Chapter VI

Summation

On the whole, through the thematic analysis in the select novels of Bapsi Sidhwa, the present researcher has highlighted the major themes dealt with by the author which range from history to contemporary burning issues in the society. It comprises the multi-themes handled by Sidhwa such as Partition Crisis, Feminism, Migrant Issues and Parsi Lifestyle. Mostly Sidhwa’s novels are vibrant, powerful, poignant and realistic. Her way of narration is highly entertaining and straightforward. Her narrative style is laced with native words from Indian languages like Gujarati and Sanskrit and also with the Arabic language Urdu; sensibly reproduces the real flavour to the readers.

In some of her novels such as Ice-Candy-Man, The Pakistani Bride, An American Brat, Water and The Crow Eaters: Sidhwa portrays the different aspects of human life through the realistic portrayal of her characters. Through an intellectual creation of her characters like Lenny, Faredoon Junglewalla, Qasim, Feroza, Zaitoon and Ice-Candy-Man; she represents the social, cultural, psychological and historical barriers which govern and play a crucial role in the human life. Moreover her novels fall under the realistic form, because her protagonists are not perfect and heroic, but they genuinely reflect the practical realities of life. It is rightly observed by Randhir Pratap Singh as:

Her novels may be placed in the picaresque tradition. Journey provides the framework to her plots. The characters like Faredoon, Zaitoon, Carol, Lenny and Feroza move from one place to another, have diverse experiences and thereby gain in
self-knowledge. In contrast to Salman Rushdie’s magic realism, Sidhwa’s is a linear realist narrative. In her novels she tells stories naturally, easily and in a way that creates maximum amount of interest at every stage. The reader’s curiosity is kept alive throughout and even at the end of the novel one feels inquisitive to know what eventually happens to Zaitoon or Ayah or Feroza, for example. In making her stories open-ended, Sidhwa seems to follow the course of the real life but like Jane Austen, she confines herself within the field of her own first-hand intercourse with the world and never allows herself to stray beyond it. (85).

Moreover, Sidhwa’ works mirror her own experiences in her life or from the lives of other people whom she has come across in her life. She has created those realities into her fictional works; hence her novels realistic rather than fictional. Randhir Pratap Singh aptly mentions this aspect of Sidhwa in his work *Bapsi Sidhwa* as: “Creativity lies dormant until some poignant experience of life ignites it by seeking expression. In Sidhwa’s case, listening to a real story of a runaway bride did the job.” (vii). Sidhwa weaves the haunting tragic real story of the runaway bride, beheaded by her tribal husband across the Indus River in the Kohistani range of mountains, as the core theme of the novel, *The Pakistani Bride*.

As mentioned in the lines, “The tribal husband along with his clansmen hunted her down, caught her near the rope-bridge that could have taken her to safety, and chopped off her head. When Sidhwa arrived back in Lahore, she felt compelled to tell this ghastly story.” (Pratap Singh vii). With a gynocentric
perspective, she recreates the real story with an optimistic twist at the end of the story, where she makes her protagonist Zaitoon escapes from her brutal tribal husband. The indomitable courage and vigour which is displayed by the protagonist Zaitoon reveals the feministic perception of the author. It is accurately stated by Paranjape as: “The [Pakistani] Bride is dedicated to the incredibly simple, deprived, and courageous women of this magnificent country.” (94).

The novelist underscores the trauma faced by the protagonist Zaitoon in the hard tribal culture. Her predicament in the forced tribal life is rendered by the author as: “Subsisting on baked maize and water, supplemented occasionally by a little rice, she laboured all day, chaffing, kneading, washing, and tending the animals.” (TPB 174). The novelist also exhibits the violence against Zaitoon, with the description of the hard handling of her atrocious husband Sakhi, in the following lines:

Sakhi surveyed his diffident bride with mounting excitement. Here was a woman all his own, he thought with proprietorial lust and pride,…He tore the ghoongat from her head and holding her arms in a cruel grip he panted inarticulate hatred into her face….Zaitoon looked at him wildly, terrified as he dragged her up and roughly yanked her red satin shirt over her head….He tugged at the cord of her shalwar and the silk fell to her ankles. Before she could raise her trousers Sakhi flung her back….Fiercely kicking out, Zaitoon leapt over the charpoy. She screamed. She backed towards the straw and mud-plastered wall, and screamed. Leaning against it, covering her chest and
crotch with her hands, she screamed. Sakhi stood across the room, incapacitated by the shrill animal noise, and she screamed and screamed. ‘Abba, save me,’ she shrieked. (*TPB* 159-160).

From the above cited passage, Sidhwa sensitively conveys the traumatic violence against the women protagonist in the tribal society. She is treated as an animal by her husband in a senseless manner and the disgraceful state of Zaitoon is stated by Sidhwa in the lines: “She also grew immune to the tyrannical, animal-trainer treatment meted out by Sakhi....she no longer thought of marriage with any sense of romance.” (*TPB* 175).

Sidhwa not only highlights the pains endured by the women in the society but she also paves way for them to overcome the odds, through the revolutionary steps undertaken by her women characters in her works. Likewise, in the novel *The Pakistani Bride*, Zaitoon displays the privation of Sidhwa’s women through her escape from the hard tribal life which is imposed on her by the society. Sidhwa minutely narrates the daring escape of Zaitoon from the Kohistani Mountains, where she spends nine dreadful days in the mountain hidings, in order to save herself from her searching husband and his clansmen, who vigorously search for her to kill her and save their tribal pride.

The fear endured by Zaitoon during her horrible flee in the mountain ranges, is sensibly exemplified by the author as: “Trembling, she sat down again, burrowing into her blanket. Her eyes shut, Zaitoon began to pray. Concentrating on the cryptic Arabic incarnations, she extracted from them a faith that once had transformed her childhood nightmares into peaceful
She prays to God to save her from the wild animals around her and it is rendered by Sidhwa with the lines: “Her voice rose to a whisper. Interspersing the mystic syllables with Punjabi, she begged, ‘Allah help me, help me. Don’t let me be afraid . . . Allah protect me from the animals . . .’” (TPB 193).

Through Zaitoon’s frightful flight in the mountains, Sidhwa vividly exposes the male chauvinism imposed by the society on a young girl’s shoulder in the name of forced marriage. It is evident in the lines: “Like vermin in search of dim crevices, Zaitoon felt safe only in the dark.” (TPB 194). The nightmarish experience faced by the female protagonist Zaitoon during her nine days battle for survival is appropriately shown:

While they confine their search operation to the bridge at Pattan, she intelligently moves towards the bridge at Dubair. She has picked the most difficult route because she knows the easier passages will be the first to be searched by the tribals. On the fourth day Sakhi has a suspicion that Zaitoon has crossed the river at Dubair. His father, Misri Khan, goes to Dubair to inquire about her. He requests Major Mushtaq to inform him at once if he has any news of her. On the eighth day in the morning a vulture tries to attack her but she shooes it away by hurling a stone at it. In the afternoon she comes across a snow leopard. Luckily it is shot down by a hunter. On the ninth day she reaches the beach of the river where she is raped by two tribal brutes…When she regains consciousness, she has no strength left in her body but she forces herself to move forward
until she reaches the bridge in the evening. (Pratap Singh 29-30).

