Chapter I
Introduction

The introductory chapter is a detailed discussion on the origin and development of the Pakistani English Literature, the life and works of Bapsi Sidhwa and her contribution to the Pakistani English Literature. Sidhwa is enormously acclaimed as ““A powerful and dramatic novelist”” and “As an born storyteller,…shrewd observer” (Qtd. in ICM) by The Times and New Statesman respectively. Sidhwa is one of the most prominent writers of fiction in Pakistani English Literature. As a versatile writer, Sidhwa emerged as a significant voice in the world of Commonwealth Literature. Her success as an eminent novelist is evident in the wide readership of her novels. It is rightly observed: “Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel belongs to that rapidly expanding literary by-product of the Empire: English language fiction by Third World Writers about their societies during the colonial period.” (Dhawan and Kapadia 9).

The researcher has made up her mind not to duplicate the research, the topics which have already investigated with regard to Sidhwa. Mostly researches were done in the works of Sidhwa on Borders and Boundaries, Female Consciousness, Treatment of Exile and Multiculturalism. The researcher does not confine herself to be on the beaten track thus the researcher at present is of the view that there are some themes of Bapsi Sidhwa such as feminism, partition consequences, migratory issues and depiction of Parsi culture, which have to be focused much with the present study. Hence the researcher has entitled her thesis as A Thematic Study on the select Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa.
In the pages that follow the present researcher estimates the place of Sidhwa in Pakistani English Literature and the enviable position she holds in contrast to the other writers in that field. In this sense, it is appropriate to give details about the origin and development of the Pakistani English Literature. English is one of the official languages of Pakistan and the national dialect spoken in the country is known as Pakistani English. Pakistani English Literature refers to English literature that has been evolved and developed in Pakistan, by the members of the Pakistani Diaspora who write in the English language.

Dr. Alamgir Hashmi introduced the term "Pakistani Literature in English" with his "Preface" to his pioneering book *Pakistani Literature: The Contemporary English Writers* (1987), also as well as through his other scholarly work and the seminars and courses taught by him in many universities since 1970's. It was established as an academic discipline in the world following his lead and further work by other scholars, and it is now a widely popular field of study. From 1980's Pakistani English Literature began to receive national and official recognition, when the Pakistan Academy of Letters included works originally written in English in its annual literary awards. The first major English writer to receive this Pakistan’s highest national honour in arts was Alamgir Hashmi. Subsequently, through the last three decades, a number of other Pakistani English writers, including Bapsi Sidhwa and Nadeem Aslam, have been recognized by the Academy.

In the beginning English language poetry from Pakistan held a special place in South Asian writing on account of the new trends represented by the poets
Shahid Suhrawardy, Ahmed Ali, Alamgir Hashmi, Daud Kamal, Taufiq Rafat, and Maki Kureishi, and later with Athar Tahir, Waqas Ahmed Khwaja, Omer Tarin, Hina Babar Ali and Itrat Husain Zuberi. As a reputed initiator, Shahid Suhrawardy wrote verses from 1911 to 1937, when he published his essays in *Verse* (1937). Later, he translated Lee Hou-Chou’s Chinese poetry into English, jointly with Lin Yih-Ling. His poems have been included in *The New Harmony: An Anthology of Pakistani Poetry in English* published in 1970. The emergence and the distinguished features of the poetry in Pakistani English Literature were aptly compiled by Tariq Rahman as:

Language, at least in its creative aspect, can transcend politics and many Pakistanis keep writing in English nevertheless. To understand the development of Pakistani poetry in English, it is necessary to understand the tradition of the ghazal in the subcontinent. The ghazal is essentially lyrical poetry on the themes of love, fate, man’s relationship with God and eroticism.... It is in this ethos that the first Muslim poets of note, Shahid Suhrawardy and Ahmed Ali, started writing. (186)

