the river. Bapsi Sidhwa was moved by this genuine story, and she made the decision to write a novel.

Sidhwa was honored nationally in Pakistan with the Patras Bokhari Prize in 1985 for her novel. Three women's stories, those of Afshan, Carol, and Zaitoon—are told in *The Bride*. In the novel, a young girl named Zaitoon serves as the protagonist. In contrast to the girl of the actual narrative who was taken to the mountain by a tribe member and was murdered by her husband and tribal members because she ran away, the protagonist of Sidhwa's novel *The Bride* (1983) is a powerful individual who fights male dominance, domestic abuse, and violence of her tribal husband Sakhi and resists the oppression and survives at the end of the story. Bapsi Sidhwa has amplified the voice of women by addressing the patriarchal existence in her novel *The Bride* (1983). "*The Bride* is a women's lyric cry in prose against existential fate and societal cruelty,. Zaitoon is a successful representation of Sidhwa's depiction of agony and sorrow. She has written dramatically about a specific culture, marriage, allegiance, and honour, as well as their

contradiction with conventional wisdom.” (Sahai, 2004, p. 85-86)

The Wandering Falcon (2011) was written by Jamil Ahmad, a retired Pakistani civil servant who now lives in Islamabad. He began his career in Pakistan's Civil Services in 1954, and for many years he served as the FATA Federally Administered Tribal Areas' administrator. Because of his ethnological interest in tribes, he wrote stories while working in Frontier Province and Baluchistan and in 1974 he finally finished a collection of interconnected short stories. *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) went on to become known as one of the best anthologies of short stories to be released in 2011. *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) is a collection of short stories about the life of Baluchis from several tribes who reside on the Iranian, Pakistani, and Afghan borders. The figure of Tor Baz, a youngster born to a daughter of tribal chief, who elopes with his father's servant, serves as a connecting thread amongst the short stories.

The Wandering Falcon (2011) by Jamil Ahmad and *The Bride* (2008) by Bapsi Sidhwa both illustrate the difficult lives that Zaitoon, Gul Bibi, Sherakai, and Shah Zarina lead in tribal societies ruled by tribal customs, brutality, and patriarchy. The novels also show how women fight against oppression and abuse. The oppressive socioeconomic standing of women and patriarchy are inextricably linked. Tribal customs such as The Bride Price (Rasnama/Walwer/Khawara), Honour and Pride (Ghairat/Nang), and Miratah (declaring a woman as issueless in the absence of male kin and thus denying her property), which lead to disaster in their lives, are imposed by the dominant person of the family like father.

This qualitative study seeks to investigate the tribal customs that make the tribal women subaltern by silencing them, promotes patriarchal mindset, and cause disaster in their lives. It also seeks to identify the causes of violence against women and how tribal women respond to patriarchy and violence. The textual analysis and content analysis of the primary texts *The Bride* (2008) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad are the study approaches used to accomplish these goals. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Subaltern Theory" used in this study, to evaluate the primary texts. The primary purpose of this study is to find answers to the following research questions for the issue under consideration, voices of the voiceless. 1. What are the tribal customs that relegate women to a subaltern position, encourage a patriarchal mindset, cause disaster in their life and silence them? 2. What are the causes of violence against tribal women and how do they react to the oppression they experience?

Literature Review

For years, there has been a heated debate over Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Bride* (1983) and Jamil Ahmad's novel *The Wandering Falcon* (2011). As a result of the debate, a tiny body of study has lately arisen that explores the many components of the novels. Khan (2013) argues in her research, *Man Woman Relationship: Crises Of Moral Values a Study Of Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride"*. A review of previous studies reveals both similarities and differences with the present research. Among them, the study by Irfan et al. (2020) is the most comparable; however, it diverges in terms of scope and methodology. The current novel examines how masculine beliefs, which are prominent in Pakistani society, are applied to the treatment of women there and in other South Asian nations. Women have long been subjected to abuse, murder, and subjugation. The topic here seems to be current even though the book is set in 1940s culture. Velvizhi and Santhosh (2021) stated in their study, *A Study on the Struggle of Women Survival in the Select Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*, that the goal of the current study is to acquire a greater understanding of her female characters, by revealing them as five stages of a woman's existence in a circle that experiences increasing degrees of repression of emotions and wants. *Bapsi Sidhwa* employs sophisticated and evocative language to effectively engage readers and

convey her message. Language functions as a rhetorical tool used to persuade and influence the target audience (Irfan & Krishnasamy, 2024).

