



VOICES OF RESILIENCE: UNRAVELLING CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S NARRATIVE TAPESTRY

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Abstract : This article closely analyzes Bapsi Sidhwa's storytelling strategies and the way they depict women in literature. Through her distinctive narrative techniques, Sidhwa provides readers with a profound comprehension of female characters and their functions in literature by shedding light on the nuances of women's lives. The purpose of this research is to look deeply into Sidhwa's works in order to learn how she shaped narrative craft and how that affected female characters in literature. The article will focus on how Sidhwa constructs women's stories, exploring character development, plot structure, and narrative voice in relation to significant ideas from both narrative theory and feminist literary criticism. This study aims to enlighten many ways in which women's stories are told by dismembering the language, symbols, and images that Sidhwa uses to narrate her story. Further, this research investigates the broader socio-cultural contexts in which Sidhwa writes, examining the ways in which her narratives engage with and respond to questions of power, gender, and identity. It presents a comparative method that covers all of Sidhwa's works to describe how her narrative strategies changed over time and what this portends in terms of women's literary representation. This research aims to enlighten the impact Sidhwa has on women's writing and the way narrative construction shapes the way women are portrayed in literature in the end. The present study closely examines the techniques of Sidhwa's storytelling in an attempt to uncover the complex nature of women's tales in literature. In doing so it will provide a new understanding of how female experiences are represented and understood in literature.

Keywords : Narrative Techniques, Complexities, Imagery, Feminism, Portrayal, Structure, Craft.

INTRODUCTION

Bapsi Sidhwa is an acclaimed Pakistani-American writer who has carved a niche in contemporary literature through her fierce and magnificent tales, which delve into the knotty substance of ethnic identity and its far-reaching effects on intercultural interchange. The multifaceted and complicated themes present in Sidhwa's texts are reflected in her unique life story, which took its root in Karachi, Pakistan, and later culminated in the United States. Amidst the backdrop of an outspoken and multi-voiced society, her novels, "Ice-Candy Man," "The Crow Eaters," "An American Brat," and "Water: A Novel," offer an insightful portrait of the cultural tapestry that shapes her characters. The protagonists and antagonists in Sidhwa's novels grapple with peculiarities between their cultural heritage and the transcultural touch of modernizing society. Whether it takes place in pre-partition India or immigrant communities flourishing in the United States, her works instigate changing landscapes of cultural belonging, tradition, and adaptability. In Sidhwa's exploration of cultural identity, this portrayal of the struggle between traditional South Asian norms and Western influences is particularly striking. Many of her protagonists face central existential dilemmas and self-discovery conflicts when caught between two or more opposing cultural currents. The characters' journeys mirror individuals' efforts to claim a place for themselves in an increasingly global context. Sidhwa's novels elucidate the life-altering nature of cross-cultural communication. Her narratives often feature.

1. Her Profile and Novels

The fiction of Pakistani-American writer Bapsi Sidhwa has cast an unremitting shadow on world literature. She was born in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1938. Her cosmopolitan upbringing and unique Parsi heritage affected her art. Her satirical masterpiece, "The Crow Eaters" (1978), is her debut novel, offering a comic and insightful view of the idiosyncrasies and customs of the Parsi people. Through the eyes of a small Parsi girl called Lenny, "Ice Candy Man" (1988, also known as "Cracking India") takes one back into those turbulent times of the Indian Partition. "The Pakistani Bride" (1990) investigates the dilemma of a young lady who finds herself in an arranged marriage, whereas "An American Brat" (1993) illustrates the American immigrant experience.