Fiction from Pakistan began to receive recognition in the later part of the 20th century. The early success of Pakistani English poets was followed in fiction by the prose works written by some great literary figures such as Ahmed Ali, Zulfikar Ghose and Bapsi Sidhwa. The very first name that comes to the Pakistani novelists of English is, Ahmed Ali. He can rightly be called the pioneer of English Literature in Pakistan. After the Indian partition in 1947, he moved to Pakistan from Delhi. Though he wrote many works and also translated the Holy Quran in English, his fame rests on his novel *Twilight*
in Delhi (1937) which skilfully presents the fading culture of the ancestors. To quote Tariq Rahman:

The novel evokes the culture of Delhi through describing customs and ceremonies minutely and—says Brander—‘the fine wedding chapter reads like an epithalamium in which verse and prose alternate in wonderfully refreshing bridal music. Even the beggars are described and their songs and mannerisms make them concrete presences and not just another detail. When the writer comes to describe or allude to the superstitions of the time, he does so in a manner which reveals his own beliefs....The theme, the philosophical import of the novel, is based on Ali’s subjective response to his moribund culture and is, in the last analysis, sentimental and therefore unsatisfactory. For the theme is the passing away of Muslim civilization in India. The narrator’s attitude towards this culture is romantic.

(57-58)

Another notable writer in the Pakistani English Literature is Mumtaz Shahnawaz, probably the first female novelist of English in Pakistan. Her only novel, The Heart Divided (1959) gives a meticulous glimpse of partition of the Indian subcontinent. She died in 1948 in an air crash in Ireland, but left a probably incomplete first draft of the novel, which was later published by her family. Her famous novel The Heart Divided was written between 1943 and 1948 and published posthumously in 1957. This novel is the only major response to the events which created the two states of India and Pakistan during the partition. The theme covers the renunciation of the idea of
Hindu-Muslim unity and the acceptance of the idea of creating a separate state for the Muslims in Pakistan. This theme is expressed by the writer, through the plot which consists of the changing relationships between a Hindu and Muslim family.

Zulfikar Ghose is one of the most vital novelists in the history of Pakistani English Literature. He represented the major themes of the Pakistani English fiction, which mostly reflects the theme of exile and rootlessness because of the impact of the Indian partition in the lives of the writers. One of his most reputed works The Murder of Aziz Khan, is considered as the most significant work about Pakistan’s social reality in the nineteen sixties. As Tariq Rahman quotes:

Ghose does not call himself a Pakistani in the political sense but his work owes much to his being born in a land which he had to leave later. He is, therefore, one of the most significant writers in this history of Pakistani literature in English….Ghose’s fiction with his two major themes: alienation and deracination. This is important because these themes are so constant in Ghose’s fiction—probably because he had left the land of his birth. Thus, like V.S.Naipaul from Trinidad, Dom Moraes from India and others, Ghose too is the exile, the intellectual alienated from his society, and his work can be seen in the light of consideration. Ghose’s consciousness of being in exile is expressed in his autobiography, Confessions of a Native-Alien (1965). The theme of exile has also been noted by earlier critics. (109-110)
Following the footprints of these writers, many young novelists are giving a new and distinct identity to this genre and are contributing to the Pakistani English Literature. The most important among them is Mohsin Hamid. With his debut novel *Moth Smoke* (2000), he explores the theme of partition of the subcontinent and the trauma endured by the people during the vehemence. Also with his controversial work, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) he discusses the reaction of an American educated Pakistani youth during the aftermath of the 9/11 incident with a sense of strong autobiographical elements.

Another expatriate young novelist, Nadeem Aslam conveys the theme of tragedy, loss and betrayal in an exotic style through his works. His novel, *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), elegantly portrays the migrant life in England. In his another novel *The Wasted Virgil* (2008), he reveals the conflict in Afghanistan and the lives of the individuals who were trapped during the riot. There are also some young female writers like Uzam Aslam Khan, who also belongs to the new generation writers in Pakistan, vibrantly contributes with her works for the growth of the Pakistani English Literature.