Khanal and Raj (2016) expressed in their research, *Rootless Identity in Jamil Ahmad's The Wandering Falcon*, discusses hybrid identity in Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon*, when faced by contradictory cultural standards, a person is solely left with their cultural option. A person picks up a new culture, and influenced by it because they need to adapt to their new environment's culture. An individual's identity is a hybrid identity due to the impact of both cultures. In the book, Tor Baz is shown as a figure who has been uprooted and who adopts his tribal customs in order to fit in with the new society. He accepts his hybrid identity as a new identity because of his dual cultural locations. Wasif (2017) discuss in her research, *Utopic Borders: Liminal Zones of Transition and Cultural Creation in Jamil Ahmad's The Wandering Falcon*, Jamil Ahmad's depiction of an exceedingly essential image of 'utopic borders'. She presents the case to the readers that these areas, since they are in a liminal zone and because of their location, are undergoing significant changes. In order for these areas to serve as the beginning of change for a better world, she also suggests that they should be emphasised as centres of cultural assimilation and creativity rather than as centers of conflict, much like Tor Baz, who brings readers hope by displaying a transformation in himself that may indicate he will ultimately settle and possibly marry.

Our knowledge of the texts, protagonists, and other characters is enhanced by the study indicated above. The strong imagery and design of tribal practices and dominance, which render tribal women voiceless, bring about disaster in their lives, and depicts their resistance to abuse and dominance in the chosen primary texts *The Bride* (1983) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad, are not, however, discussed in these research articles. There was never a fruitful discussion on this subject previously; As a result, it represents the research gap. I intend to fill this gap by giving readers fresh perspectives on patriarchy, tribal customs, and women's resistance to violence and male dominance, all of which render tribal women voiceless and have a disastrous impact on their lives.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Subaltern Theory*, as articulated in her seminal essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*". Spivak's concept of the "subaltern" refers to those marginalized and silenced by dominant power structures, particularly within postcolonial and patriarchal societies. Her assertion that "the subaltern cannot speak" underscores the epistemic violence through which colonial, patriarchal, and elitist structures erase or appropriate the voices of the oppressed especially women.

The framework is particularly relevant to the analysis of tribal women in the selected novels, *The Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad, where female characters are depicted as socially and politically marginalized due to entrenched patriarchal norms and tribal customs. The study employs Spivak's dual notions of representation "*speaking for*" (political representation) and "*re-presentation*" (aesthetic depiction) to critique how tribal women are denied autonomy, identity, and voice through cultural practices like bride price (Walwar), honour (Ghairat/Nang), and property exclusion (Miratah). These practices function as discursive tools of silencing and subjugation, rendering tribal women subalterns who, even when they act or resist, are unable to claim narrative authority over their own lives.

By engaging with Spivak's theoretical lens, the research critiques not only the depiction of tribal women in literature but also the structural conditions that produce their voicelessness. The framework allows for a nuanced understanding of how gender, power, and culture intersect

to reproduce silence and subordination, and how these are narratively constructed and potentially contested in literary discourse.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to explore the thematic construction of female subalternity in the two selected novels. The methodological approach is rooted in textual analysis and content analysis, allowing for an in-depth examination of language, narrative, and cultural representations that marginalize women.

The primary sources analyzed are:

- *The Bride* (1983) by Bapsi Sidhwa
- *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad

These texts are critically examined for how they portray tribal customs and gender dynamics, particularly in the Kohistani and Balochi contexts. Through close reading, the study identifies key motifs, narrative structures, and character portrayals that reinforce or resist patriarchal ideologies.

The analysis is further guided by Spivak's Subaltern Theory, which provides a conceptual lens to interpret the silencing of women as a form of epistemic and cultural marginalization. The research focuses on how patriarchal and tribal power structures manifest in cultural practices such as:

- Bride price (Rasnama/Walwer/Khawara)
- Honour codes (Ghairat/Nang)
- Property exclusion laws (Miratah)

This interpretive framework enables the researcher to trace patterns of symbolic and material violence against women and to highlight moments of resistance that challenge their subaltern position.