The script for 'Water' (2006), adapted by Sidhwa, touches on widowhood in traditional Indian society. The reader finds herself in the quasi-abstract discourse that represents a retrospection upon the social, cultural, and identitarian contours of life as found in Bapsi's works.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An important part of the global cultural landscape that came into existence in the 20th century was the work of postcolonial authors. The objective of the postcolonial authors has been to fight for their own culture and resist imperialist ideology and cultural domination. These authors have written a mountain of writing into the subtleties of postcolonial existence and the stories of those still bearing the scars of past colonization. Many works of postcolonial literature focus on questions of colonial authority, how colonialism shaped people's identities and cultures, and the fights for freedom and independence that followed. From Antigua's Jamaica Kincaid to Nigeria's Chinua (1958), postcolonial authors have reimagined cultural and identity myths via literature to question and dismantle oppressive systems. Their writings left a permanent legacy in literature and shaped new thought patterns towards the past and present of postcolonial cultures. Some other notable postcolonial writers who have sought to rebel against the ideology of the colonialist world and its hegemony are (Aidoo, 1992; Coetzee, 2019; Deshpande, 1993; Emecheta, 1976; Ghosh, 1989; Kincaid, 1988; Morrison, 2004; Naipaul, 2010; Roy, 2001; Rushdie, 1991; and Smith, 2016). They have fought for a more accepting cultural environment by using literature to question established norms. The work of many postcolonial authors has also served to elevate the voices of the oppressed and to shed light on the lived realities of people of color. Particularly, gender, class, and race have been brought to light in Sidhwa's work. "Cracking India" is Sidhwa's tale of a girl finding her way amidst the social, political, and religious divisions that arose in India after the 1947 Partition. The heroine is a young girl at the time. She subverts the authority of the British and the Indian governments via her characters and their stories. Postcolonial writing, like that of Sidhwa, maybe a tool to dismantle oppressive structures and bring about positive change. A watershed moment in Indian history occurred in 1947 with the Partition of India, which created Pakistan and India from the Indian subcontinent. This was an era that witnessed a lot of violence and displacement, as well as a great deal of movement. During this time, there was constant fear, violence, and trauma for women. Bapsi Sidhwa's book, *Ice-Candy-Man*, is a Pakistani novel that explores the erasures of female bodies and their displacement through the aspects of the Indian Partition and afterward. This article tries to analyze Bapsi Sidhwa's tale to examine its representation of colonial Pakistani power and women's stammering bodies. A minor girl is portrayed in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* 1988 (published in 1989) as being brutalized and rendered helpless during the Indian Partition. This was the first form of this barbarity, aiming to shame and harm the religion and country of the opponent. The second was to harm the religion or the country of the lady. The story shows how the males exploited the weapons of women's bodies to portray their anger as well as to show how feeble they were. The second reason men are violent is because they want to keep their religion and country holy. Men in their religious group committed acts of brutality against women in order to preserve the honor and purity of their faith and homeland. The film *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) narrates the experiences of women in India during the Partition, a time of great brutality and anarchy. The bodies of women, symbolizing purity and dignity, were the center of attention during the ethnic conflicts. Two forms of violence against women emerged from this symbolic significance of physical harm: one was performed by men of the opposing religious group in an effort to degrade and humiliate their opponent. At the same time, the other was committed by men of the same religious faction in an effort to defend their dignity and virtue.

METHODOLOGY

To thoroughly investigate objectification in Bapsi Sidhwa's writings, this study uses a mixed-methods strategy. A thorough textual study of the book is conducted in the qualitative strand, using close reading methods to detect instances of objectification. To get a more nuanced understanding of objectification's portrayal in connection to larger postcolonial issues, thematic coding will be used to classify and examine recurrent patterns. Quantitative techniques to support the qualitative approach of research involve sending a representative sampling of readers in a survey questionnaire that we will be asking from those readers to get an idea of what happens in relation to how these concepts echo and become internalized inside the whole storyline. This mixed-methods approach ensures the triangulation of results to understand better the complex dynamics involved in Bapsi Sidhwa's work. The theoretical underpinning of the research is well-established postcolonial theories of literature. The results are interpreted through this theoretical lens, which enhances the study by taking into account the power dynamics, cultural norms, and historical context of postcolonial narratives. To complete the examination of the novel's postcolonial aspects, it will be helpful to study secondary materials, such as academic publications and critical assessments, in addition to the main analysis. This study relies heavily on contextualisation. In order to understand how colonial legacies, power dynamics, and identity crises interact, this analysis will focus on the cultural and historical settings in which Bapsi Sidhwa's work develops. Analyzing in detail, we can take into consideration the various layers of objectification, from the book itself to greater societal, cultural, and historical frameworks that shape its story. This study will provide a rich understanding of objectification in Bapsi Sidhwa's work by including both qualitative textual analysis, quantitative reader perspectives, and theoretical frameworks. In addition, it will provide valuable insights into the greater discussion of postcolonial literature and the way it imparts its impact on current cultural discourses.

