

Unfolding Cultural Predicaments in the Select Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa

Dr. P. Enola Arutchelvi Parvatha

Associate Professor of English

M.V.Muthiah Govt Arts College (W), Dindigul 624001

Abstract

As Bapsi Sidhwa works on her philosophy of history, this point of view has enormous relevance as a literary approach. Sidhwa is known for focusing on women's issues in her works of fiction. She portrays a bonding between women. It becomes increasingly important in this storey to address the issue of female-to-child education. Her works, which deal with both past and present history, attempt to feminise it by asking questions about women's roles in various historical and political contexts. Cordiality has also been a hallmark of family and community interactions in the changing context. The older generation of Parsis often opposes the idea of ethnic purity among the younger generation. In her works, Bapsi Sidhwa explores the interplay between Indian and colonial identities and how that affects the Parsi community. Bapsi Sidhwa's four novels are all about depicting the fluidity of the Parsi community. Although she is not the only Pakistani author writing fiction in English, Sidhwa has had the most success in the English-speaking world. As a result of Bapsi Sidhwa's efforts, Pakistani fiction in English has come into being. When she began writing in the late 1970s, unlike her contemporaries in India and Africa, there was no established national heritage on which she could draw. Pakistan, after all, is a unique postcolonial nation that has never been colonised.

Keywords: Women, History, Colonial Identities, Parsi Community, Nation

A diasporic writer faces a complex problem while offering a Parsi Discourse. Parsis are subjected to diaspora and receive images that reflect their past, present, and uncertain future because they have been exposed to a diverse diaspora of people. Studies of the critical achievements and struggles of the Parsi people as reflected in the writings of Bapsi Sidhwa demonstrate their identity problems and methods of survival, such as self-identification and retreat. This book depicts the Parsi way of life and the hardships they overcame. As an ethnic minority in India and Pakistan, the Parsis have unique challenges and opportunities due to their exodus to the Indian subcontinent and their unique insider-outsider status. This study sheds light on these challenges and opportunities. The fundamental focus of Bapsi Sidhwa's writings is Parsi consciousness and cultural crisis.

For the Parsis, religion plays an essential role in their sense of self. In sociology, ethnicity is defined as a group that deals with the group's identity within a larger society. People's identities are built on their ethnicity. It is only later that different identities are established. Changing one's religion or nationality is a form of an identity shift. In postcolonial contexts, ethnicity is a political issue. Ideally, identities should operate in a network of ever-expanding circles of affiliation. Parsis and Zoroastrians identify themselves as belonging to the same ethnic and religious group. Bapsi Sidhwa demonstrates how circumstances enslaved the Parsees during the Partition of India. She uses subtly suggestive pictures, gestures, and innuendo to convey the delicate subject of the Partition. As a writer, Mistry focuses on the Parsi community's relationship to its national consciousness and its relationship to the world. The anxieties and fears of a passive community are the focus of Mistry's fiction. The Parsi people authentically reflect their unique cultural heritage with their characteristics and quirks. In her works, Bapsi Sidhwa deals extensively with nostalgia. Sidhwa believes that through elevating Pakistan's literary profile in the West, she has helped to right the West's skewed perception of Pakistan. It is no surprise that Sidhwa has drawn so heavily on her cultural roots and helped as a young writer by having access to an affluent environment and resources affluent Parsi families have a cosmopolitan heritage.

She tells how Zaitoon grows up in Lahore, virtually as Qasim's daughter, and she is similarly educated to be an obedient Muslim girl in *The Pakistani Bride* by Sidhwa. Sadly, she enjoys daydreaming about her. she has lost mountain paradise for the defender. This neighbourhood has been glorified to the point of exaggeration. Zaitoon, who has lived on the plains for years, is married to a tribal guy in North-West Pakistan. She realises that her dreams are nothing more than fantasies resists as her utopian community transforms into an absolute nightmare. *An American Brat*, Sidhwa's fourth novel, explores the immigrant experience, which is tinged with nostalgia. Many community components are involved in the establishment and preservation of a community, even as the community becomes more fluid as individuals travel across the world. The narrative focuses on a yearning for a community that has become increasingly flexible. An immigrant's search for a new home takes precedence over his or her search for a new place to call home. Feroza's nostalgia merely relates to an exile as time passes. She has torn between the world she left behind and the one she now inhabits. It does not offer any hope for the future. Feroza has a hard time adjusting to her new home. Recorded in *American Brat*, this puzzled Parsi community is a possible descendant of the Crow Eaters. An affluent Parsi family in quiet times in Lahore is the focus of this current tale.

