

Alienation in Novels of *Bapsi Sidhwa*

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Abstract : Pakistani novelist Bapsi Sidhwa is a diaspora award-winning writer. She moved to the United States. In 1939, Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi, which was then part of independent India. She is a Parsi, and several centuries ago, following the Arab invasion of Persia (Iran), her community moved to India. According to Jagdish Batra, “Their exodus to India started after a century or so. The documentary evidence speaks of a stream of migrants from 785 to 1021 A.D. However, trade and cultural relations between India and Persian Empire existed since, at least, the third century A.D. According to Kissa-I Sanjan written in Persian by Dastur Sanjana, the migrating Parsis were received by the king of a coastal region in Gujarat- Jadhav Rana, who gave them permission to settle down on certain condition.” (Rohinton Mistry :Identities, Values and Other Sociological Concerns 34)It could be claimed that she has uprooted herself from her original roots. However, Bapsi Sidhwa's migration abroad is essentially a matter of status. The Islamic conquest of Persia drove the Parsis into exile. She frequently writes about having experienced double displacement. With particular reference to *The Bride*, *An American Brat*, and *The Crow Eaters* of Bapsi, this paper aims to investigate the phenomenon of this feeling of searching for her lost home as well as the degree to which these elements of marginality and alienation are present in her novels.

Keywords- Alienation, Marginality, ill-Treatment, Exploitation, Suppression

The twentieth century saw the colonization of the world by European nations and the mass immigration of non-Whites into White civilizations, which together constitute the historical periodization of the theme of alienation. Following this immigration, immigrants had a difficult time adjusting to life in the new country. However, identity crises, issues, and the prejudices they entailed continued to be the main source of concern. Unfortunately, the immigrants also faced the significant issue of being perceived as "being-in-itself" as opposed to "being-for-itself" in Sartre's phraseology. In addition to the people's alienation as a result of this realization on the part of immigrants and residents of colonized nations, it also led to their own decolonization



efforts. Thus, it can be observed in the writings of numerous other postcolonial authors as well as Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhaba, and G. C. Spivak. Therefore, 1960 can be considered a rough date since it was then that many postcolonial themes, including alienation, came to light. A peaceful existence on a global scale is a significant theme and feeling, particularly for immigrants who live thousands of miles away from their homes and hearts under different circumstances with different goals. This adds fuel to the fire and intensifies the sense of alienation, which can have both positive and negative effects on the individual, his friends and family in the host country, as well as the place or country he is currently living in. It appears that the alienation of immigrants is a long-standing issue that persists globally. Such a significant and potent theme is present, albeit in various forms and shades, in the literature of many nations. Five English-language novels by Bapsi Sidhwa are reflections of her own experiences. She is of Indian, Pakistani, and American descent, but she prefers to be identified as a Punjabi, Pakistani, and Parsi woman. Her experiences as a Parsi, Punjabi, Pakistani, and American woman are explored in her novels *The Crow Eaters*, *The Bride*, *Ice-Candy-Man*, and *An American Brat*, in that order.

Her novels are very different from one another in terms of topic and style. Her fiction touches on a wide range of subjects, including the partition crisis, expat life, the Parsi milieu, and the peculiar social practices of the small minority. Born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1938, she moved to Lahore shortly after. She served on Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Women's Development Advisory Committee. She was a Columbia University instructor. In an interview, she stated, "Feroza is closest to me and my views" regarding the identity issues, lifestyles, and cultures of Pakistani Parsi immigrants to the US. This shows how close she is to her characters.

Prominent novels including *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988), *The Bride* (1982), *An American Brat* (1993), and *Water* (2006), which have been translated and published in multiple languages, are written by her. 2006 saw the release of her anthology, *City of Sin and Splendor: Writings on Lahore*. Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta turned *Ice-Candy-Man* into the movie *Earth*. Her book *Water* is based on the same-titled film by Mehta. Her articles, reviews, and stories have also been published in *The Economic Times*, *Houston Chronicle*, *New York Time Book Review*, and *London Telegraph*.