Apart from the horrendous chaos around Zaitoon, Sidhwa strongly exposes the firm determination of her women characters with the guts of Zaitoon. She bravely endures the trials and tribulations during the nine days of her crucial flight. Sidhwa writes: “Zaitoon awakened late in the evening. Her pain had eased and her mind was alert again. The comforting roar of the river throbbing in her ears, and once more her instinct for life came to the surface.” (TPB 232). Sidhwa exposes the strength of women even during the terrible afflictions, through Zaitoon’s escape and it is apparent with Zaitoon’s words of determination: “‘I must find the bridge – I must get out of here . . .’” (TPB 232).

In most of her novels the novelist expresses an optimistic outlook as a vision for womanhood in their suppression. The characterization of Sidhwa’s women creates ripples in the minds of the readers. In all her novels, her women characters are portrayed as courageous, modest, intelligent and strong-willed. They cope up with any hardships and disputes in their lives. Sidhwa presents her women characters not as rebels against the culture and society, but she creates them to fight against injustice and inequality.

The novelist courageously reveals the various aspects of injustice prevailing in the society against women like: victimization, exploitation, suppression, etc. She makes her women characters break the unjust laws imposed on them and practices like child marriage, widowhood and forced prostitution. Through the portrayal of her women protagonists, Sidhwa shows
the readers that the reason for the subjugation of women in the patriarchal society, from the pre-partition days to till date, due to the lack of education for women and also their economic dependency towards men in their domestic life.

Sidhwa, through her novels, conveys the fact that though legally the law has given rights to women, it is the patriarchal society that makes women inferior to men. The women’s inferiority is in fact deeply embedded in the patriarchal psyche. Various forms of direct and indirect suppression of women are still prevailing in many parts of the society and through her works Sidhwa effectively uncovers the marginalisation of women in the society.

As a feminist, she advises her women characters to overcome the struggles in their life and get rid of their fate, in its hands they are mere puppets. These aspects of feminist approach are intensely revived by Sidhwa in the novel *Water*. Sidhwa reproduces the status of the women and their pathetic way of survival as victims in the patriarchal society through the representation of her women characters Chuyia, Kalyani and Shakuntala in this novel *Water*. She realistically portrays the injustice perpetrated by the Indian society on widows during the pre-independent era.

Through the child protagonist Chuyia, who forcibly enters into the widowhood in that tender age by the blind tradition following Brahmanical family and the prejudicial society around her. Sidhwa exemplifies such dreadful phases undergone by women all over the world. It is rightly pointed out in an article, “The Script of a Widow’s Life”: 
Inside the portals of the ashram are lodged some twenty widows, ranging from twenty-five years to seventy years. The matriarch Madhumati, the self-proclaimed ruler of the ashram; the sunken-cheeked Patiraji always dreaming of the ladoos served for her marriage; the stern-visaged but gentle Shakuntala; the manly-looking Snehlata - represent those who have taken refuge in the ashram. It is into their midst that Chuyia walks in with an irrepressible thirst for life which neither the white robe nor the cropped hair can assuage. Chuyia notices that the only exception to the ghostly figures around her is Kalyani, who lives in a room in the attic – the one with an unshaven head. Little does Chuyia know that her long hair is a special privilege for her “nocturnal journeys.” (Supriya 2)

In the novel, Water, Sidhwa highlights the pitiful life of the widows in the ashram through the character of Chuyia. Sidhwa brings out the injustice and inequality imposed by the society on women in this novel. She sketches the society which has smashed the lives of the women victims in the name of traditions. She exposes the attitude of the people who consider widows as bad omens and untouchables. Thus the marginalisation of women in the society is conveyed by the novelist through the description of the lives of the widows in the novel Water.

She renders how the people follow the blind norms in the name of tradition for the sake of the society, without considering the emotions of the pitiable widows. Sidhwa describes the imprudent beliefs of the people which violate the emotions of the widows through Chuyia’s life after her sixty year
old husband’s death. It is aptly showed by Sidhwa in the following passage, where Chuyia undergoes the first stage of her widowhood:

Having lost all control over what was happening to her, Chuyia sat on the steps stoical and resigned….The barber cut her hair in stages….Black hair littered Chuyia’s bare shoulder and her white sari. She kept her eyes tightly shut. Her fingers involuntarily tore at her sari as the barber held her firmly by the shoulder with one hand and ran his snipping scissors all over her scalp. Somnath came and sat on the stone step below Chuyia….Resting his head on the palm of his hand, he watched the procedure covertly, through gaps in his fingers; there was an unaccustomed tremor in them, and his face held the cumulative sorrow of all fathers who had watched their young daughters go through this agonizing ritual. It was enforced by the belief that if the widow did not shave her head, every drop of water that fell upon the hair polluted the husband’s soul as many times as the number of hairs upon her head….As the razor scraped across her scalp, Chuyia’s teeth were set on edge. Somnath noticed her toes curl, almost reflexively, in mute protest. (Water 43-44).

In the above cited passage, Sidhwa narrates the superstitious beliefs of the people about the widows, who are destined to suffer due to their sins in their last birth. she writes: “It was enforced by the belief that if the widow did not shave her head, every drop of water that fell upon the hair polluted the husband’s soul as many times as the number of hairs upon her head” (Water
44), here Sidhwa reveals how the blind beliefs make people ill-treat the widows without giving importance to their interest and freedom.

Sidhwa also appropriately details the arduous restrictions imposed by the society on the widows even in their food habits. The widows should have only two meals a day and it should not include fried food items and sweets, so as to control their inclination for tastes. It is evident in the lines: “She [a widow] is to observe fasts, give up eating “hot” foods in order to cool her sexual energy, avoid auspicious occasions because she is considered inauspicious (for having caused her husband’s death), and to remain celibate, devout and loyal to her husband’s memory. (Water 171).

Through a gynocentric mindset, Sidhwa questions the cruelties committed to the widows, who are treated as mere objects and viewed only as bad omens by the people around them. The novelist describes the untouchability followed by the society on the pitiful widows with some following incidents from the novel. One of the incidents comprised the words of a shop keeper against the little girl Chuyia is: ““Go back to the ashram, child.”...“They shouldn’t allow widows to run around like this. They bring bad luck to our business.” (Water 74).

Not only men but women have also treated the widows in an insensible way and it is clearly expressed by Sidhwa in the novel. When Kalyani, a widow, accidently touches a married woman, while the latter is retrieving from a bath from the river, the woman abuses Kalyani with filthy words as if she is touched by an inauspicious creature in the world. And Sidhwa mentions it as: “She grabbed Kalyani by the arm and said, “You have no morals! You
are a widow,”…then she yanked her arm away as if she’d been stung and hissed, “You’ve polluted me. I have to bathe again!” She retracted her steps to the river.” (Water 73).