Pakistani girl who gets migrated to the United States. It is her novel *Kartography* (2004) which has given her due fame as an eminent novelist. It is an examination of the cultural life of Pakistan during the seventies.

Bina Shah is also one of the prominent women novelists in the field of Pakistani English Literature. Through her debut novel *Dream in Blue* (2001), she exhibits the search for the past and the future in the background of a mystic tradition. And with her another novel *786 Cybercafe* (2004), she boldly reveals the theme of religious extremism and corruption prevailing in the Pakistani society. Hence these young writers of fiction dynamically took the rank of the Pakistani English Literature into the next stage. With their novels, they reflect the present political scenario of Pakistan along with the on-going issues of terrorism in the country.

These young generation novelists strive for a change in the socio-political upheavals of Pakistan. Thus their works audaciously expose the theme of burning political issues around them. It is evident with the novelist Mohammed Hanif, who created storm on the literary scene of Pakistan with his most famous novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), which has received many controversial reviews. The novel reveals the mystery behind the murder of General Zia-ul-Haq, who died in a plane crash in 1988. Apart from the controversies around the novel, it got long-listed for the booker prize.

With the contributions of these writers, the field of Pakistani English Literature has gained a worldwide recognition in the commonwealth literary scenario. The Pakistani English Literature was considered uncompetitive in its beginning years in the field of the Third World Literature. This aspect of the insignificant stage of the Pakistani English Literature is aptly denoted by Tariq
Rahman in the following passage from his book *A History of Pakistani Literature in English 1947-1988*:

English language writers remained concerned with romanticism and with the ability to write good English in the beginning and this continued to be the tradition of minor writers in Pakistan. Unfortunately, there were hardly any major writers, so that a distinctively new literary tradition did not emerge. One reason for this could be that there has never been any encouragement of creative work in English in Pakistan either at the official level or at the public one. Even Pakistani Universities have never given attention to this literature and the best Pakistani writers have never given attention to this literature and the best writers have had to settle abroad or, at any rate, publish abroad. Thus, Ghose lives in Austin, Texas and is supported by the University there; Bapsi Sidhwa lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is supported by Harvard University, and Hanif Kureishi lives in London. Daud Kamal was published by peter Dent in England and Alamgir Hashmi was published in the United States. (289)

With the above cited lines, it is understood that the Pakistani English writers were not encouraged in the beginning, by the publishers in their own country. But later the Pakistani English Literature got a gradual progress with the tremendous works of art by the above mentioned poets and novelists. With their awards and literary prizes they represented the Pakistani English Literature to the world.
In the 21st century, a number of Pakistani novelists writing in English were shortlisted for the international awards. Mohsin Hamid won the Betty Trask Award and was also a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway award. And also his second novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. And the women novelist Kamila Shamsie won her literary award in Pakistan for her debut novel *In a City by the Sea*. And her other novel *Kartography* was shortlisted for the John Llewelyn Rhys award. Uzma Aslam Khan also got shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize for her second novel *Trespassing*.

Hanif Kureshi won the Whitbread award for his prolific novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990). Moniza Alvi published several poetry collections and won the British Literary Prize. The British-Pakistani writer Nadeem Aslam won the Kiriyama Prize for his second novel, *Maps for Lost Lovers*. And Mohammed Hanif was shortlisted for the Guardian First Book Award for his debut novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Hence with these contributions, the Pakistani English novelists have proved that Pakistan too has literature which can be compared with the best in Third World Literatures in English.

A brief bio-critical introduction to the life and works of Bapsi Sidhwa will help the readers to have a perfect understanding of the semi-autobiographical elements which get reflected in her novels. Because it is impossible to estimate Sidhwa without considering her biographical context, which made her the type of women she became and the writer she emerged. Born in an eminent Parsi business family in Karachi in 1938, Sidhwa moved with her parents Peshotan and Tahmina Bhandra to Lahore. She was two when
she contracted polio, which has affected her throughout her life and was nine in 1947 at the time of Indian Partition. These facts shaped the character of her eight year old protagonist Lenny in her novel *Ice-Candy-Man*.