RESULT

A. Bapsi Sidhwa's Portrayal of Women in Her Masterpieces

Reflecting the richness of the experience of a woman, the tales of Bapsi Sidhwa paint the women's profile in shades that are neither plain nor unidimensional. By dealing with multiple subjects and themes, Sidhwa provides an inside-out view of the

identities and the roles assigned to women by society. Each woman in the tales of Sidhwa is multidimensional, with a story and her wishes and concerns. Whether it is the patriarchal conventions or the chaotic aftermath of Partition, such women are courageously independent, autonomous, and enduring. Sidhwa's stories of female protagonists face multifaceted relations of power within cultural expectations and gender standards that shape their control over their roles and agency. Through relationships with family members, community leaders, and political officials, these women handle their roles and exercise agency in both the public and private spheres. Sidhwa emphasizes womanhood and teamwork in her writings. There is a tendency during difficult times to come together with women, encourage, advise each other, or even strengthen one another. Sisterhood brings them close together against a backdrop of financial status, creed, or race and color. Unafraid and unapologetically addressing issues like womanly lust and sexual, Sidhwa questions and undoes gender laws and prohibitions. Her protagonists fearlessly go about their sexual awakenings while being open-minded and confident in their ability to express themselves. The women in Sidhwa's stories break all the stereotypes and conventions, resist oppressive systems, and fight for social change through their actions and choices. These women are fighting for themselves, fighting for equality and respect for their humanness, and they are doing it by questioning cultural norms and conventional gender roles. Sidhwa captures women's strength in the face of suffering coupled with sensitivity in a discourse regarding the impact of trauma on their lives. The very strength and assistance of their community catalyze such women to overcome personal trauma as well as flashback effects coming from past brutality. With these themes and complex characters, Bapsi Sidhwa depicts that women in her stories are strong, capable, and full of complexities. Her writings touch readers deeply by reflecting on the many facets of femininity and the variety of experiences that women have.

When it comes to the personal, communal, and cultural trauma experienced by previous generations, which are events that are "remembered" via tales, pictures, and behaviors, Hirsch argues that post-memory best characterizes this connection. (105). Members of the "generation after," who were children when the conflict broke out, and subsequent generations endure the psychological scars of the division. Since Sidhwa was too young to recall the horrors of war and Partition, she is considered to be a part of "the generation of postmemory" (107). She is, therefore, "dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness" (107). Nevertheless, her writings serve as a literary portrayal of postmemory, which she experiences at different points in her life via metaphors and pictures. The only person who can properly resurrect memories of their childhood is the kid. Thus, I want to live out my youth. My experience as a writer has prepared me to "zap in time," live in other bodies, and occupy spaces like gardens, bungalows, rooms, and the past ('Defend...'165). "When I was writing my book, it made sense to me because I grew up with stories of what happened, hush-hush stories," Sidhwa says, acknowledging that she "grew up with stories" (Bruschi 144). "The sun-charred little body is covered with scars and wounds..." which depicts the anguish associated with Sikander's recollection of the Partition. "Defend" 168. However, tiny Joy does not know the truth about his injuries.