Through such widow characters in the novel, Sidhwa exposes how the widows face the inhuman treatment given by the society to them. She denotes the attitude of the people who feels polluted with the very touch of a widow’s shadow. This is expressed by the novelist with an incident that, when the priest Sadananda orders the widow Shakuntala to make a distance from a bride in the temple. Through the hard words of the priest Sidhwa reveals the cruel reality of the world of widows as follows: “Watch it! Don’t let your shadow touch the bride.”” (Water 114).

Through the character Shakuntala, Sidhwa sensitively reproduces the traumatic phases undergone by the women only because she is a widow. Through the widow character Shakuntala’s experience of unrevealed plight, Sidhwa represents the discrimination against the widows in the domestic level, about how families treat a widow within their home. They are considered only as a disgrace to the family’s pride and it is apparently recited in the lines about Shakuntala’s sufferings after her husband’s death:

At first, Shakuntala had thought she might die from grief and did not know how she would live without the love and protection of her husband. Her grief was compounded by her ill treatment at the hands of her in-laws. She had gone from being adored to being reviled, looked upon as something filthy….she could still see the fury in her mother-in-law’s eyes as she broke
the glass bangles and ripped off the mangal-sutra (a necklace worn by a married women) from her neck in the first rites marking her passage into widowhood...she was essentially slowly starved, as she was limited to one meal a day—and a meager one of unseasoned rice and daal (lentils) at that—to cleanse her body of lust. She had to sleep on the ground. Her only useful role, that of wife and producer of sons, was gone forever. She was not only viewed as responsible for her husband’s death, but also as a threat to her husband’s family and, most of all, to that of her dead husband’s spirit, simply because of her vital womanhood and potential sexuality. She felt all eyes were constantly watching her, waiting for her to commit some sin that would bring curses on them and consign her husband to hell. (Water 176).

The sufferings of the widows and their shattered emotions due to the customs in the society are expressed by Sidhwa in this novel. It is mentioned by the novelist as: “She remembered the time-honoured words known by all Hindu women, exhorting that the sight of the widow itself was something inauspicious, so inauspicious that if sighted at the beginning of an auspicious venture, the venture itself had to be postponed.” (Water 143).

Sidhwa raises many questions towards the society for treating the widows in an unfair manner and it is showcased as “Shakuntala felt a tug-of-war within her. Her common sense pitched against these age-old traditions practiced simply because it was always so—these thoughts were running in opposing directions in her mind and heart.” (Water 143). Shakuntala’s heart,
which gets ruptured by the ill treatments of the society, outburst the following questions in conversation with the priest Sadananda:

“Is something troubling you?” he asked, masking the desire in his voice and shading his eyes, as if from the glare, with his hand. Shakuntala sat down on the floor at his feet and, overcoming her hesitation and speaking gravely as was her wont, said, “Panditji, I have read the Holy Books without questioning them. But you have studied all the Holy Scriptures . . . I have great respect for your learning . . . Panditji, is it written that widows should be treated badly?” …Shakuntala was not given to saying much to him, and he was surprised by her loquacity and the almost provoking way she had phrased her question. (Water 184).

Sidhwa also ironically depicts the ugly side of the patriarchal society, which frown at the sight of a widow during the day but illegally sleep with them at night. The author denotes this sexual abuse of widows in the lines uttered by Narayan’s father to him: “‘Narayan, perhaps you are not aware of this. Our Holy Texts say Brahmins can sleep with whomever they want, and the women they sleep with are blessed.’” (Water 201). With this representation, Sidhwa exposes the crafty behaviour of the males in the patriarchal society, who interpret the holy texts for their own benefits. This aspect of the society is uncovered by Sidhwa through the portrayal of the widow-prostitute Kalyani in the ashram.
Through her forced prostitution, Sidhwa underscores how women get used as mere sexual objects in the patriarchal society. They not only get mental humiliation but also face domestic violence in the name of forced prostitution. It is indirectly exemplified by Sidhwa in the following conversation between Narayan and his friend Rabindra, at the sight of Kalyani in the Ganga Ghat [river platform]:

A lone light glided slowly down the river. As the small boat, which was the source of both the bobbing light and the song, drew closer, Rabindra said, “There she goes.” Narayan, nearing the denouement of the raag (Indian classical tune) ceased playing.

“There goes who?” he asked, dreamily, still in the emotional grip of the melody. The friends conversed in English.

“A Whore,” answered Rabindra nonchalantly. “My father is one of her clients.”

Narayan, intrigued, sat up in an attempt to get a closer look at the boat and its occupants. All he could see was the smudge of a white shape against the dark night, and that too was disappearing.

“Does she look like a whore? She’s a widow, you fool,” said Narayan, irritated.

“I know she’s a widow,” replied Rabindra. “The gentry here have an ‘unnatural concern’ for widows.” (Water 88-89).
With the mute locked up emotions of Kalyani, Sidhwa showcases how women are rudely shaken both mentally and physically by the society’s unfair treatment. The author reveals the social injustices against the women victims and hence highlights the burning issue of forced prostitution in the society which prevails till date. Sidhwa sensibly emphasises the plight of Kalyani, who fell a prey to the society around her. The victim’s sufferings are expressed thus: “Kalyani had somehow learned to compartmentalize her life….She kept her nocturnal calls in a recessed box hidden even from herself and allowed it open only when she doing business for Madhumati.” (*Water* 152).

Having become a widow at a very young age like Chuyia, Kalyani is forced into prostitution in her teens, for the financial support to the ashram. Though she led a degraded life, her heart is pure with dignified thoughts. It is clear in the lines: “‘Learn to live like a lotus,’” Krishna had said in the *Gita* (Hindu holy text), “untouched by the filthy water.” Kalyani had taken these words to heart and had learned to live by them.” (*Water* 152). Though she accepts her fate without questioning, some moments make her to outpour her inner anger towards the society, for her smashed decorum and self-respect. Sidhwa expresses Kalyani’s anger in the conversation between Madhumati and Kalyani, as follows:

“You must take care of yourself,” Madhumati cooed, and Kalyani noticed she was stroking her thigh. “You are the jewel of this house,” the woman said, gazing at her fondly. “If you are happy, our clients are happy. And when they’re happy, I am happy!”
Kalyani couldn’t take it anymore. “This is an ashram (spiritual
retreat centre), didi (sister), not a brothel,” she said quietly.

The affection and good cheer drained from Madhumati’s flabby
face, as spite and cunning narrowed her eyes. Kalyani slipped
away before Madhumati could get back at her. (Water 152).

In the novel water, Sidhwa also highlights the widow’s remarriage act
which is passed during the pre-independent era. She also emphasizes that the
act is not followed by the people during that period, because of their
meaningless prejudice and blind faith in their tradition. The novelist
underlines this issue in order to highlight the women suppression and
inequality prevailing in the society. People do not encourage the widow
remarriage act; they give importance only to their abstract beliefs and tradition
but not to the soulful white dressed widows around them.