Being the only child of her parents, Sidhwa felt lonely in her home in Lahore. As because of her polio, Sidhwa had to undergo a numerous surgical operations. The doctors advised her parents not to strain her with studies and hence an Anglo-Indian tutor was employed by her parents for Sidhwa’s home education. To get rid of her lonely hours in home, she started reading at the age of eleven, where her tutor gave her a book of the American novelist Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*. She read many books and her readership quality impressed and moulded her as a writer. In an interview with Feroza Jussawalla, Sidhwa mentioned about her nature of reading in her childhood, which made a great influence on her writing career:

> From the age of about eleven to eighteen, I read non-stop because I did not go to school. I had nothing else to do, no other form of entertainment to fill my life with, and a big slack was taken up by reading. This did turn me, I now realize, into a writer. I must have read *The Pickwick Papers* at least four times during that period, I would laugh out loud. I recently reread *The Crow Eaters* and reread *The Pickwick Papers* and realized there were so many parallels. I subconsciously absorbed a lot of that book and years after when I wrote *The Crow Eaters*, it influenced that book without my being aware of it. I think all
that I read then was an influence – a lot of Tolstoy has influenced my work… (217)

In 1956, Sidhwa got her Bachelor’s degree from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. And she married a sophisticated Bombay based businessman Gustad Kermani in 1957 and lived with him for five years in Bombay. After being divorced from her husband, she went back to Pakistan with her daughter but the divorce made her to forcibly part with her son. Thus Bombay left some ineradicable scars in Sidhwa’s life. After some years, she remarried a Lahore based businessman Noshirwan Sidhwa, son of the former mayor of Karachi R.K. Sidhwa. Though Noshirwan was twelve years senior than Sidhwa, he supported her much in her writings.

Sidhwa started her writing career after an accidental meeting with an Afghan woman writer, in a plane who suggested Sidhwa to write. It is said that history is more often made by accident than design. And it is illustrated in case of Sidhwa who later became a most prominent writer in the history of Pakistani English Literature. Though Sidhwa read many books, she was unaware of writers and publication of books. And only after her accidental encounter with the Afghan writer in the plane, Sidhwa realised the spark within her to write. Sidhwa expresses it, in an interview with David Montenegro as:

I’m so fond of reading, and I used to think that a writer was some sort of a being who lives in another sphere. I never thought of the writer in human terms but almost as some disembodied power that automatically produced books. And
suddenly by telling me that she (the Afghan Woman) was a writer, she made me realize that writers are very flesh-and-blood persons. And that did make me want to write. In fact, I then wrote just a short piece, which was published in a magazine with her help. (2)

But a vibrant novelist within Sidhwa was exposed only after Sidhwa’s vacation trip in the northern plains with her husband, which became a turning point in her life. During the trip, she heard about a story across the hills, about a young Punjabi ran away bride, who get beheaded by her tribal husband in the Kohistani hills. When Sidhwa arrived back from her trip to Lahore, she wanted to recreate it into a short story but fortunately her intense emotion for the young girl made her come out with a novel. That story haunted Sidhwa deeply and it formed the theme of her first novel *The Pakistani Bride*. She realises her passion for writing within herself, while writing for the novel *The Pakistani Bride*. Sidhwa confesses it in an interview with Feroza Jussawalla:

> When I came back to Lahore, I felt I had to tell her story, I had not written before...I had a compulsion to write the girls’s story and the story of the tribal’s hidden away in this beautiful part of the world I started writing a short story about this girl, without my really being aware of it, it was developing into a long story. It was an obsession. (n.p)