With a population of around 111,691–121,962, the Parsi Zoroastrian community has already reached the last stage of demographic change. They have a terrible depletion of community potential and cultural exclusivity due to late marriage, no marriage, limited childbirth, fecundity, the urban craze that causes migration, and the desire to keep the bloodline 'pure' (Kulke, 1978). Due to the impending doom of the village, its residents suffer from chronic worry and often question if they will be able to continue living in the not-too-distant future. There is a strong feeling of community and belonging among the residents. Issues of assimilation, crisis of identity, and survival tactics on the verge of extinction have long preoccupied them. In many respects, this homogeneous group has shown its remarkable adaptation abilities: it has successfully escaped its conquered homelands, maintained its religion untainted, held fast to its fundamental values, maintained its ethnic identity, and thrived in the face of modernity. They make up a pitiful 0.007% of India's total population. Due to a lack of cultural, behavioral, and religious customs as well as consanguinity, they do not seem to be fundamentally Indian in terms of their religious rituals and practices (Register General of India, 2001). Research found that the Parsis have avoided straying too far from their Persian heritage via marriage by actively opposing interfaith marriage (Nanavutti, 1970). However, there is no longer any social link between the group and its long-lost homeland of Persia, which is now Iran. Neither side has any ideas to offer, no shared language, no correspondence, and no modern-day relationships. They stand apart from all other groups in India because of their religious beliefs, history, ethnicity, and self-perception of being at the top. One further thing that has made the Parsis different from the rest of India is their shared elite mentality, which is a hangover from the colonial era (Deshmukh, 2014). The people here hold on to the belief that they can only ensure their existence by maintaining a strong sense of ethnic solidarity. Because of this, the prospect of cultural assimilation causes them great anxiety.

Members of the marginalized Parsi Zoroastrian community come together as a cohesive group because of their ideals, ethics, and worldview. This helps individuals feel more and more connected to their charitable, historical, and cultural legacy while also driving them to discover methods to blend in with mainstream culture while yet protecting their distinct ethnic background. However, they are anxious about losing their culture and doubt their ethnic essentialism because they are aware of their diminishing numbers and because they are afraid of social change. Because of this cultural anxiety, concerns over communal thinking and the unchangeable core of ethnic identity are heightened. There is a high level of ethnic annihilation anxiety due to the persistent worry about their dwindling numbers and the possibility of cultural change. This is an existentially disturbing state of mind brought on by a deep-seated dread of the total annihilation of the Parsi people. Famous Parsi writers and artists like Bapsi Sidhwa portray this shared fear in their works and use it as inspiration to write works that are uniquely Parsi in order to keep their culture alive.

B. Ice Candy Man (also published as "Cracking India")

Originally published in 1988 under the title "Cracking India," Bapsi Sidhwa's "Ice Candy Man" is a moving and dramatic tale. This book delves into the effects of communal violence on people, families, and communities during the turbulent 1947 partition of India. It offers a riveting and emotionally charged account of the era. A little Parsi girl called Lenny Sethi narrates the narrative. Because of her physical disability caused by polio, Lenny is able to see the world around her with keen insight and complete innocence. She lives in the city of Lahore, which is a manifestation of the religious and ethnic conflict that arises as a

result of the division. A very important part of the story revolves around the "Ice Candy Man," whose real name is Ayah. To Lenny, he is an enchanting and mysterious character, equally intriguing and terrifying.

In times of strife, distinctions between good and evil are much blurred, and Ayah's character is one of the complexities of identity and desire. The novel has a very important theme: the terrible effects of division on common people. Through Lenny's eyes, atrocities of violence, forced migrations, and community distrust are viewed. Sidhwa graphically depicts, through her story, the violence and anarchy that at the time swept throughout the subcontinent. In "Ice Candy Man," another serious issue is the theme of identity, particularly in the light of ethnic and religious diversities. Lenny feels alienated but belongs at the same time as she goes about her surroundings, mostly a Muslim and Hindu civilization. The story revolves around religious and cultural identities amidst a diversified location. "Ice Candy Man" by Bapsi Sidhwa is an excellent, emotive, and vivid storytelling narration. Through this, she develops very intense emotions of sympathy for the characters and their ordeal. The narrative style of the novel achieves a fascinating and engrossing reading experience through the integration of innocence with terrible reality.