The orthodox belief of the people during the pre-independent period is
elucidated as: “‘The Brahmanical tradition in the stri-dharma [wifely duties] says a widow has two options: She can commit sati [a Hindu ritual where wife cremates herself with husband’s funeral pyre] and mount her husband’s pyre, or lead a life of self-denial and pray for her husband’s soul.’” (Water 184).
Sidhwa reveals the prejudice with the traditional Hindu families, who opposed
the widow’s remarriage for the sake of their traditional beliefs and considers it
as a cardinal sin without considering the widow’s liberation.

It is exposed by Sidhwa through an incident, where Narayan reveals
his wish to marry the widow Kalyani to his mother Bhagwati. Bhagwati
cannot encourage her son’s broad mind in marrying a widow even she cannot
able to resist his decision. She is concerned only with their family’s prestige in the orthodox Brahmanical traditional society and it is clearly narrated by Sidhwa as follows:

She understood what was left unsaid. She began stroking his legs in a light massage as she was used to. “Who is she?” “She’s a widow,” said Narayan....Bhagwati’s head jerked up. She stared at him in horror, and then she covered her face with her hands. It couldn’t be true. “You are joking,” she said and smacked Narayan’s feet in disgust.... “Hai Bhagwan! (Oh God) You’re serious! How will we show our face to the world?” weeping and wiping her tears on her sari, she scolded him, “Gandhi has turned you into a lunatic! Marry a widow? How can you even think of it? It’s a sin! You should know that!”...Narayan had expected this reaction. He understood exactly how intolerable the thought of his marrying a widow was to her, and she could be relied upon to enact tempestuous scenes.... He said, “It is not as terrible as you think, Ma—old ways and ideas have changed. Raja Ramohan Roy says widows should get remarried.”...Bhagwati wiped her nose on her sari and retorted disgustedly, “And Raja whoever—what does he know about our traditions? (Water 162).

Sidhwa not only projects the plight and sufferings of women in her works, but as a strong feminist she also renders the possible liberation of women from their predicament. Like Zaitoon’s flight from the mountains in the novel The Pakistani Bride, Chuyia also is able to come out of the forced
prostitution with the help of Shakuntala in the novel *Water*. Her vision for the women’s liberation is clearly conveyed with the strong will power displayed by Sidhwa’s women in most of her works. It is exposed by the novelist in the novel *Water*, where Shakuntala learns that Madhumati has sent Chuyia along with Gulabi across the river, in order to replace Kalyani’s place with Chuyia in her prostitution business.

Shakuntala’s anger on Madhumati, in order to save Chuyia from the prostitution, is sensitively exhibited by Sidhwa as: “‘Where did you send her? Where did you send her? OPEN YOUR EYES! WHERE DID YOU SEND HER!’” she shrieked…Shakuntala slapped Madhumati hard across the face. The old woman’s head shook from the force of the blow…” (*Water* 216). With a strong feministic perspective, the author dynamically describes how Shakuntala has rescued the little girl Chuyia from the hands of the evil society, to safeguard her from the prostitution.

Shakuntala’s determination and vision for Chuyia’s future, which is aptly denoted as: A vague plan began to form in Shakuntala’s head: Chuyia had to be saved from the assaults that would be inevitable if she were to go back to the ashram. All at once, she knew with a certainty she felt in her bones that Chuyia’s only hope of rescue lay abroad Gandhi’s train. (*Water* 226). It is apparent with the following passage, where Shakuntala hands Chuyia with great effort, into the hands of Narayan in the moving train, which is full of Gandhi’s followers:

With a monumental effort, Shakuntala held the child aloft as she ran with the train, trying desperately to hand Chuyia over to
any of Gandhi’s followers who would reach out a hand...."Brothers please take her. Please take this child with you,” she begged the khaddar-clad young people looking out the windows, standing at the open doors. “Listen to me . . . Why don’t you listen? Why don’t you understand? Sisters! Please take her with you! Please listen! This child is a widow.”...The straining engine began to gather speed, and Shakuntala ran alongside faster. She was afraid she would stumble; her voice was becoming hoarse. Just then, a hand reached out from the train toward her and Chuyia....Shakuntala looked up to see Narayan leaning precariously from the train, holding on with one hand, extending the other to grasp Chuyia. “Didi!” He shouted. (Water 227-228).

Through the portrayal of the fortitude and stamina of Sidhwa’s women characters, she encourages the women’s liberation and advocates the female community to break the male chauvinism. Through the portrayal of the women subjugation, female oppression, male chauvinism and also with the citation of sexual abuse, exploitation of women, physical and domestic violence against women, Sidhwa paves way for the need of change in the society in her works.

Sidhwa not only creates her works from an anti-male viewpoint, she also focuses the psychological traumas faced by her male characters like Ice-Candy-man, Qasim, Freddy, David and Yazdi in her works. She sensibly reproduces the shattered human emotions during the terrific partition violence in the Indian subcontinent. Indian Partition and its aftermath violence is one of
the major themes dealt by Bapsi Sidhwa in some of her works like *Ice-Candy-Man* and *The Pakistani Bride*.

Sidhwa gracefully brings the history of the Indian subcontinent during the India-Pakistan border division into limelight. She sketches the picture of the communal violence before the reader’s eyes. As a first hand witness of the border partition, she realistically recreates the segments of the partition and the communal riots in the novel. She incorporates her experiences in her novel *Ice-candy-Man*, through the child protagonist Lenny. She accentuates the difference between the pre-partition and post-partition days in the Indian subcontinent.

Sidhwa expresses how the brotherhood and fraternity between different communities like Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs which is maintained for centuries get shattered within seconds because of the communal hatred induced by the border partition. Sidhwa says in an interview with Feroza Jussawalla, about her nightmarish experience in those partition days, which later induced her to write about the partition violence in her novels:

When I was a child living in Lahore at the time of partition, my maiden name was Bhandara, which sounded like a Hindu name. After most of the riots were over, a gang of looters came in carts into our house thinking it’s an abandoned house. They were quite shocked to see us and my mother and everybody there. At that time our Muslim cook came out and said, “What do you damn people think you’re doing? This is a Parsi household,” and they said “we thought it was a Hindu
household,” and they went away. I decided to write a story about partition because this scene was vivid in my mind. (200)

Sidhwa vibrantly depicts the horror pictures of the partition violence in the Indian subcontinent, which not only cracked a peaceful nation but also cracked the unity of the different community people, which still remains irreparable. The theme of partition and its aftermath violence has been documented by many historians, where they recorded the facts and surveys of death prevailed during the violence riots. But what has not recorded is the crucial impact caused by the tragic event of partition from an individual perspective. Thus the writers of literature bring the toils and traumas of the people who suffered and survived during the communal riots in the partition violence into limelight.