As a qualitative literary inquiry, the study does not aim for generalizability but rather offers contextual insights into the gendered nature of tribal oppression and the literary mechanisms through which such oppression is narrated.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak (2023) made an impact with her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" and got engaged in literary postcolonial studies. To clarify the meaning of the term "subaltern," Spivak stated in an interview with Leon de Kock (1992) that "subaltern" does not denote someone who is oppressed, is seen as different from others, or is not receiving a fair share of the pie. Everything is subaltern in post-colonial terms, with little to no access to cultural imperialism. Who would argue that those are only the oppressed, though? The class of workers is oppressed, not subaltern. The most dangerous and uninteresting individuals are those who wish to assert their subaltern status. They ought to observe how discrimination operates. They shouldn't refer to themselves as subordinates (De Kock, 1992, p. 29-47). According to Spivak (2023), "Subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak, 2023, p. 104). *The Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad both depict tribal women as subaltern. Due to domestic patriarchal rules and tribal customs, tribal women are silent and deprived of their fundamental human rights, including the freedom of choice (which prevents them from choosing a life partner or making important life decisions), the freedom of speech (which prevents them from speaking for themselves), and the right to own and inherit property. Tribal women are treated as less than human by the tribesmen. When tribesmen's nomadic lifestyle changed to a sedentary one, the notion that tribesmen were superior and tribal women were inferior emerged. The tribal structures were altered by this shift. Although the tribal women never asked for their rights and

did not receive them, but played a crucial role by helping tribesmen relocate during and after battles. When the tribes began to settle and obtain land, the number of indigenous women began to decline. They stripped the tribal women of their liberties and imprisoned them in the psychosis of honour. The patriarchal tribesmen began to accept the traditionalist belief that, similar to other laws of nature, males are born to dominate women and women are born to be subject to them. Tribesmen view tribal women as their own personal property and a source of honour. The tribal practices support Aristotle's theory of form, which holds that because women are naturally less capable than men, they also have less capacity, less capacity for reason, and less capacity for decision-making.

The representation of tribal women serves a key part in silencing the subaltern. "Two notions of representation tend to run together: representation as "speaking for," and representation as "re-presentation", using one term for each (Spivak, 2023, p 70). Marx is cited by Spivak (2023). Small-scale landowners must be represented because they are unable to speak for themselves. Their representative simultaneously depict them as their master, a superior, and an unrestrained source of governmental power that shields them from other classes and showers them with rain and sunshine (Spivak, 2023, p. 71). The patriarchal household power and unconstrained tribal customs serve as the representatives of subaltern tribal women and make them unable to speak for themselves. The patriarchal tribesmen who represent tribal women appear to be their masters and protect them because they uphold the dignity of the family heads while simultaneously wielding decision-making authority over the tribal women. The concept of representation establishes the silence of subaltern indigenous women.

"Can the subaltern speak (as a woman)?" (Spivak, 2023, p. 92). In the novels *The Bride* (1983) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad, the subaltern tribal women are 'spoken for' by the native patriarchal tribesmen and tribal customs. Some of the primary tribal customs include the Bride Price (Rasnama/Walwer/Khawara), Honour and Pride (Ghairat/Nang), and Miratah (declaring a woman issueless in the absence of male kin and withholding her property) that significantly contribute to the silencing of the underprivileged female characters Zaitoon, Gul Bibi, Sherakai, and Shah Zarina in the chosen texts *The Bride* and *The Wandering Falcon*. The tribal women are forced to adhere to tribal conventions and must conduct their daily lives in accordance with them. In this portrayal, the subordinate tribal women's voice, which expresses their desires for what they want, with whom and how they wish to spend their lives, as the tribesmen reestablish their dignity by slaughtering them if they speak out or act in a way that is contrary to tribal customs or their husbands' or fathers' honour.