She took nearly four years to complete the novel which she wrote and re-wrote for a perfect unique outcome. Soon after completing *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa started working in her second novel *The Crow Eaters*, which is a live and humorous depiction of the Parsi community people. Sidhwa is
conversant with several languages like Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi and English. But she chooses English as her medium in her writings and her English which is bilingual like that of the most of the South Asian writers. She has framed her English narration with Gujarati and Urdu words and phrases. Sidhwa justifies about her choice of language in her interview with David Montenegro as follows:

I find myself comfortable writing in this language. My written Urdu is not very good, though I speak it fluently. As for Gujarati, hardly anyone in Pakistan knows the language. In Britain, of all places, people say, “Why don’t you write in your own language?” And they bring very heavy political overtones to bear on this. But I think, well, the English don’t have a monopoly on the language. It is a language of the world, now. And it is a means of communicating between various nationalities and the most immediate tool at hand. So I use it without any inhibitions or problems. (523)

In the beginning of her writing career, Sidhwa got recognition only after her hard work in publishing her works. At first, she faced many rejections in Pakistan where no publishers came forward to publish her works. Then Sidhwa decided to self-publish her own novels and also she self-distributed her works in bookstores. But publishers show little interest and also criticized the title of her novel, *The Crow Eaters*. Sidhwa became frustrated and later she got a publisher from Britain called Jonathon Cape, who showed interest to publish her novel *The Crow Eaters* after reading the self-published copy from a bookstore.
Gradually through her literary contributions, Sidhwa emerged as one of the most prominent writers of fiction in English and a significant voice in the world of Commonwealth Literature. She produced five internationally acclaimed novels and also her novels have been translated into many languages like French, German, Russian and Italian. In 1978, her first novel *The Crow Eaters* was published and soon gets translated into numerous languages. Though she wrote *The Pakistani Bride* as her first novel, it gets published only after *The Crow Eaters*, in 1983. Her third and most remarkable novel *Ice-Candy-Man* was published in 1988 and got many reputations for Sidhwa’s excellent narration. *Ice-Candy-Man* was later published as *Cracking India* for international readers, and which was later made into a film called “Earth”, by a renowned director Deepa Mehta.

It was declared as the *New York Times*, Notable Book for the Year in 1991. It also received Liberaturepreis Award in Germany. It was also nominated by the American Library Association as a Notable Book of the Year of 1991. In 1994, Sidhwa’s fourth novel, *An American Brat* was published. Along with these novels, in 2006 Sidhwa has also published *Water*, a work of fiction based on the movie of the same name by Indo-Canadian film director Deepa Mehta. Sidhwa’s other works include some short-story collections and translations like, *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore, Their Language of Love, Jungle Walla Shahib* and *Omnibus* respectively. In addition to her major works, Sidhwa’s reviews and articles have appeared in *Houston Chronicle, The Economic Times, The London Telegraph* and in the *New York Times*. 
Her works made her high reputation in the literary scenario of Pakistani English. In 1986, she received a Bunting Fellowship at Radcliffe from Harvard University. To her credit she had the visiting scholarship at Rockefeller Foundation Centre, Bellagio in Italy in 1991. In the same year, Sidhwa received Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Pakistan’s Highest National Award in arts. In 1994, she also won the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Writer’s Award. She also took part as a member in the Advisory Committee of the late Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto on Women’s development in Pakistan. Sidhwa has keen interest in the social works related to needy children and women.

Hence she served as a voluntary secretary in the Mother’s and Children’s Home, a shelter for destitute women and children, in Lahore. In 1970, she was also a part of Women’s delegation to Iran and Turkey. And she also represented Pakistan at the Asian Women’s Conference at Alma-Ata, in the republic of Kazakhstan. In the academic front, she taught at Columbia University, University of Houston and in Mount Holyoke College. She was also the Fanny Hurst writer-in-residence at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s craft is writing, though she is an assistant professor of Creative writing at the University of Houston. Sidhwa prefers experimental individualistic writing rather than very methodical. She stresses that she was not a methodical writer like Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Dickens and Nayantara Sahgal, who follows a fixed routine methodical writing. In an interview with Asif Rahim Khan, Sidhwa says as:
When I’m writing a novel, if I happen to write ten days a month, that’s about the maximum. But when I do write, I write for almost 12 to 14 to 18 hours a day. You get onto a roll, and sometimes you just don’t want to stop, and then I can leave the novel for three months or six months. It happened while I was writing *Ice-Candy-Man*... I cannot just write continuously. After all the brain does get tired and emptied. And you don’t want to force yourself to write – so I write when I am able to write. (n.p)