When it comes to creating historical narratives, the novel's history writing takes centre stage. It aims to explain events and characters by going back in time to comprehend the present better. However, when it fails to explain, it raises a few questions.

Although history is structured by war and conquest, the women writers see it as also defined by the interplay between women and society's cultural traditions. Nostalgia is not their primary focus, and they do not intend to bring back anything from the past. As a result, historians and political theorists instead analyse and interpret history and politics instead of relying on stereotypes.

In her works, Sidhwa explores the past and present of history and aims to feminise it by questioning the role of women in historical and political contexts. Again, no migration or Partition occurs in Sidhwa's work without loss. There is even a price for Freddy's cheerful ascension. *An American Brat* is an excellent example of how migration is woven into the fabric of life in her work because of the humour that permeates it. Sidhwa also uses many narrative positions and personas to enhance her storylines.

Consequently, nostalgia becomes a wide range of attitudes about oneself, society, and race. Although the epic sweep is beyond Sidhwa's reach, there is an effort to witness all Brechtian types many times. She is only interested in macro-issues if they directly influence her life, microcosm of one's own family and oneself. Her public statements have a casual, unscripted tone in a way that suggests a unique perspective on history and culture.

In Sidhwa's novels, postcolonialism is a prominent theme and interest. *The Ice Candy Man* revolves around the postcolonial era, which takes place today. It is also situated during Partition, which Sidhwa claims is crucial in postcolonial history. This work is infused with the horror felt by the people during the Partition. The Parsis are the most encroachment. They realise that they have a lot in common with the rest of the continent. They are ageless and allude to the cultural tension when people migrate. Bapsi Sidhwa's works indicate that she is both a Pakistani and a Parsi writer. Even though an innocent youngster is the subject of questioning and betrays her Hindu maidservant to the Muslims in *Ice Candy Man*, the Parsis are not implicated in the Hindu-Muslim conflicts.

Bapsi Sidhwa's work focuses on the relationships among the Parsis, regardless of where they are in the world's multiracial population at home in the United States and the United Kingdom or elsewhere. Faredoon and other elders like him have influenced the bulk of young people. Their political naivety was kept under wraps. They were also in charge of directing. Their endeavours to improve their own lives and achieve success. Despite this, though, the liberation movement gained such traction in the following four years that it proved challenging staying out of the picture to certain Parsis, such as the *Ice-Candy Man's* Dr Maneck Mody.

Sidhwa has Pakistani ancestry as well. As a creative artist, her expatriate experience is enhanced by her lack of actual exile, which is precisely what makes her such a unique individual. Whenever she felt like an exile, she would fly back to Pakistan to replenish both her mental health and the wellsprings of her creative energy. Postcolonial novelists have embraced the intercultural subject in their works, and *An American Brat* is no exception. Value systems from the East and the West are shown as in conflict. The conflict between the two cultures can be seen both on a societal and an individual level: identity crises and the subsequent search for acculturation result from this sense of isolation and disconnection. Sidhwa shows significant interest in the two's interaction, as does Bapsi cultures that coexist close to one another. In particular, the Zoroastrian way of It is hard for Feroza, a Parsi protagonist, to fit in with modern American social life. Material well-being is also emphasised. Fiction as a result of this requires a life-changing decision from her. Many people suffer the same fate. In the modern world, there are many foreigners.

Like Firdaus Kanga, Bapsi Sidhwa keeps a distance from religious matters. Based on this, Feroza intends to cultivate good thoughts and words, as well as good deeds, in order to carry out His divine plan. It is as if the fire's spiritual power is reaching out to embrace her from the depths of its holy core. As though Ahura Mazda has infused her with his spirit, she senses him around her. Exiled Parsis wear this as a symbol of their religious identity, a sort of armour to protect themselves from being betrayed by their homeland. The same tension marks expats' relationships with their countries of birth and adoption.

The story of *An American Brat* revolves around the expatriate experience. Her stories touch with essential topics such as mixed marriage and the subjugation of women. Bharati Mukherjee and other novelists have a considerably smaller canvas than Sidhwa. It is forbidden in the Zoroastrian community to have a mixed-race marriage. Any benefits that typically accrue to Parsis who marry outside the community are forfeited by those who do so. Anti-Orthodox Parsis in Lahore are concerned about Feroza's relationship with an American Jew, David Press. On the other side of the fence is Feroza's mother, Zareen, trying to discourage her daughter from marrying a Zoroastrian. Zoroastrianism's strict code is also a point of contention for her.