These traditions and institutions give Pakhtuns the organizational characteristics necessary to uphold both their unique "value orientations," which "emphasize male autonomy and equality, self-expression, and aggressiveness in a syndrome that might be summarized under the concept of honour (izzat)," and their identity as Pakhtuns. (Edwards, 1986, p. 315)

The tribal custom of paying the bride price prevents subalterns from speaking for the rest of their lives. The Pashto word for the bride price is "Walwar," which has its roots in Afghan tribal custom. Tribal members practice the tradition, bride price when they are married. The groom or the groom's father presents the bride price to the head of the family, who could be the bride's father, uncle, or brother. The bride price is paid since the tribal people are typically so impoverished that they cannot afford to pay for their daughter's wedding. Hence, the bride price is seen as a financial aid to the bride's parents so they can pay for the dowry. The indigenous bride's dowry consists of a few basic essentials like furniture, clothing, and jewelry. The bride's father, uncle, or brother collects the bride price as consideration for the girl, offered in the

marriage, and as the money that parents have put in raising their child; however, the wedding price does not have to be spent entirely on the dowry. Daughters are seen as a burden in Pashtun families in tribal areas, yet this burden gains value when the groom or his family pays the bride price for the girl. The bride price determines how much respect and adoration the groom and his family will receive; the higher the bride price, the more revered the groom and his family will be. The bride price custom is meant to help the bride's parents financially, but in reality, tribal girls or women are sold as mere commodities. When tribesmen give girls and women to those who can pay a high bride price, they become an easy way for them to escape poverty. Strangely, leading a tribal existence gives the family access to prestige. The indigenous women are typically regarded as being of no value, yet thanks to the bride price, they become the parents' source of riches.

However, if the bride's family already is wealthy and is reluctant to get a high bride price, the groom and his family start to believe that the girl might be having a problem. She might not be virgin or she might be divorced. The high bride price affects tribal women in another manner as well; their families are so materialistic that they reject any engagement if the prospective husband and his family cannot pay the exorbitant bride price. The ladies age as a result and do not get married. The bride price varies from region to region depending on the social level, beauty, and education of the girl as well as her family. Whether the girl who will be given in marriage is a virgin or not determines the bride price. The virgin girl's bridal price is double or triple that of a married lady who is currently divorced or widowed.

In *The Bride* (1983) and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011), respectively, Bapsi Sidhwa and Jamil Ahmad illustrate the tribal custom of bride price. In reality, receiving the bride price from the bridegroom's family, amounts to selling the indigenous women. According to the tribal custom of bride price, in the novel *The Bride* (1983), Qasim receives from Misri Khan five hundred rupees, some meagre maize, and a few goats in exchange for his commitment to marry Misri Khan's son Sakhi to his daughter Zaitoon. No money from the bride price is spent by Qasim on Zaitoon's dowry. He turns his daughter Zaitoon into a silent slave for the rest of her life in accordance with tribal custom. Similarly, Fateh Mohammad, the father of Shah Zarina in *The Wandering Falcon* (2011), begins wedding preparations after receiving a portion of the bride price in advance from the groom. The wedding feast is planned and some money is spent by Fateh Mohamad and his wife to purchase dowry. Before the wedding ceremony begins, the groom's father gives Fateh Mohamad the remaining bride price.

When Miriam learns that Qasim has received the bride price for Zaitoon in *The Bride*, She grows enraged and confronts Qasim. 'Is it because Pathan offered you 500 rupees for some paltry grain and a few goats? Is that why you're treating her like a thief? 'I'll give you that and more,' she remarked dismissively. 'Nikka is going to! How much more do you require? We're going to buy her!'. (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 84)

For the indigenous parents, girls and women are a valuable resource that can be traded for cash, corn, or even animals. When tribal girls and women are traded for money, their standing is reduced even further by the bride price. The bride price snatches a tribal woman's voice for the rest of her life, leaving her with no choice but to submit to her husband and put up with the abuse. As a result, patriarchy is promoted by tribal custom. After getting married, the tribal husband begins to abuse his wife like an animal. By torturing and disregarding her, he demonstrates his dominance over her. He takes over her life as his slave, denies her the ability to speak, makes her completely reliant on him, and forbids her from spending even a single second apart from him. The poor treatment of Sakhi and Shah Zarina's husband demonstrates the