Sidhwa’s novels were written with a genuine social purpose and her concerns range from the pre-independent social milieu to the partition days. Her themes diverge from traditional norms to the contemporary. Mostly her novels reflect a passion for history and it was evident in some of her major three novels such as *Ice-Candy-Man, The Crow Eaters* and *The Pakistani Bride*. Sidhwa examined a strong sense of place and community which she described as an aspect of Pakistan’s post-colonial identity. With these novels Sidhwa established herself as a leading English language novelist in Pakistan. Through the publication of the novel *An American Brat*, Sidhwa became global in the literary scenario.

Being a Pakistani writer, Sidhwa felt it is obligated to explain her Pakistani background to those unfamiliar with her Pakistani culture and society through her works. And this aspect of Sidhwa is reflected in most of her novels. She also underscores her Parsi culture in some of her works in a non-native language, in order to explain her native culture to the foreign audience for its worldwide recognition. Though Sidhwa deals with the
traumatic events of partition tragedy, she produced them with a subtle humor in her narration. As a born storyteller, her narrative style is unique and individualistic and it was also praised by the great Urdu poet Faiz Ahamed Faiz for Sidhwa’s comedy and shrewd observations of human behavior in her narration. To quote G.D.Barche:

She has a “natural inclination to see humor even in tragedies” - which critics generally agree is the mark of a brilliant storyteller. At another place, she is quoted as saying that being a member of a minority community in Pakistan, she could see things more objectively than others in the ultimate analysis though, it is her subjectivity, her sensitivity to the subject she has chosen to write on, together with her love for being precise yet subtle in her description of certain situations that she has written about, that makes the internationally acclaimed mix. It is true of her, and true of all writers of ‘merit’. The precision comes after a writer works at her or his craft, and should usually include a course on how to write on a subject without necessarily stirring a public controversy. (16)

The following select works of Sidhwa, which the researcher has taken for the present study, varies from their theme from one another. Being a multi-dimensional writer, Sidhwa covered various themes in her works which includes partition crisis, social idiosyncrasies, Parsi milieu, women’s plight and expatriate experiences. She revealed some degree of autobiographical elements in her five novels: Water, Ice-candy-Man, The Pakistani Bride, The Crow Eaters and An American Brat.
She incorporated some significant incidents from her own life and also from the lives of other people around her in her fictional writing.

One of the relevant features of Sidhwa’s novels was the perfect blending of fact and fiction in her narration. The novels, *The Crow Eaters* and *An American Brat* deal with the Parsi culture and their tradition. *Ice-Candy-Man* portrays the tragic event of Indian partition and its resultant violence in the sub-continent. And the novel *The Pakistani Bride* sheds light on the true story of a young Punjabi bride in the tribal territory. The novel *water* underlines the exploitation of women and the cruelties against the widows in the society. It is evident with her words about her novel *Ice-Candy-Man* in an interview with David Montenegro:

I started writing *Ice-Candy-Man* using the first person narrative voice of a child; I had to at once distance myself from the character of Lenny. Had I not done so, I would have been too self-conscious to write the circumstances of my life, but Lenny is a very different child. She is feisty and shrewd, when I was quiet and docile. I have based some characters, like Mother, Father, and Godmother, on people I’ve known intimately, but I’ve put them through all sorts of fictional situations. (12)

In her first published novel, *The Crow Eaters*, Sidhwa produces a humorous piece of fiction about a Parsi household. She describes the Zoroastrian religion of the Parsis and their customs, norms, rites and rituals through domestic settings in the novel. She highlights the loyalty and charity of the Zoroastrians which they held as the utmost duty in their life. She also depicts the cultural and religious norms followed by the Zoroastrian
community in marriages. Thus she expose about their strict ban on the interfaith marriage in this novel.