Sidhwa is mainly concerned with the Parsee youth. She opposes unthinking adherence to the Parsi community's dominant philosophy. Sidhwa emphasises the necessity of change through Feroza and Zareen. She stresses their importance when she talks about mixed marriage and microscopic communities. Despite her disdain for Pakistan's religious fundamentalists, she also takes issue with the zealous keeper of the Zoroastrian faith.

Furthermore, Zareen shows that Zoroastrianism is a more enlightened and pure religion than Judaism. David is enraged by her condescending demeanour. Individuals are born with differences and deficiencies in society because of how society is structured. Various issues arise due to socioeconomic inequities, prompting politicians and social scientists to call for solutions.

Maintaining a state of social equilibrium is a worthwhile endeavour. In these times of gloom and gloominess, the quest for one's own unique identity has never been more crucial. We must all sense that we are part of the same human family and share the same brotherhood. The appeal of the United States is its abundance of material goods and the sense of security it provides in the face of oppression and injustice. Feroza decides to live her life that follows her values and desires. She is a Parsi, and she intends to remain a Parsi for the rest of her life. Sidhwa depicts the love-hate relationship between the land and the migrants in her storey. Expatriation is often a result of an individual's desire to work in an intellectually engaging setting. Universities and libraries in the New World pique Feroza's intellectual curiosity. It is a longing for knowledge that the conservative homeland cannot meet. Every character in the narrative is immersed in the harsh reality of war. Despite the ongoing conflict with Pakistan, Indian citizens are

affected by food shortages and rationing. Gustad's dark, covered windows and the sound of air raid sirens suggest his constant fear of military invasion and a resulting sense of uneasiness and paranoia.

There is a high rate of late marriages, low birth rates, rising divorce rates, illness, and ageing in the Parsi population, all of which contribute to a unique family dynamic. A wide range of troubles plagues Parsi families, and both Sidhwa and Mistry have delved deep into the lives of Parsis to expose them. As Bapsi Sidhwa works on his philosophy of history, this point of view has enormous relevance as a literary approach. In *Ice –Candy Man*, Sidhwa steers clear of omniscient narration. With this book, she enters a new era of her writing career, emphasising the importance of narrative voice. Sidhwa describes Partition in two narrative voices: that of Lenny, the youngster, and that of the authorial narrative voice, who has omniscience.

Hamida is yet another innocent woman whom human beings have brutally murdered. Lenny's mother hires Hamida as a nursemaid. It is not uncommon for women to be the victims of men's brutality, but Sidhwa makes males the cruel perpetrators. This is consistent with Sidhwa's view of the Partition from a female perspective. There are many stories in this book, and some of them are more interesting than others. However, the stories are told so that no one is given more prominence than the others. As a national allegory in the style of Frederic Jameson, the novel should only be read as its whole. It is more than just a storey about the Partition of India, in any case. Here, we see how one family, who are themselves Parsis, decides to stay out of religious strife and work with people from all walks of life. At a community assembly, the doctor preaches neutrality while recounting the storey of the first Parsi immigrants from Persia their rejection by the ruler of India. This is a significant development of the Parsis' choice to play a role in times of crisis.

As a chronicle of the history and as a cultural document, Sidhwa's novels are a must-read for anybody interested in Indian culture. While Sidhwa's novels have a solid connection to the subcontinent where she was born and raised, they also have an air of cosmopolitan appeal that readers can detect beneath the characters' skin. For a novelist who deals with a wide range of issues in her work (such as the Partition crisis, expatriation, and the Parsi milieu, among others), it is not easy to simplify them into a single narrative. There are many other kinds of cultural studies, but this one is focused on the qualities of cultural studies. Other cultural viewpoints on Sidhwa's novels show how her writings reflect her vast experiences in various cultures.

Works Cited

Hai, Ambreen. "Sidhwa, Bapsi." *The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*, 2010.

Hashmi, Alamgir, and Bapsi Sidhwa. "The Bride." *World Literature Today*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1984, p. 667.

Macwan, Mital. *A Critical Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's Major Works*. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2014.

"Mimetic Representation of Female Characters in 'Their Language of Love' by Bapsi Sidhwa." *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, 2020.

Sidhwa, Bapsi. *An American Brat: A Novel*. Milkweed Editions, 2012.

---. *Their Language of Love*. Penguin UK, 2013.

---. "Landscapes of Writing." 2019.

Singh, Randhir P. *Bapsi Sidhwa*. Sarup & Sons, 2005.