

The Role of Women in Parsi Community in the Selected Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa

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During Zarathustra's era, the treatment of women vacillated between respect and bigotry. Although granted great economic and social freedom, and seen as a Central figure in the household, they intrinsically were not valued early civilizations. Women in the were not valued early civilizations. Killed by Zarathushtrians enjoyed, legal and religious rights unknown to women in other parts of the world. The ancient Zarathustzi women did not wear the veil: they owned and managed property they accompanied men to. Could be witnesses religious and social events; as well as Judges they in Court. Women acted as officiating priestesses. Females had the same initiation ritual as the male and wore the same badges of the religion. In a marriage, the woman's consent was essential. The father could not arrange a marriage for his daughter without her consent and that of her mother. The Zarathushtris fled skar because of religious upheaval thirteen hundred years ago and settl in Gujarat, India they came to be known as Parsis. To a great extent the Parsis adopted the mores of the Gujrati Hindu culture. This included social inequalities like. In this age of globalization, it is usually very difficult to categorise some writers and Bapsisidhiwa is one of them. She belongs to India, Pakistan and the United States simultaneously to be described as a Punjabi- but she likes herself Pakistani and Parri Woman. Her novels *The Crow Enters*, *The Pakistani Bride*, *Ile-Candy-Man*, *An American Brat* and *Water: A Novel* are about her perceptions of life as a Parsi, Punjabi, Pakistani and American woman respectively. Sidhwa believes that all of her works have some degree of autobiographical elements. She picks up some significant incidents from her own life or from the lives of other people and flashes them to create a larger reality of fiction. Schematically Sidhwa's novels are rooted in the subcontinent where she was born and brought up.

An in-depth analysis of Bapsisidhiwa's chronicling of a closeted Community. It deals with theme of dispassionate and even satirically oriented chronicle of the Parse community. The major works of under saluting here are *The Crow Eaters* and to some extent, *An Amuic Brat*, wherever deemed relevant, reference has been made to *Ile-Candy-man*. The Parsi life and rituals of like disassociating widows from celebrations, child marriage and dowry. After the

community's prolonged stay in a Country where the general status of women is low, Taset women too had taken on a docile and unassuming role a far cry from the Positive role they had played in ancient Kan. The major factor responsible for changing the status I women in the Parsi community was education. In 1840s, Sir Jamshedji Jeejibhoy and Framje Cowasji Panagi educated their daughters. But they did this in the utmost secrely to avoid criticism from the community for their revolutionary ideas. Within a generation, however, secondary education for girls had become a horm. By 1870, over 1000 Parsi girls had already had the benefit of secondary education. She major reason why the education of women became so popular so rapidly was that there was no religious opposition to it.

Reformers like Dadathai Naoroji, Kharshedji Cama and Sohrabji Bengalee were pioneers in the emancipation of women. In the mid-nineteenth century they developed quite a storm in the local community and they participated in all walks of life, including the national movement for independence. Of Navjote ceremony, wedding, death rites and various aspects of Zoroastrian religion depicted in her fiction.

Sidhwa portrays Parsi community's traditional dictum of double standards one for men, another for woman especially when it is the question of inter faith marriage. Man's inter faith marriage is acceptable and the children born out of this wedlock are accepted into the Parsi fold. But if a woman marries a non- Parsi, she is treated as an outcast and debased from community and even from their temple- Agfari. Sidhwa neither glorifies nor vilifies Parsi life. She attempts is to established the fact that the Parsi community is like any other community with its own strengths and weakness. She has not only presented the various aspects of Parsi life but also provided the non- Parsi world with a better understanding of their ways of life, the faith and values.

'Plight of Women' takes up the issue of the travails of other sex. In the novel the Pakistani Bride where the plight of not merely the Pakistani Zaitoon but that of an American girl, Carol has also been taken up. The novel provides an incisive look into the treatment of women. Zaitoon, a young girl is victimized by the debilitating patriarchal prescriptions of an inselastihed society. At the age of sictun, Taitoon's marriage is fixed with sathi, a lidat mer. The marriage and the ineschule of foy that follows are both short-lived. Zaitoon's tortme begins on the very next day after marriage. Her husband beats her on the slightest putext and the martiage sams to be doomed to fail. she decides to fee from her nightmarish world.