With her protagonist Faredoon Junglewalla, the novelist represents the Parsis’ neutral blinding, peaceful resettlement and their prosperity. She recites about the Parsi prayers, their God and Prophet and about their Fire temples. She also denotes about the Parsi rituals through Parsi marriage ceremony, death rites and with their Navjote ceremony. Sidhwa’s objective attitude as a writer was revealed, though she portrays her own community without any favours in this novel. It is rightly observed by Tariq Rahman in the following lines as:

Although Bapsi Sidhwa has had the rare courage and honesty to have written about the Parsi community in this unflattering way, the community stands symbolically for any group of people of any belief…. All this underlines the fact that Bapsi Sidhwa has the observation and the knowledge necessary for creating a work in the realistic mode of writing. But, as I said earlier, it is her honesty and intelligence which makes her work realistic. For, without honesty, one falsifies facts out of a desire to support some theory. Generally, people falsify reality for the sake of their creed, their community or their social group. If Bapsi had not been so stringently honest she would have presented only the best aspects of the Parsi community, thus creating a propagandist work and falsifying reality. (159-160)

In the plot of the novel *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa highlights the strong will and mental courage through her protagonist Zaitoon. This novel
portrays the story of a young Punjabi girl Zaitoon, who is adopted by a Kohistani tribesman Qasim, after her parents get killed in the partition riots. Because of his nostalgia for his tribal life, Qasim forcibly sent Zaitoon in marriage with a tribal man Sakhi, from the Kohistani Mountains. Zaitoon who could not adapt to the hard tribal life and the animalistic handlings of her husband, fled from the mountains to reach her home. Her daring struggle and willpower in her escape through the risky mountains express Sidhwa’s vision for women liberation from the brutal violence around her in the society.

An American Brat is an account of a Pakistani migrant to America and her expatriate experiences in the struggle between the native and foreign culture. In this novel, the author depicts the migrant issues which revolve around Feroza Ginwalla, a young Pakistani Parsi girl who is sent to the United States from Lahore by her family for a three months’ vacation, in order to broaden her outlook on life. The decision of Feroza’s parents in sending Feroza to America is the outcome of her fundamentalist behaviour in Pakistan because of the Zia rule. But Feroza’s process of migrant made her challenge her traditional ethos of her Parsi family.

In the western context, she gets diluted and enters into the phase of assimilation which results in her decision of marrying a non-Parsi, which was against her religion. It is because the Zoroastrians won’t allow mixed marriages in their faith. The Zoroastrians were very strict in their marriage norms that, Parsis who marry outside the community have to relinquish all the privileges enjoyed by the other Parsis, even entering into their Parsi Fire temples. But Feroza wants to break the traditional norms of her Zoroastrian
community and Sidhwa vividly exemplifies the migrant assimilation through her protagonist Feroza.

The novel *Water* exhibits the fatalism, inherited indifference, child marriage and forced prostitution prevailed in the Indian society in the 1930s. Sidhwa expose the exploitation of women and how they were dragged into the evil prostitution. The author sensibly depicts the miserable life of the widows in the widows’ ashram. The novel focuses the life of a little girl child Chuyia, who was made by her family to marry a sixty years old man at the age of six and suddenly get widowed at the age of eight.

Then she is forcibly transported to the widows’ ashram from her home, where she undergoes the cruel norms for a widow in the Hindu orthodox tradition. In the ashram, Chuyia slowly accepts her dreadful fate and becomes a catalyst for the change in the lives of the other widows. Sidhwa reveals the brutal attitudes of the patriarchal society, where men used women only as mere sex objects through the character of the widow-prostitute Kalyani, who get killed by the injustice laid by the society on her. Finally the novel ends on a tenuous note of hope on Chuyia’s escape from the ashram.