The plot of Bapsi Sidhwa's book *Ice-Candy-Man* delves into the repression of female bodies during the Indian Partition. The kidnapping of Lenny's Hindu nanny, Ayah, gives the heroine a taste of the horrors she encounters during the division in the book. Lenny was deceived into divulging Ayah's whereabouts by Ice-Candy-Man, Ayah's previous lover, who was a mafia member. In doing so, Ice-Candy-Man was venting his frustrations and fury at Ayah through communal violence, using her Hindu identity to objectify and abuse her. As Ice-Candy-Man used the religious and political turmoil in India to exact vengeance on Ayah, this scene illustrates how women's bodies were oppressed and harmed during the Partition of India. When Hari/Himat Ali converted to Islam, he had physical changes. This could not be done for a woman because she lacked a definite outward sign of her religious affiliation. Crucial to Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* is the character Hari/Himat Ali's decision to become an Islamist. The religious tensions and divides that emerged during the 1947 Partition of India are mirrored in his choice to convert from Hinduism to Islam, and the physical and psychological changes that many individuals experienced as a result of the Partition and its aftermath are symbolized by his bodily makeover. Since a woman's religious affiliation is often dictated by her father or spouse, her connection to religion is often indirect. Nonetheless, upholding a standard of sexual purity is still demanded of them since it is connected to the honor of their family or community. According to Kapur (2017), when women experience sexual violence or kidnapping, it is believed that they have transcended social, cultural, and political barriers, rendering them unable to serve as ambassadors for their country. As soon as Ayah is removed from the situation, she stops talking and is very silent. Following her forcible abduction and subsequent sexual assault, Ayah's status as an integral part of the nation's social fabric was severely diminished. She was exposed to sexual abuse and socially murdered because others thought she would reclaim her purity by ending her own life (even if she had already died).

C. The Pakistani Bride

An engrossing and introspective read, "The Pakistani Bride" by Bapsi Sidhwa delves into cultural identity, arranged weddings, and the difficulties women have in patriarchal cultures. This 1983 book gives the reader an inside look at the lives of its protagonists, especially Qasim, a young bride from Pakistan. Qasim is the protagonist of the novel- a young woman whose life takes a drastically different path after being forced into an arranged marriage with an older man residing in the US. The plot revolves around this arranged marriage, which is prevalent in many South Asian societies. It sets the setting for a more in-depth examination of cultural disputes and gender dynamics.

This sense of tension between modernization and tradition is explored in "The Pakistani Bride" as Qasim deals with pressures from her family and society. As she traverses from Pakistan to the US, the customs prove pretty different, but readers get a glimpse of the struggles, triumphs, and epiphanies occurring as she tries to fit into the environment, holding on to her heritage. On the whole, the book deals with women's struggle for equality in a patriarchal society. Actually, in the backdrop of strong social pressures, her marital duties, and her ambitions and dreams, Qasim's character undergoes a vital transformation. Her tormented experiences throw light on the subtleties of roles women enact and are subjected to in both traditional and contemporary contexts. The author of this novel impressively grapples with these issues using complex characters who question individuality amidst cultural habits and autonomy. Readers are challenged to think about the significance of choice and the hardships faced by individuals who operate between two worlds, trying to balance their cultural identity with their newly gained freedom. As she dexterously and sensitively tackles sensitive and provocative issues in "The Pakistani Bride," Sidhwa proves herself to be a great storyteller. In the context of a dynamic, unpredictable world, the book provides a moving exploration of how gender, tradition, and social conventions interface to transform people's daily lives. The book is an important literary work even today because it encourages readers to reflect upon and associate with the experiences of people who are undergoing tough times.