tribesmen's view of women as private property after marriage, for which they pay the bride price prior to marriage. Due to her master's authority, a subordinate tribal woman who is regarded as private property is unable to speak. They believe they have the right to govern women as they like. In the novel *The Bride*, Sakhi brutally torments Zaitoon because he believes she is disobeying him. Sakhi sees no distinction between a lady and an animal, and he rules over both. By physically abusing and verbally abusing his wife, he demonstrates his dominance over her, and she is forced to submit to him and put up with his agony without objecting. Furiously Sakhi shouts at Zaitoon that, "You are my woman! I'll teach you to obey me!" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 157). The phrase "You are my lady" demonstrates Sakhi's dominance and patriarchy over subordinate Zaitoon, for whom he has paid the bride price. Zaitoon is unable to speak since she is a slave and can only be treated and disciplined by being mercilessly and severely beaten like an animal. *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) portrays another subaltern tribal woman who is silent and can only put up with her husband's ignorance and patriarchal behavior. Shah Zarina's husband similarly treats her like an animal. He carries Shah Zarina with him after they get married. Every morning, Shah Zarina's husband used to beat her with the staff having nails, this became a habit. The patriarchal behavior of Sakhi and Shah Zarina's husband, who treats their wife as private property and rules over her, demonstrates how the bride price custom of the tribe turns women into the property of the tribesmen. After paying the wedding price, a subordinate tribal woman is regarded as property and is therefore unable to speak because this is how a man establishes his dominance over a woman and becomes the master over her. The bride price is determined by whether or not the girl to be married is a virgin. The virgin girl's bride price is twice or three times higher. Afzal Khan had this to say about Shah Zarina: "I believe she is a virgin so far, and if I could help it, I would rather sell her for marriage" (Ahmad, 2011, p.123). Shah Zarina, was a pearl when she was a virgin. Nevertheless, the traders didn't seem willing to pay the price that Afzal Khan was asking for, and he was unwilling to lower it (Ahmad, 2011, p. 41). In the novel *The Wandering Falcon* (2011), Afzal Khan encounters two alone women named Sherakai and Shah Zarina who have fled their homes. He hasn't indicated that he wants to keep any of them as his wife. His choice to sell these indigenous women demonstrates his greed in wanting to profit from them by charging the bride price. Sherakai and Shah Zarina have a definite social standing as inferior tribal women who can be sold twice or thrice even though they are silent. In the texts *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) and *The Bride* (1983), the words "sell" and "selling" are used to illustrate the fact that those who are paid a bride price to deliver a girl to them for marriage are essentially selling the girl.

The bride price elevates the status of the tribal lady, who is rendered speechless due to the sum of money paid to her parents, to that of a subordinate. Because of this, the tribesmen who pay the bride price do not treat the tribal lady with the respect that should be shown to a wife; instead, they treat her as private property and view her as the protector of his *ghairat/nang* (honour). "A wife was a symbol of status, the embodiment of a man's honour and the focus of his role as provider. A valuable commodity indeed, and dearly bought" (Sidhwa, 1983, p.126). The indigenous girl protects her father's honour before marriage, but after marriage she protects her husband's honour. The other tribal custom, known as *ghairat/nang*, is equally important in classifying silent tribal women as inferiors. Tribesmen view tribal women as pride and honour. The Urdu term "*ghairat*" means "honour," and for tribesmen honour is a source of pride. Every tribesman should possess *ghairat* in order to safeguard his rights and possessions. The tribesmen consider it an insult and a damage to the father, spouse, brother, son, and even the entire tribe when tribal women refuse to adhere to the conventions and go against them. To protect the

honour, such tribal women are punished by being killed. The tribesman and his family's honour are recovered and restored by killing the woman in the name of honour. As Qasim cannot hear or comprehend his daughter, he chastises her and threatens to kill her if she disobeys him. By warning Zaitoon, a subaltern, and by considering her to be the protector of his honour, he silences her.