Sidhwa tangibly exemplifies the theme of partition in most of her works. Though many writers have tripped this theme of partition in their works, Sidhwa intensely portrays the minute physiological traumas undergone by the people during that period and the human emotions which get smashed during the border partition. It As Randhir Pratap Singh rightly observes:

Partition figures in all her novels in the Indian subcontinent. It forms the tail of The Crow Eaters, the head of The Pakistani Bride, and the main body of the Ice-Candy-Man. It is not that Sidhwa was the first to foray into this field. Before her, Saadat Hasan Manto and Ismat Chugtai in Urdu, Amrita Pritam in Punjabi, Khushwanth Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal, Attia Hosain and Mehr Nigar Masroor in English wrote
fiction on the theme of partition. What distinguishes Sidhwa is that she does not belong to any of the three major communities – Hindu, Muslim and Sikh – that played key roles in the cataclysmic events preceding and following partition. She is a Parsi and Parsis always believe in allegiance to the state. (38)

As mentioned earlier, Sidhwa’s writings are impartial without any favours and compromise to any religions. Hence her works mirrors the realities in the society during the communal riots. She boldly captures the communal clashes between the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs in some of her novels, who once lived as friends in harmony.

The novelist emphasizes the crucial impacts of the border division between India and Pakistan, which makes the two nations to get devastated. Sidhwa underlines both the consequential human loss and material loss caused during the communal vehemence. Her works also covers the exodus of people who get migrated between the borders because of the partition, leaving their native lands to the lands which are completely foreign to them. Sidhwa sensitively describes the emotional agony of the people during the mass migration. It is evident with the following incident in the novel The Pakistani Bride, where Zaitoon’s family was travelling from India to the newly created Pakistan.

Sidhwa realistically captures the time of partition as follows: “The train at Ludhiana station already swarmed with Muslims who had boarded it at earlier stops. Panic-stricken families were abandoning their animals and possessions in an attempt to get on.” (TPB 18). Zaitoon’s parents Sikander and
Zohra represents the pathetic situation of the people during the exodus and their sudden detachment of their endearing motherland:

Whistles screaming their strident warning, the train speeds through Amritsar. Past the station it slows, resuming its cautious, jerky passage. They are nearing the border with Pakistan. Already the anticipation of safety lulls the passengers, and tensions lessen. Here and there a head slumps down in sleep....Zohra has been praying silently. Now that the danger has abated, she dares to think out loud....’What about the five hundred rupees we lent to Meera Bai for her daughter’s wedding?’...An emancipated old woman crouching next to her peers inquisitively into her face....Sikander looks fixedly into the darkness. He doesn’t answer. Zohra senses his tension, and bitterness shoots through to her. They have abandoned their land, their everything, and she thinks to remind him of money lent to a Hindu woman they will never see again. Abashed, she lays her head against his arm, muteely begging forgiveness. (TPB 26).

Sidhwa highlights the emotions of the people during the terrific vehemence of partition. She reveals how the communal riots during the partition period claims many innocent lives in both sides of Hindustan and Pakistan, and how it creates irreparable scars in the minds of the people. She describes the aspects of the partition violence where houses get looted and numerous women victims get raped as they are mere instruments of revenge.
Sidhwa expresses the tragic event of the border partition, the border between
the nations as it is drawn with the blood of the innocent souls.

The prevalence of violence at the partition is effectively rendered by
the author: “India was to be partitioned, and that summer the anger and fear in
people’s minds exploded….Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, each rushed headlong for
the locality representing his faith, to seek the dubious safety of strength in
numbers. Isolated homes were ransacked and burnt. (TPB 23). Sidhwa
describes the dead bodies of people, killed in the riots as: “The sky glowed at
night from the fires….Dismembered bodies of men, women, and even
children, lay strewn on roads.” (TPB 23).

It is apparent that, “The dying and the dead are being looted of their
bloodied ornaments and weapons. An eerie silence settles on the stench of
blood.” (TPB 29). The author posthumously exhibits the violent plea during
the partition struggle, when the refugees get killed and violated during the
mass migration between the two nations. Sidhwa recites how the people get
influenced by the communal hatred which makes them to behave in an
animalistic manner.

The cruelties of the partition violence are presented by the author with
the lines: “Trains carrying refugees sped through the darkness of night –
Hindus going one way and Muslims the other….Yet trains were ambushed and
looted and their fleeing occupants slaughtered. (TPB 15).To show the gory
segments of the border struggle, Sidhwa writes: “Men, freshly dead, their
bodies pale and velvety, still lay in alleys and in open drains.” (TPB 31).
Sidhwa also underscores the terrific deaths and bloody vehemence caused
during the communal clash, with the incident of Sikander’s death and his pitiful sufferings in safeguarding his family:

Sikander pushed Zohra and the children off the train and yelled, ‘Run. Hide in the dark.’ He watched from on top. Zohra was pushing her way through the swirling bodies. She was almost beyond the range his vision when he saw an arm clutch at her. The sea of faces swayed beneath him. Pin-pointing her position he leapt, clasping his knife. He half slid, half hell down the embankment and sprang up. A Sikh, hair streaming, lashed a bloody sword. Another slowly waved a child stuck at the end of his spear like a banner. Crazed with fury Sikander plunged his knife into the Sikh’s ribs. He stumbled over soft flesh and the mud slushy and slippery with blood. ‘Zohra! Munni!’ he screamed, barely conscious of his own futile voice. (TPB 28).

Sidhwa reveals the mindset of the people, who do not want their country being divided in the name of religion. Sidhwa writes: “The earth is not easy to carve up. India required a deft and sensitive surgeon, but the British, steeped in domestic preoccupation, hastily and carelessly butchered it. They were not deliberately mischievous – only cruelly negligent!” (TPB 14). Here she uncovers the political game played by the Britishers along with some Indian political leaders in destroying the unity of the nation. She details how the Britishers unfaithfully played their shrewd politics in the name of giving freedom to the nation, and how they cunningly kindled the communal spark between the major communities in the Indian subcontinent.
The tension and trauma among the citizens, caused because of the border partition between India and Pakistan is made clear in the novel *The Pakistani Bride*. As Sidhwa writes it is true that, “Until the last moment no one was sure how the land would be divided. Lahore, which everyone expected to go to India because so many wealthy Hindus lived in it, went instead to Pakistan. Jullundur, a Sikh stronghold, was allocated to India.” *(TPB 14)*. Sidhwa underlines the terrific result of the border partition which cost million innocent lives of people in the subcontinent. She writes: “The earth sealed its clumsy new boundaries in blood as town by town, farm by farm, the border was defined.”*(TPB 16)*.

The theme of partition and its impact on the lives of the people is narrated by Sidhwa in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*. From the viewpoint of an eight year old child protagonist Lenny from a rich Parsi household, Sidhwa recreates the chaos of the traumatic struggle in this novel. Through the eyes of the little girl Lenny, Sidhwa showcases the terrific deaths, gruesome rapes and the communal fire between the communities in an efficient way of narration. She not only documents the facts of the partition period but also conveys the inner sufferings and muted emotions of the people during the border clash between the nations.