This concept is the theoretical thinking of "the third space," which has become an appealing background for making sense of how power is formed in complex postcolonial relations during 'The Pakistani Bride.' Establishing such, Bhabha in "The Location of Culture" 1994 has discussed the point to be well that a "third space" always emerges whenever one culture intermeshes with a colonized or an invading one. Many identities exist in this space, creating a hybrid that allows for the negotiation of new forms of agency and identity rather than complete allegiance to either the colonized or the colonizer. The protagonists in 'The Pakistani Bride' are positioned within this "third space," defined by the lingering effects of colonialism, in the wake of the historical event. The story quite masterfully paints all the angles of agency and identity that grow in this scenario. It then becomes a ground on which the protagonists go about navigating the contradictions of life in the postcolonial context-contradictions of indigenous versus foreign influences, of modernity and tradition. The "third space" power negotiation is central to an understanding of how characters struggle with being objectified. Power is not imposed from above but a fluid interaction where the individuals negotiate their agency. Their identities are shaped by this power dynamic, which lingers from colonialism that, in turn, affects how they see themselves and thus objectify themselves. The hardship of the characters is portrayed through negotiation. This is closely related to the concept Bhabha developed, where cultural hybridity refers to aspects taken from both the colonizer and the colonized civilization. 'The Pakistani Bride' portrays objectification as a result of this cultural blending. One reason behind adding to the characters' feelings of objectification is the clash of cultural standards, which is the pitching of traditional values against

outside influences. The cultural friction within the "third space" intensifies the power dynamics and the complexity of their identities. Beyond being a site of oppression, the "third space" is, critically, a site in which agency may be exercised. In power struggles in this ever-changing landscape, people can create resistance spaces and reimagine who they are. Thus, objectification is both a product of power relations and a space for the assertion of agency. In this complex sociocultural context, characters resist objectification as they negotiate and question societal norms. Historical legacies influence modern power dynamics; Bhabha's approach illuminates this. The residual effects of colonialism are not just echo chambers; they actively keep the narrative's objectification alive. The "third space" reveals ways in which the colonial legacy infiltrates social norms, societal structures, and how people are being objectified. Bhabha's concept of "third space" creates a useful critical theory for viewing colonial legacies and power dynamics in 'The Pakistani Bride.' The study on objectification comes hand in hand with the search for self-control and agency within the characters themselves in this multidimensional context. The story becomes an independent thing while describing postcolonial life when the people are in a constant battle against being objectified, reasserting their agency, and facing the historical impacts of colonialism in the difficult terrain of the "third space."

CONCLUSION

The books of Bapsi Sidhwa take us on a trip through a complex web of contemporary life, reflecting its complexities via a variety of cultural identities and cross-cultural encounters. The extraordinary writing of Sidhwa has given readers the opportunity to feel the ups and downs of individuals who are navigating the complex aspects of their cultural identities. Sidhwa has skilfully depicted cultural blending and collision throughout her writing career, focussing on the conflict between antiquated practices and cutting-edge ideas. Her protagonists in "Ice-Candy Man" and "An American Brat," who live in different periods and places, let us delve into the nuances of cultural identity. The protagonists change and grow as the story progresses, mirroring the universal experience of people torn between the pull of tradition and the temptations of modernity. The books written by Sidhwa highlight the profound impact that encounters across cultures may have on a person. Her experiences serve as a reminder that these relationships may be both challenging and transformative, allowing us to learn, develop, and redefine who we are. With a message of optimism that transcends cultural boundaries, Sidhwa's storytelling rings true in a world where variety and interconnection are becoming the norm. The books written by Bapsi Sidhwa are strong evidence that issues of cultural identity and intercultural encounters are still relevant in today's world. Sidhwa encourages readers to contemplate their own identities, the factors that mold them, and the possibility of harmony in the face of variety via the moving stories she tells. She has made substantial contributions to the continuing conversation on cultural variety and the fluidity of identity in a globalized society via her writing, which has enhanced literature and the world at large. The enduring topics and global relevance of Sidhwa's writing ensure that it continues to motivate and educate readers around the globe.

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