The subordinate tribal women are rendered silent by the honor/pride custom, and they are also denied the freedom to decide for themselves how they want to live and who they want as their life partner. After their marriage, Zaitoon takes on the role of Sakhi's honour guardian. In response to Sakhi's verbal abuse and acts of torture, Zaitoon flees without realising that the fugitive woman will be punished due of Sakhi's intolerable insulting and abusive behaviour. "There was only one punishment for a runaway wife" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 174). He wants to kill Zaitoon because he is a defender of honour and wants to regain his honour. Subaltern Zaitoon is once again unable to criticise her spouse Sakhi's actions. Sakhi and the other tribesmen pursue her after she flees in order to kill her since they kill any woman who disgraces the honour of the family chiefs. "Women get killed for one reason or other... imagined insults, family honour, infidelity...." (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 206). By killing the woman who dishonor family chiefs, tribesman who may be her father or husband—is viewed as the protector of honour, restores their lost honour and makes the rest of the subaltern tribal women silent forever so they may learn from the killed one. In the novel *The Wandering Falcon* (2011), Gul Bibi, another subordinate tribal woman, is shown. She is the protector of her father's and her husband's honour; she is unable to speak for herself; and as a result of her husband's abusive behaviour, she elopes with her father's servant. Her father and husband, who are the protectors of honour, execute Gul Bibi as a kind of retribution in order to restore their honour. Because tribal jirga, the traditional justice system among tribes, permits killing tribal women in the sake of honour, tribesmen slaughter the women without concern for state law. In the matter of the killing of tribal women, tribesmen are seen as 'speaking for' the tribal women. The voice of the subaltern tribal women that she wants to marry a man of her own choice is not heard; rather the women's voice is silenced by the tribesmen voice that it's an issue of honour. Tribal women are not free to leave or be taken away. Tribesmen execute her regardless of whether she eloped or was taken hostage. The cut-off head of a tribal lady that Carol discovers while taking her husband for a walk to the river is an illustration of killing, honor-related violence against tribal women in Sidhwa's story *The Bride*. The cutoff head must have an honourable backstory, but the tribesmen killed her and threw her head into the river to quiet her.

"Can the subaltern speak (as a woman)?" (Spivak, 2023, p. 92) According to Spivak (2023), "The subaltern cannot talk" (Spivak, 2023, p. 104). Tribal women who are less powerful are unable to speak up for their right to possess and inherit property. Without a masculine role model like a father, husband, brother, or son, they lack a distinct social identity and property rights. The status of tribal women in tribal society is further defined by the Miratah custom. Tribal women lack property rights, so they require a father, husband, brother, or son to help them financially because the male in the family inherits the property. Sherakai and Shah Zarina, two tribal women who are both runaways in *The Wandering Falcon*, manage to avoid being killed. Sherakai and Shah Zarina both required men for identification and financial protection; by purchasing them, Afzal Khan provided the men with both so they could both benefit from the property their men have acquired. The tribal families and tribesmen want the tribal women to be the machines that exclusively produce sons. Her identity and financial stability would be at risk if she was unable to have sons and leave a male heir for the family. Because a tribal woman

cannot inherit her husband's property after his death, she can only exercise her rights when her sons do so because whatever her sons inherit is hers. A Miratah is another name for a woman who is childless. A woman without a son, Sherakai, fails to leave the family with a male successor. Her in-laws abuse her and don't accept her into the family, which has an impact on her identity and standing. She flees, giving up her financial security in the process. Due to the desire for an identity and financial stability, she needed a guy the most.

According to Spivak (2023), what interests me, is how protecting women, what she refers to as "third-world women" particularly becomes a hallmark of a civilized culture. (Spivak, 2023, p. 94). Hence, a culture where women lack protection and do not feel secure when they are alone in public is not a decent society. Bhattacharya (2014) writes in her article, *Status of Women in Pakistan*, "Irony in a society which defends its 'honour' by forbidding women in nearly every part of life, but at the same time, blatantly dishonors her by killing, raping, throwing acid, burning, abducting, etc." (Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 189). Tribal civilization is not a safe society for women, as depicted in the books *The Bride* (2008) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad. When Shah Zarina is seen in the book *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) walking by herself down the road next to the Swat River, Afzal Khan asks, "What are you doing, girl, walking by yourself at this time? You should be strolling side by side with a sibling, a husband, or a parent. A girl needs defence." (Ahmad, 2011, p. 38). A brother, father, or husband walking alongside her is believed to be a girl's protection, and this is because girls require protection.