Lenny is depicted as a keen observer of the society by the novelist, from the very beginning of the novel. With the following innocent conversation between Lenny and her Cousin, Sidhwa expresses the thoughts of the citizens who want to save their motherland from the cracks of partition. It is described by Sidhwa with Lenny’s questions with his cousin: “There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can one break a country?”
SIDHWA accentuates the thick harmony and concord prevailed among the citizens of the Indian subcontinent before the communal clash during the border partition. With the depiction of the two villages Pir Pindo and Dera Tek Singh, where Muslims and Sikhs lived in harmony with each other before the partition riots, Sidhwa effectively portrays the calm communal climate between the villages which gets destroyed after the partition. Through the difference with Lenny’s visit to her servant Imam Din’s village Pir Pindo, Sidhwa reveals the unity among the two villagers which gets cracked during the communal clash. In the following lines between the village heads, where the villagers gather in unison to discuss about the communal climate around them, Sidhwa gracefully recites the brotherhood and strength of unity maintained by the Muslims and Sikhs in the two villages:

‘Then there is this Hindu-Muslim trouble,’ he says, after a pause. ‘Ugly trouble . . . It is spreading, Sikh-Muslim trouble also . . . ’ ‘Brother,’ the Sikh granthi says when the tumult subsides, ‘our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?’…the chaudhry, giving Imam Din his due as a respected elder, ‘I’m alert to what’s happening . . . The city folk can afford to fight . . . We can’t…To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a
Sikh?’...Imam Din nods....’As long as our Sikh brothers are with us, what have we to fear?’ he says....’ If needs be, we’ll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!’ says Jagjeet Singh....the mullah in a fragile elderly voice. ‘Brothers don’t require oaths to fulfill their duty.’ (ICM 56-57).

Later the love and harmony between the Muslims and Sikhs are overtaken by the communal hatred induced by the religious fanatics from both the sides. It is exemplified by Sidhwa with the gory vehemence and horrible deaths during the communal riots. It is evident with the depiction of the roars from both the Muslim and Sikh community mobs, which is mentioned by the novelist as: “...the Sikh soldier-saint shouts: ‘We will see how the Muslim swine get Pakistan! We will fight to the last man! We will show them who will leave Lahore!’ (ICM 133-134). And the Muslim mob also expresses their communal hatred through the slogans as follows: “And the Muslims shouting: ‘So? We’ll play Holi-with-their-blood! Ho-o-o-li with their blo-o-o-d!’” (ICM 134).

Sidhwa represents the human loss during the communal riots, with Masseur’s death. Sidhwa describes the dreadful incident in the following lines, when Lenny and her gardener Hari accidentally witness the body of Masseur in the roadways: “It is only a bulging gunny-sack....The swollen gunny-sack lies directly in our path. Hari pushes it with his foot. The sack slowly topples over and Masseur spills out.” (ICM 174). The novelist recreates the brutal deaths and violence in her works in a realistic manner and it is because of her own experiences during the Indian partition. In an interview with Feroza
Jussawalla, Sidhwa mentions her horrid memories about the partition violence around her during her childhood days in Lahore:

Another scene that haunted me was one when as a child I was walking with my gardener to my tutor. The gardener just pushed a gunny sack lying on the road spilled out of it. The man was young, good looking, well-built. There was no blood, just a wound as though his waist-line had been trimmed. These scenes and the fires all over Lahore were part of my memory. The fires were like blood colouring the sky. It was a fearful sight. The chanting of slogans was again something very horrific to my child’s ears. It was a threatening noise, full of danger to my family and my friends. So these emotions and images were in my mind, and I wanted to write a story of partition. (200)

In the novel Ice-Candy-Man, Sidhwa shows that only the women become easy targets during the violence of the partition. Women even small girls are brutally abducted by the infuriated mob during the communal clash. They celebrate their victory with women’s corpses because of the fact that women represent the pride of a family. Sidhwa projects it in the novel Ice-Candy-Man, with an incident during the communal riots in the Pir Pindo village. The village women decide to burn themselves with Kerosene in the Chaudhry house, in order to safeguard themselves from the brutalities of the Sikh mobs. Sidhwa signifies how the women measure their purity rather than their lives. Hence to save the pride of their families they took this drastic step of death during the riots.
It is apparently revealed by Sidhwa with the lines: “They have been over the plan often enough recently. The women and girls will gather at the Chaudhry’s. Rather than face the brutality of the mob they will pour kerosene around the house and burn themselves.” (ICM 198-199). She also sketches the gruesome scene of the terrific violence before the reader’s eyes in the novel Ice-Candy-Man, with the description of the murders caused by the inhuman behavior of the people, where their humanity get blocked due to communal frenzy. It is aptly recounted by Sidhwa in the following passage, through a violent incident in the Pir Pindo village, where a small Muslim boy Ranna along with his people gets trapped by the cruel Sikh mob:

They mowed down the villagers in the mosque with the sten-guns. Shouting ‘Allah-o-Akbar!’ (Allah is greater) the peasants died of sword and spear wounds in the slushy lanes and courtyards, the screams of women from the Chaudhry’s house ringing in their ears,…Ranna, abandoned by his mother and sisters halfway to the Chaudhry’s house, ran howling into the courtyard. Chidda had spanked his head and pushed him away, shrieking, ‘Go to your father! Stay with the men!’…Ranna ran through their house to the room the boys had been instructed to gather in….More men stumbled into the dark windowless room…it was stifling. He heard his father’s voice and fought his way towards him. Dost Mohammed shouted harshly: ‘Shut up! They’ll kill you if you make a noise.’…A teenager, his cracked voice resounding like the honk of geese, started
In the above cited passage, Sidhwa reveals the agonizing pain endured by the people during the disastrous partition days. Sidhwa underscores the bravery and guts of the citizens in the Indian subcontinent even during their deathly seconds. The novelist expresses it with the words of Dost Mohammad towards the young boys, to face death with courage: “‘Hush,’ said Dost Mohammad...Then, with words of strength and compassion, with infinite gentleness, he said, ‘What’s there to be afraid of? Are you afraid to die? It won’t hurt any more than the sting of a bee.’” (ICM 200).

In some of her works, Sidhwa deals with the theme of Indian border partition and its violent consequences, which results in the enormous loss of innocent lives in both India and Pakistan. Sidhwa projects partition as a monumental tragedy in her novels, where the revenge attitude between the communities makes the people not only to forget their past unity and brotherhood, but it also stands as the cause for the on-going subsequent conflicts between the nations from 1947 till date.

Sidhwa also focuses the lifestyle of the Parsis, their tradition and culture in most of her works. As Sidhwa herself being a Parsi, practically reproducesthe Parsi community, both its positive and negative sides, from an objective viewpoint without any favours and prejudice. She reveals the customs of the Parsis and also about the Zoroastrian religion through the portrayal of the Parsi families in most of her works: The Crow Eaters, Ice-Candy-Man and An American Brat. Sidhwa wishes to bring her tiny miniscule community into limelight, which lies at a brink of extinction among the major
religions in the society. With her novels, Sidhwa strives to commemorate the endangered species by detaining their traditional ethos.