Zaitoon's struggle is for autonomy and an identity of her own the is fitted against a hostile environment and with sheer willpower and quit is able 10 overcome bobstay strewn in her bath she is ultimately protected and saved. Along with Zaitoon, Carol, an American girl, married to a Pakistani army officer is equally oppressed in her relationship. In Card, Sidhwa reveals the fangs of a werten, upper-class woman in the male dominated deciety. But dina the means of resistance are more easily available to her due to her privileged class and raa identity, she decides to break free. Carol's story nicely Complements Zaitoon's and together they convey the status of women in the novel. Ice-candy-Man with Ayah and An American Bsut with feroza also figare prominently. Ayah who he bomes a victim to the lust of men during the Partition riots in Ice-candy-man isanother victim figure. Ajah is the highly victimised woman who suffers excruciating fair and agony at the hands of the mob that tears her apart.

As if this physical abuse by the mot were not enough, the Ice candy Man clinches her lot by condemning her to prostitution. Oppression of women, which is central to the narrative in The Pakistani Bride is dealt with in An American Brat also, though briefly, The novel is deeply Concerned with gender inequalities and oppressive practices under Islamic rule in Pakistan. Sidhwa scrongly condemns the Hadood ordinances and the zina ordinances introduced by General zia which devalue woman to the level of a Commodity. The legislative measures were grossly unfair to

woman and often perpetuated crimes against them by enabling the male offender to go free with the female victim was punished. This novel also discusses the close attitude of the Parsi Community which does not permit Parsis to marry non-Parsis and which the Community even if he marries a 'non'. Sidhwa is concerned with the way women are treated by the faith which seems biased and unfair. Sidhwa feels that Parse Community must move with the time and permit equal rights to the women who marry outside the community.

A novel is all about the Indian widows in 1930s and how they were made to live in the widow houses. This novel shows the exploitation of women especially widows by other people and how they are dragged into prostitution. Bapsi Sidhwa has very realistically illustrated women's plight and exploitation in the patriarchal society.

As Sidhwa is in her real life, so are her women characters in her fictional world. They are fairly beautiful, intelligent, modest but strong-willed and courageous. They try to cope with parental, societal and cultural pressures in their life as much as they can but when they find their very life or identity in danger, they throw off all shackles and fight with full force to foil the foul attempts of their adversary. Sidhwa is a very optimistic writer. She seems to give a positive message to women that life must be preserved under any circumstances since one can fight oppression only when one is alive. It is noteworthy that no women character dies in any of her novels. Zaitoon in *She* is Pakistani. Of Navjote ceremony, wedding, death rites and various aspects of Zoroastrian religion depicted in her fiction. Sidhwa portrays Parsi community's traditional dictum of double standards: one for men, another for woman especially when it is the question of inter-faith marriage.

Man's inter-faith marriage is acceptable and the children born out of this wedlock are accepted into the Parsi fold. But if a woman marries a non-Parsi, she is treated as an outcast and debased from community and even from their temple-Agfari. Sidhwa neither glorifies nor vilifies Parsi life. She attempts to establish the fact that the Parsi community is like any other community with its own strengths and weakness. She has not only presented the various aspects of Parsi life but also provided the non-Parsi world with a better understanding of their ways of life, the faith and values. 'Plight of Women' takes up the issue of the travails of other sex. In the novel *The Pakistani Bride* where the plight of not merely the Pakistani Zaitoon but that of an American girl, Carol has also been taken up.

The novel provides an incisive look into the treatment of women. Zaitoon, a young girl is victimized by the Bride manages to save life despite the looming threat. In the same novel, Carol an American girl who is equally oppressed in her married life, decides to break free and returns to her own American culture. In the same way, Ayah in *Ice-Candy-Man* is liberated from the hira mandi, a notorious place for prostitution and sent back to her family in Amritsar. An American Beat shows that the protagonist Feroza in spite of enormous pressure of his family to return to Lahore and her failure in her first love decides to settle in America. Chuyia too is escaped in the end of the water. Hence that Sidhwa's women are strong-willed, assertive and courageous. They resolve this crisis in their own way.

An American Brat which brings out her gift of keen observation, heightened sense of story and character along with her moral vision of her Parsi community. The perennial Parsi problem of inter-faith marriage arises when Feroza wants to marry David Press, an American Jew.

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