Similar to this, Sidhwa describes in the novel *The Bride* (1983) that illustrates how a woman in a tribal society cannot protect herself; she must rely on the male of her household. A man from another town first notices Qasim's wife Afshan washing by the stream at the beginning of the novel *The Bride* (1983). Afshan is discovered by the stranger as an easy target, but Qasim defends her because he was present at the scene. Tribal members believe it is acceptable to want women outside of their own family or tribe and to do so with impunity. Tribal members' envious gaze signals their desire to rape. In another event described by Sidhwa, Carol feels enraged after seeing three tribesmen mockingly inspecting her. "Maybe I should put on a burka! She spoke in a stern, irritated tone. I felt like they were taking my clothes off (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 102). Only when they see tribal women belonging to their house or clan do tribesmen lower their eyes in a gesture of respect. They feel a sense of attention from every other woman they encounter in their society. Because he is fully aware of the hostile tribal lifestyle for women and the covetous attitude of tribesmen, Major Mushtaq begs Carol not to venture outdoors on her alone. He puts a picket to watch over Carol as she paints the river since he is aware that she needs protection. Tribal members that are covetous become motivated to commit rape. Afzal Khan, Qasim, and Major Mushtaq saved Shah Zarina, Afshan, and Carol from potential sexual assault. The rape of Zaitoon adds fuel to the fire, to put it last. She was raped, demonstrating that a woman by herself is not safe in the tribal society. She is a prime target for rape, one of the worst tragedies for tribal women. Zaitoon suffers as a result of this catastrophe. Hence, a society that cannot safeguard women is not a good society.

Resistance is the capacity to resist being impacted by anything and to refuse to accept or comply with it. Because there is a tolerance limit, people have a tendency to fight against the undesirable aspects of life. When their tolerance wears thin, the aboriginal women's element of resistance emerges. They stoically refuse to submit to patriarchy and violence when they know they won't be heard or understood. They also refuse to be impacted by violence and patriarchy. They want to eradicate the tribesmen's inhumane behaviour. Zaitoon and Shah Zarina's resistance

to patriarchy is a result of their rejection of the idea of obedience, which makes their lives unpleasant. They demonstrate defiance to the violence by refusing to endure everyday torture. In tribal community, it is not socially acceptable to flee or elope. Runaway is a term for fleeing someone or leaving a place to avoid dealing with a challenging issue. While to elope is to flee with someone in order to get married. In order to escape dealing with a challenging situation of violence that is getting worse with each passing day, Zaitoon in *The Bride* (1983) and Shah Zarina in *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) flee from their respective places. They flee from the man who acts in a disrespectful way towards his wife. The decision to flee made by Zaitoon and Shah Zarina is merely a step in the direction of freedom—freedom from violence and freedom from patriarchy.

According to Spivak (2023), "The subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak, 2023, p. 104). She adds "The subaltern as a female cannot be heard". (Spivak, 2023, p. 104). Being subalterns, Shah Zarina and Zaitoon are unable to speak; despite their efforts, they are not heard. They flee violence and tyranny, but once more they fall prey to Major Mushtaq and Afzal Khan, two patriarchal males. Zaitoon is saved by Major Mushtaq, and Shah Zarina rushes off and meets Afzal Khan. In Sidhwa and Jamil Ahmad's story, Major Mushtaq and Afzal Khan are also portrayed as patriarchal men because they occupy the same position as a patriarchal family head and make decisions about a woman's destiny without consulting her. The decision-making authority for the women is shared by both men. Shah Zarina and Zaitoon are unable to overcome patriarchy and masculine domination. Without asking Zaitoon what she wants now or where she wants to go, Major Mushtaq decides to send her with Carol, saying, "In a few hours he would silently whisk her away in the truck bringing Farukh and Carol to Lahore" (Sidhwa, 2023, p. 227). Afzal Khan makes the decision to sell her, saying, "And if I could help it, I would rather sell her for marriage" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 41). He doesn't even inquire about Shah Zarina's will or any decisions she may have made regarding her future. Tor Baz, who is not prepared to settle down with his wife and start a family, is the buyer to whom Afzal Khan sells Shah Zarina. It demonstrates that Tor Baz does not pay to marry of Shah Zarina. Sherakai, another woman is also sold by Afzal Khan. Sherakai, a victim of abuse, claims to be in love with him, but Afzal Khan does not want to be her husband. As a result, he sells her to the two traders who buy her together without considering Sherakai's wishes. The way Major Mushtaq and Afzal Khan make decisions for the ladies demonstrates that they share patriarchal values with Qasim, Sakhi, and Shah Zarina's husband and are not fundamentally different from them. Zaitoon, Sherakai, and Shah Zarina's voices are lost because Major Mushtaq and Afzal Khan speak for them. The women are not given the opportunity to make decisions about their futures; instead, Zaitoon, Sherakai, and Shah Zarina are forced to follow the wishes of men.