In most of her novels, Sidhwa portrays the Parsi families in order to expose the rites, rituals, customs, ceremonies, habits and norms of the Zoroastrians. She also minutely reproduces the psyche of the Parsis and their tradition, with her natural collective consciousness in the beliefs and customs of the Parsi community. Her passion and respect for her Zoroastrian community is dignified by Sidhwa in one of her novels, *The Crow Eaters*: Because of a deep-rooted admiration for my diminishing community—and an enormous affection for it—this work of fiction has been a labour of love. (*TPB* 7). Randhir Pratap Singh rightly states this aspect of Sidhwa and the history of the Zoroastrians in the lines as follows:

In her interviews Bapsi Sidhwa has said it repeatedly that she is first and foremost a Parsi. She is proud of her Zoroastrian faith, and there is no reason why she shouldn’t be. Zoroastrianism is one of the earliest religions and its origin goes back to 3000 BCE. The Zoroastrians lived in the ancient Persia now called Iran. After the conquest of their country by the Muslim Arabs they fled to India as religious refugees. They first landed at Diu in Kathiawar in AD 766, and later moved to Sanjan on the coast of Gujarat. In her novels, *The Crow Eaters* and *Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa recounts the traditional story of the Parsis’ arrival from Iran to India in the eighth century… (7)

The novelist mentions about Ahura Mazda, Zoroastrian God, and their prophet Zarathustra in most of her novels. It is apparent with the following
lines in *The Crow Eaters*: “Mazdayasni Faith is the true faith, that Zarathustra is the true Prophet of God and that he should obey the three commandments: *good thoughts, good words and good deeds.*” (*TCE* 139). Sidhwa uses fire, the holy symbol of Zoroastrianism to denote Parsis, the fire worshippers.

She brings to light some of the beliefs of the Parsis, where they spiritually believes the fire as the divine light and hence considers smoking as a cardinal sin in their religion. This facet of the Zoroastrians is rendered by Sidhwa in the novel *The Crow Eaters*, with the lines as “Fire, which has its source in primordial light, symbolises not only His cosmic creation but also the spiritual nature of His Eternal Truth. Smoking, which is tantamount to defiling the holy symbol with spit, is strictly taboo – a sacrilegious sin.” (*TCE* 49).

In the novel *An American Brat*, Sidhwa sketches about the Parsi Fire Temple and the religious rituals of the Zoroastrians. She represents the customs of prayer and the spiritual rites performed by the Zoroastrians in the Fire Temple, through Feroza’s way of prayer in the Parsi Fire Temple. The following passage intensely explores the Parsi Fire Temple and the prayer rites of the Parsis through the representation of Feroza’s visit to the Fire temple, before her voyage to The United States:

Feroza liked to hear the priest chant her family’s names during the *Tandarosti* for good health. He recited the prayer slowly and with a solemn majesty that caused each word to resonate with sacred significance beneath the dome of the inner sanctum and the soaring vault of the hall….Feroza also liked to watch the priest, luminous in a froth of starched white robes,
decorously feed the fire with offerings of sandalwood from a long-handed silver ladle....Feroza lit an oil lamp and saluted the enormous framed portraits of departed Lahori Parsees and, removing her shoes, knelt before the marble threshold of the inner sanctum. The walls and dome of the small, round room imbued the space with a mystic aura and provided an appropriate foil for the *atash* (sacred fire) as the manifestation of God’s energy....Feroza took a few steps backwards and, holding her palms together, raised her eyes to the *atash*....bowing her head in gratitude, she moved to a side window and, pressing her radiant face to the polished brass bars, chanted the happy little *Jasa-me-avanghe Mazda* (Come to My Help O Ahura Mazda) prayer.

Sidhwa also highlights the most important aspect of the Zoroastrians, their sense of charity, in most of her novels. In the novel *The Crow Eaters*, this aspect of the Parsis is apparent with the lines: “the moment a Parsi strikes it rich he devotes a big portion of his energies to charity. He builds schools, hospitals and orphanages; provides housing, scholarships…” (*TCE* 21). The Parsis not only believes in charity during their life but they also follows charity even at their death. Sidhwa reveals the Zoroastrian beliefs in their afterbirth.

The Zoroastrians believe that the human soul enters into the cycle of the afterbirth, through its entry into the food chain of the animals. Hence in the Zoroastrian faith, the corpse of a Parsi should be placed in a stone *dakhma* [tower shaped graveyard], which is open to the sky at the roof and the vultures
will prey on the corpse. The tower stone dhakmais termed as ‘Tower of Silence’ and this way of disposal of the dead bodies is called as Dakhmanashini.

As it is indicated by Sidhwa in the novel *The Crow Eaters*, “Parsis are a tiny community who leave their dead in open-roofed enclosures atop hills – to be devoured by vultures. The British romanticized this bizarre graveyard with the title ‘Tower of Silence.’” *(TCE 45).* Sidhwa exhibits this way of disposal of the corpse which is emphasised by the Prophet Zarathustra in their Holy book Avesta. It should be followed by each Parsi as one of his duty and this Parsi religious norm is depicted by Sidhwa in the following lines, when Freddy’s mother-in-law Jerbanoo feel grief over the news about the absence of the Tower of Silence in Lahore: “When they first came to Lahore, Jerbanoo had been mildly troubled by the discovery that there was no Tower of Silence in the city… she absolutely refused to be shoved beneath mounds of maggot-ridden earth…” *(TCE 46).*

The Zoroastrians strongly believes the act of charity at death, as one of their foremost duties, which has to be filled to complete the meaning of their birth. It is narrated by the novelist through Jerbanoo’s words: “‘It was his final act of charity! Every Parsi is committed to feeding his last remains to the vultures’… ‘Our Zarathusti faith is based on charity.” *(TCE 47).* Sidhwa expresses this important aspect of charity in the Zoroastrian faith with the following passage, in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, where Lenny questions about the Tower of Silence with his Godmother Rodabai:
We call it Dungarwadi: not Tower of Silence. The English have given it that funny name . . . Actually it is quite a simple structure: just a big round wall without any roof,’ says Godmother…The dead body is put inside the Dungarwadi,’ explains Godmother. ‘The vultures pick it clean and the sun dries out the bones.’ . . . I sit down, facing her, and drawing me close she says: Mind you . . . It’s only the body that’s dead. Instead of polluting the earth by burying it, or wasting fuel, by burning it, we feed God’s creatures . . . I feel curiously deprived. Here’s an architectural wonder created exclusively by the charitable Parsees to feed God’s creatures and I haven’t even seen it. And I don’t want to wait until I’m dead!…’I want to see it’ I demand . . . ’we don’t have one in Lahore,’ says godmother. ‘There are too few Parsees: the vultures would starve. But when you go to Karachi or Bombay you can see it from the outside. Only pall-bearers can go in . . . we have a graveyard in Lahore.’ (ICM 113-114).