Sidhwa’s most reputed and vibrant novel *Ice-Candy-Man* captures the traumas and toils of the partition violence. The theme of the Indian partition becomes the core subject of this novel and records the communal riots and the human loss caused by the border division. To quote Tariq Rahman:

…without a word of protestation or preaching and without histrionics, Bapsi Sidhwa has written one of the most powerful indictments of the riots during the partition….this novel which
shows the human personality in stress as a result of the partition and shows a society responding to such a catastrophic event in the way societies do react: through sheer indifference, gossiping, engaging in the trivial and the malicious, making love and, as if through magic, killing, raping and going insane. This aspect of reality is often lost in novels which deal only with surface reality. Thus, through her deviation from the methods of traditional realism, Bapsi Sidhwa has written a truly authentic, multi-dimensional, novel about the partition. *Ice-Candy-Man* is one of the best works of Pakistani fiction and one of the best works of Pakistani fiction and one of the fine novels of this century. (167)

In this novel Sidhwa realistically renders the change in the harmony and friendship, caused by the communal hatred, between the major communities like Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs. Through this novel Sidhwa projects the psychological traumas endured by the citizens of the Indian subcontinent because of the division of the Indian subcontinent.

The author describes her own childhood days in Lahore during the gruesome partition days, and recreates the historical tragedy of the border division through the eyes of the eight years old child narrator Lenny. Through her child protagonist Lenny, who belongs to a sophisticated Parsi family, the author represents the neutral state of narration about the event of the Indian partition through her age and religious consciousness. Sidhwa focus on the role of Lenny’s Hindu ayah, to emphasize the crucial role of communal violence which trapped numerous women victims during the partition riots.
Sidhwa showcases the transformations with the people into brutal creatures who involved in the violence, because of the communal disgust. Sidhwa reveals this change in the human psyche during the violence through the character *Ice-Candy-Man*, who once a peace loving person turned completely down as a revenge seeking ruthless man. Thus he abducts Ayah along with an infuriated Muslim mob and keeps her in the Hira Mandi as a dancing girl. Finally she is rescued by Godmother and sent her to Amritsar from Hira Mandi. Ayah’s story represents numerous women victims, who were abducted and raped between the communities during the vehemence of partition. As Sudhir Kakar observes in his book *The Colour of Violence*, about the physiological imbalance of the people during the communal riots where women became easy targets of revenge:

The chief reason for the preponderance of specifically sexual violence in the partition riots in the north is that, as compared to many other parts of the country, the undivided Punjab was (and continues to be) a rather violent society. Its high murder rate is only one indication of a cultural endorsement of the use of physical or family honour. There is now empirical evidence to suggest that the greater the legitimation of violence in some approved areas of life, the more is the likelihood that force will also be used in other spheres where it may not be approved. In this so-called cultural spillover effect, there is a strong association between the level of nonsexual violence and rape, rape being partly a spillover from cultural norms condoning violent behavior in other area of life. (38)
In the following pages, the researcher attempt to make A Thematic Study on the Select Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa. To arrive at a justification of the title the researcher takes up the select novels of the author and evaluates them against the backdrop of her personal and professional life. Sidhwa vibrantly brings out multi themes through her creative works, where each theme is significant for study. Hence the researcher deals with the various major themes such as feminism, forced migratory problems, partition consequences and politics as projected by Sidhwa in her creative works.

This chapter justifies itself by introducing Bapsi Sidhwa against the backdrop of Pakistani English Literature, along with the contributions made by Sidhwa to the above mentioned literary field with her creative works. And it is followed by the projection of the author’s personality in her writing, highlighting the autobiographical elements which Sidhwa used in her fictional writings. It is then followed by the general survey of the novels selected and the thematic concerns with the novels. This introductory chapter spells out the thesis statement *A Thematic Study on the Select Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa* which the researcher has committed in her attempt to justify by an in depth thematic study.