Conclusion

The analysis finds that among the Kohistani and Balochi tribes described in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Bride* (1983) and Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* (2011), men are the highest-ranking masters over women's fate. A patriarchal attitude, tribal norms, the imposition of men's will on women, and men's honour are the causes of disaster in women's life. Tribal norms such as bride price (Rasnama/Walwer/Khawara), honor/pride (Ghairat/Nang), and Miratah (declaring a woman issueless in the absence of male kin and therefore losing her property) are the root reasons of tribal women's violence. Women flee or elope in order to demonstrate their opposition to violence and patriarchy.

Subordinate tribal women are unable to speak, and even when they do, their words are not understood. They are represented by their patriarchal tribesmen and tribal customs. The tribal

women are silenced by tribal customs. The bride price custom (Rasnama/Walwer/Khawara) snatches a tribal woman of her voice for the rest of her life, leaving her with no choice but to submit to her husband and put up with the abuse because the tribesman who pays the bridal price regards his bride after marriage as personal property or possession. Zaitoon and Shah Zarina are silenced by the bride price; after their marriage, they are left with no alternative but to submit to their husband. By stating that tribal women are the pride and honour of the tribesmen as the head of the household, the tribal tradition of honour (Ghairat/Nang) also silences the tribal women. The women of the house are thought to hold the tribesmen's honour in their bodies. To preserve their pride and honour, they keep their women within the confines of the home, holds the decision making power of their women's future, and view any disobedience on the part of the women as a betrayal of their honour. The tribal custom known as Miratah determines the status and identity of women; in the tribal community, a woman without a man such as a father, husband, or son is considered to be Miratah (declaring her issueless in the absence of male kin and denying her property). Only a father, husband, or son may provide protection and financial assistance for a woman. A native woman is not permitted to inherit her husband's assets after his passing. She has no other source of income than what her kid inherits. In a similar vein, the daughters are not entitled to inherit the father's possessions.

The patriarchal tribesmen operate as the heads of families and silent the tribal women by depriving them of rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of choice, and the right to inherit and hold property. Tribal customs and tribesmen acting as family leaders speak for the tribal women since they are unable to speak for themselves and are not heard when they do. They are denied the right to free will, are unable to make any decisions on their lives on their own, and are unable to select a life partner of their own. The ability to own and inherit their father's and husband's property is likewise prohibited to tribal women. The patriarchal tribesmen and tribal customs that control them, dictate how the tribal women must live. They suffer brutality and demonstrate opposition to it. Due to patriarchy and tribal traditions, they are unable to actively contribute to society's advancement.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this research offer several important implications for literary scholarship, gender studies, and cultural discourse. Firstly, by applying Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Subaltern Theory to *The Bride* and *The Wandering Falcon*, the study foregrounds how literary texts can critically engage with and expose the systemic silencing of tribal women through entrenched patriarchal customs. This suggests that literature not only reflects social realities but also serves as a site of resistance and critique, capable of amplifying marginalized voices otherwise excluded from mainstream historical and cultural narratives.

Secondly, the study's exploration of specific tribal practices such as bride price (Walwar), honour codes (Ghairat/Nang), and property exclusion (Miratah) demonstrates how cultural traditions institutionalize female subalternity. This insight has broader implications for examining similar mechanisms of gendered oppression in other tribal and postcolonial contexts, encouraging comparative research across regions and cultures. It highlights the need for scholars to interrogate how cultural norms intersect with gender and power to perpetuate inequality.

Moreover, the analysis reveals the paradox wherein women's resistance to oppression, while symbolically significant, often remains constrained and reabsorbed by patriarchal structures, as illustrated through narrative interventions by male characters like Major Mushtaq and Afzal Khan. This suggests that genuine female agency in such contexts requires more than individual acts of defiance; it demands structural and cultural change a perspective valuable for feminist

theorists, policymakers, and activists concerned with gender justice.

Finally, the study enriches the academic discourse by filling a noted gap in existing scholarship: a focused, theory-driven examination of how tribal women's voices are silenced and selectively represented in Pakistani English literature. It encourages further interdisciplinary research combining literary analysis with sociocultural critique, thereby broadening our understanding of how literature can document, challenge, and potentially transform deeply rooted systems of gendered oppression.

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