It also makes reference to Bapsi's theme of marginalization and alienation, which is shared by her fellow religious writer Rohinton Mistry. Denigrating women's roles in patriarchal societies, where they are confined within the restrictive framework of rules imposed by the patriarchal society in general and the male figures of the household in particular, is another recurring theme in *The Bride*. Even though their entire being—including their feelings—may be on the line, they are denied any crucial role in the important decisions that are made. Treatment of young Zaitoon, Carol, and Miriam makes this aspect of their suppression very clear. They have extremely stringent rules. The women turn into platforms that display their men's status. After witnessing Zaitoon talking to an army jawan while crossing the river, Sakhi, a young tribal man to whom Zaitoon is married, loses his temper. He takes revenge on Zaitoon for her boldness, and enraged, Zaitoon flees his house because she is from the plains of undivided Punjab and cannot adapt to the hill culture. Miriam is another extremely constrained being whose sole responsibility is to stay in the purdah. Her circumstances are stated as follows: “reflecting her husband's rising status and respectability, took to observing purdah. She seldom ventured out without her veil.” (*The Bride* 51) Carol, an American saleswoman married to Pakistani army engineer Farukh, finds it difficult to adapt to his culture and way of life, which causes friction in their marriage. Her husband's narrow-mindedness contrasts sharply with hers. She finds out that Major Mushtaq is already married, so she ends her brief courtship with him. She then begins to flirt with someone else. Her life has been completely destroyed, and in a letter to her friend Pom, she expresses her mental pain and loneliness. “The darling of her isolated camp deep in the Himalayas-venturing where no white woman had ever gone before- protected by pickets”. (*The Bride* 114)

The theme of alienation and dislocation is clearly defined in the opening of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Crow Eaters*, as the protagonist Faredoon Junglewalla leaves everything behind and travels from Central India to Lahore in search of better pastures, bringing along his pregnant wife Putli, infant daughter Hutoxi, and mother-in-law Jerbanoo on a bullock cart. But he faces every obstacle that stands in his way. He was extremely fortunate to find Lahore, as he began to sail rapidly there. For Faredoon, it was a meteoric rise in an unknown city. Due to his close proximity to the British, he accumulated substantial property and wealth. However, the Parsis continued to maintain equilibrium while the fight for independence was ongoing.

Following the lead of most Parsis, Freddy was against the talk of rebellion. Instead, he denounces the betrayal of the British by a small number of Parsis, such as Dadabhoy Naoroji. The developments that are occurring, in which Muslims will play one role and Hindus the other, disturb him. However, he is quite evasive about whether or not the Parsis will play a role in the nation that is ruled by Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. In his speech, Bobby Kartak, who travelled from Karachi to spend time with his father-in-law Faredoon and his wife Yasmin, expresses this uncertainty: “But where will we go? What will happen to us?” (The Crow Eaters 283) Sinking back in the pillows Muslims, Sikhs, or whoever, rule. What does it matter? The sun will continue to rise -and the sun continues to set-in their arses....! (The Crow Eaters 283)

The critically acclaimed novelists Rohinton Mistry and Bapsi Sidhwa are regarded as two of the most significant modern practitioners of postcolonial literature. The history, politics, and cultural identities of India and Pakistan are the basis for Bapsi Sidhwa's novels. Writing from the viewpoint of a minority community is Bapsi Sidhwa's style. It is well known that she occasionally incorporates autobiographical elements into her writing. To build a more expansive fictional reality, she selects and flashes some noteworthy events from her own life or the lives of others. Her works differ greatly from one another in terms of subject matter and style.

Her fiction touches on a wide range of subjects, including women's migration issues, the partition crisis, the experience of emigrants, the Parsi milieu, the social ethos of the small minority community, and marriage. *The Crow Eaters*, the debut book by Bapsi Sidhwa, is a unique work of English fiction history that delves deeply into the various facets of Parsi life. The Parsi community in Lahore and its families are the main subjects of Sidhwa's first three novels. Reviewers have drawn comparisons between Salman Rushdie's narration in *Midnight's Children* and Sidhwa's use of a child's perspective to recount significant political events.

In addition, Sidhwa is recognized as a feminist post-colonial writer who skillfully tackles topics of cultural diversity and women's roles in Pakistani and Indian society. Both *An American Brat* and *The Bride* have drawn praise from critics for their compelling characterizations and analyses of intercultural conflict. It is quite normal for a writer to include elements of his or her own culture and social upbringing in their works. Bapsi incorporated her own Parsi culture, values, and beliefs wholeheartedly into her novels, giving it a strong foundation. In her novels,



the protagonists undergo a process of self-realization, self-awakening, or sometimes an awakening to their own culture.

As a result, we learn about the subcontinental people in Sidhwa's novels who have reached enlightenment and accepted the harsh realities of their time. We discover that there is occasionally a conflict in Sidhwa's novels between the Parsi identity and mainstream Indian identity. It is this conflict that makes one aware of cultural disparities. Parsis are thought to have a strong sense of group identity and cohesiveness as a result of this conflict. In addition, there are underlying causes for communities' desire for uniqueness.

Thus, Bapsi Sidhwa draws her subjects from a wide range of life experiences. She has worked on problems from history to the present day. Her works contain a variety of thematic patterns, including the sardonic portrayal of the Parsi community, the mistreatment of women, religious fundamentalism, unfair assessments of historical events, and cultural differences. She never gives extraneous information, but she always has empathy for the struggles that her characters face in her writing. Irony permeates Bapsi Sidhwa's way of seeing things. In *An American Brat*, she has used practically every word and phrase in the original tongue.

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