Generally the Parsis have a great sense of loyalty to their ruler and it is aptly revealed by Sidhwa in most of her novels. She also underlines the Parsis’ firmness in keeping their promise given to the Indian Prince, as they will not involve in any of the Indian politics, intact till date from their arrival into India. It is apparent in Col.Bharucha’s speech in the Parsis’ community meeting that he insists the Parsis to stand uninvolved in the politics of the Indian subcontinent during the partition time: “Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land!... As
long as we do not interfere we have nothing to fear! As long as we respect the customs of our rulers – as we always have…” (ICM 39).

Sidhwa also reveals the norms of the Parsi religion that the Zoroastrianism will not allow interfaith marriage or even conversion into their faith. If they break the religious custom by mixed marriages, they will not be allowed inside their Fire Temples even in the funeral of their parents. Sidhwa marks this strong determination in one of her novels, An American Brat, where Feroza wishes to marry a Jewish boy but “They [the Parsi society] won’t allow you into any of our places of worship, agyari or Atash Behram.” (AAB 298).

This strict rule of the Zoroastrians in condemning inter-community marriages in their faith is exhibited by Sidhwa in her another novel The Crow Eaters. It is conveyed by the author with the following incident when Freddy’s youngest son, Yazdi faces opposition in his family, when he wishes to marry a non-Parsi. In the following passage, Sidhwa intensely reveals the beliefs of the Zoroastrians and their reasons for the ban in interfaith marriage in their religion through Freddy’s words:

“You are too young to understand these things . . . maybe I am too old to understand you. Now, this is not something I would believe. It is what our ancestors professed; and our race will go on believing till the end of time. You may think what I have to say is nonsense, but once you are past a certain age you will see the wisdom and truth of these thoughts, I promise you. May I tell you what I believe?’…” I believe in some kind of a tiny spark that is carried from parent to child, on through generations . . . reaching back to the times of Zarathustra, the
magi, the Mazdians...’ I am not saying only we have the
spark. Other people have it too: Christians, Muslims, Buddhists
... they too have developed pure strains through
generations...‘But what happens if you marry outside our
kind? The spark so delicately nurtured, so subtly balanced,
meets something totally alien and unmatched. (*TCE* 128-129).

In some of her works, Sidhwa explores the issues of cultural
differences and its resultant conflicts between the cultures. Sidhwa vibrantly
covers some migrant tribulations like cultural displacement, ethnic anxiety,
cultural shock and cultural hybridization in most of her works. With her
migrant protagonist like Feroza and Zaitoon, Sidhwa reciprocates the phase of
assimilation and the strife of nostalgia undergone by them in the novels *An
American Brat* and *The Pakistani Bride* respectively. Sidhwa projects the
aspect of confrontation between cultures, during the process of migration. She
describes how the migrants get up-rooted from a familiar native context and
thrown into a hostile world, where they face the cultural traumas in the process
of re-rooting in the foreign context.

In the novel *An American Brat*, Sidhwa brilliantly weaves the theme of
migration and its consequences around the migrant protagonist Feroza.
Through Feroza, the author represents the assimilation process endured by the
migrants all over the world. The novelist narrates the emotional traumas
endured by the migrants during their migration, and it is aptly recited by
Sidhwa in the lines when Feroza migrated from Pakistan to America: “She
looked out the window to divert her attention, and all at once it struck her that
she was going far from Lahore, from the sights, the sounds, and the fragrances
that were dear to her, from the people she loved and had taken for granted.” (AAB 47).

Sidhwa denotes the migrant Feroza’s first step in the phase of assimilation, with the arrival of Feroza in the Kennedy Airport in America, Sidhwa reveals the new feeling of Feroza when she breathes the freedom in a foreign land. It is rendered by the author as follows: “…a strange awareness seeped into Feroza: she knew no one, and no one knew her! It was a heady feeling to be suddenly so free – for the moment, at least – of the thousand constraints that governed her life.” (AAB 58).

The author highlights Feroza’s complete transformation with her American roommate Jo’s teachings of Americanism to her. Jo teaches English to Feroza in the American way and guided her not to use much polite expressions. Along with the language, Feroza’s dressing also gets changed. The assimilation of Feroza, both inward and outward is rendered by the novelist: “Feroza’s Pakistani outfits and outrageously dangling earrings were banished to her suitcase and her wardrobe replenished by another pair of jeans to supplement the pair she had purchased at Bloomingdale’s…” (AAB 151).

Sidhwa exhibits Feroza’s endurances in her assimilation, as she not only gets modernized with her dressings but also she inculcates the habit of alcohol consumption in the parties and roaming with boys. Though she sometimes feels guilty with her activities in the modern American context, she forgets her feel of guilt with the company of her new American friends: “Every time she went out with Jo and flirted modestly with the wine, she wondered what her family would have to say of her conduct if they
knew….Feroza thought she had taken a phenomenal leap in perceiving the world from a wider, bolder, and happier angle.” (AAB 163-164). Sidhwa exposes the process of assimilation of the migrants in a foreign land through Feroza’s cultural hybridization:

“You aren’t used to boys. So, okay – get used to them,” said Jo, compelling forthright. “You gotta learn to sometime. You gotta stick with it.”…At Jo’s insistence, Feroza asked for a glass of wine the next time and nursed the drink all evening, taking small sips. Feroza discovered that she became less self-conscious, more comfortable, and that it mattered less what impression she made, whether she spoke or was tongue-tied….something within Feroza must have changed imperceptibly, because suddenly one spring evening Feroza discovered that the boys were talking to her,…and encourage her out of her painful shell….she actually started to enjoy the excursions that she had found such a painful ordeal before….at the slightest inclination for company, Jo’d say, “Let’s meet some guys,” or wail, “I wanna drink,” and they’d just shoot off, without needing to seek anyone’s permission or fear anyone’s wrath. (AAB 163).

The novelist focuses the ethnic anxiety faced by the migrants during the cultural clash between their native and foreign culture as they are unable to break their native ethos while moving into the new culture. This is skillfully conveyed by Sidhwa through the character of Feroza’s mother, Zareen, who opposes Feroza’s wish in marrying the outsider of their faith. With the
following lines, the novelist reveals the ethnic anxiety and the native ethos of the migrants who are unable to accept the cultural difference: "‘And you’ll have to look at it our way. It’s not your culture! You can’t just toss your heritage away like that, ‘t’s in your bones!’” (AAB 279).

The preceding chapters, the scholar earnestly hopes, have thoroughly explored and substantiated the thesis statement – A Thematic Study on the Select Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa. The researcher has analysed the select novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and focused on the major issues like feminism, migratory problems and partition consequences. Through the study of her protagonists and also other characters the researcher has brought out the predicament of human life in various aspects. The researcher hopes that this thesis will inspire further exploration of Sidhwa’s works on various themes also.