Chapter – II

Fictional World Of Bapsi Sidhwa
Bapsi Sidhwa is now a significant voice in common wealth fiction. Pakistani Parsi women novelist, Sidhwa is known for her keen perception, a sensitive portrayal of characters diversify of themes, supple style, and above all, her punching sense of humor. She has published four novels so far *The Crow Eaters* (1978); *The Bride* (1983); *Ice – Candy Man* (1988) and *An American Brat* (1994)

According to David Montenegro

> Thematically, Sidhwa’s novel are rooted in the continent where she was born and bought up simultaneously she possess a cosmopolitan appeal which readers can feel as a palpable presence beneath the characters and tales of a particular time and locale and herein lies her charm (Montenegro 1991: 58)

Her first novel *The Crow Eaters* was issued in two imprints in Britain Jonathan Cape in 1980 and St. Martin’s press in 1982. In India it was published by Sangam Books in 1980. The novel hilariously depicts the lives and fortunes of the Junglewallas, a Parsi family in British India. The novel was criticized by some critics and members of the Parsi community for presenting an unfair and rather a ribald picture of the community. In her preface to the novel Sidhwa has tried to explain her point of view. Expressing her admiration for her community she remarks:

> Because of a deep – rooted admiration for my community and an enormous affection for its few eccentricities – this work of
satirical fiction has been a labour of love. The nature of satire being to exaggerate, the incidents in the book do not reflect at all upon the integrity of a community whose scrupulous honesty and sense of humor are renowned. (CE 1980: Preface)

The novel is humorous and farcical at times, with occasional serious touches, accurately portraying the society it is set against. It has a somewhat loose, episodic structure. Much of its comic energy and exuberance derive from a string of gags or comic episodes.

However, the novel has memorable characters individual but not typical. With its sprightly dialogue and ironical tone, the novel evocatively presents not only a particular time and locale, but also encompasses a people with deep historical consciousness the novel ends with the threat of Partition looming large in the background.

The title of the book *The Crow Eaters* itself is translation of a derogatory term used for Parsis who are stereo typed as being excessively loud and talkative. It depicts the Parsi mind, their social behavior, their customs, and traditions and their rituals. The writer firmly believes that the incidents in the novel do not reflect at all upon the integrity of a community.

On the contrary, the reading of this text enriches one’s knowledge of the Parsi community. The writer herself is much pleased with the portrayal of her own community in the novel. In spite of her good intentions behind the
portrayal of the community in this novel, she had to encounter her own community’s hostility. According to K. Nirupa Rani

The Novel is about Faredoon Junglewall a man of distinction and listed in the Zarathust calendar of great men and women, and whose motto in life is the sweetest thing in the world is your need (1996: 153)

Through this narcissistic personality, Sidhwa takes us into heart of the Parsi community, portraying, its varied customs and traits. It is a straight narration without any twists in the plot and we travel through the book without muck mental strain.

At the age of twenty three along with his wife Putli, mother-in-law Jerbanoo and an infant daughter, Fardoon settles in Lahore. His family expands and with his pragmatic intelligence and crime of deliberately setting property on fire for claiming insurance money, he becomes a man of great consequence among the Parsis. People travel thousands of miles to see him in Lahore, especially as they wish to escape the tight spots they have got themselves into. This successful worldly man encounters disappointment and personal loss in the death of his eldest son and a self exiled second son. Within this straight conventional theme Sidhwa flings her feminine imagination with incongruous humor to talk about serious issues like national politics, fraud, death, dealing mother-in-law, Parsi superstitions, faiths, marriages, rites of death, romance, birth, multifaceted activities and forays to London.
The novel describes the social mobility of a Parsi family, the Junglewalla, during the British Raj in the early twentieth century. The description of Faredoon, nick named Freddy’s exploits is not just historical fiction but has a strong autobiographical element also Sidhwa belong to a pioneering family (the Bhandaras) of Parsi settlers in North India and was reared on tales both fictional and otherwise of entrepreneurial skills of the elders of her community. Wealth and status is Freddy’s ultimate aim which he achieves at any cost. Here Sidhwa’s mode of perception is ironic. Freddy’s fame and wealth are not virtuous but tinged with self promotion. He has developed a philanthropic image to increase his business contacts and appears selfless. Earlier Freddy amasses capital by the dubious practice of setting his shop on fire, after hiding his goods in a hired godown, to claim insurance money; he prospered in Lahore because of sycophancy toward the British officials in the guise of public relations. In all such incidents, Sidhwa’s tone is not moralistic but ironic. There is protective irony in the novel, which balances personal inadequacies against the contradictions of life itself. Novy Kapadia says:

The use of irony, caricature of buffoonery prevents the novel from becoming either excessively laudatory or too disparaging (1987: 94)

The novel is not just about the social mobility and values of a man and his family but also about the movement of the times. The Nationalist movement and the Parsis’ ambivalent attitude towards it, is also humorously portrayed. The Parsis are shown as cultural hybrids Makarand Paranjpe says:
The novel derives its humour from a blend of fantasy, scatology, physical and verbal incongruity and caricature (1987: 89)

Sidhwa writes in the tradition of Aristophanes, Fielding and the earlier novels of V.S. Naipaul, a mixture of force and irony which arouses laughter and also conveys serious themes. Sidhwa’s vision is comic as she portrays the vitality of life in mother-in-law Jerbanoo, wife Putli, son Behram and his wife Tanya and the paranoid second son, Yazdi. The novelists’ penetrative insights in presenting the marginalized Parsi milieu make *The Crow Eaters* both entertaining and educative.

*The Crow Eaters* is a loosely constructed narrative which beings with an extended flashback. Freddy, now middle aged and prosperous, tells the story of his early days to a captive audience consisting of his seven children and some neighboring kids. He tells how at the end of the nineteenth century, at the age of twenty four, he embarked on a journey to Punjab, with his wife and mother-in-law, how he struggled many years with his mother-in-law for control over his house hold, how through a fraudulent insurance scheme in which he set fire to his shop and frightened his mother-in-law, he become both the master of his house and rich man and how he rose to power and eminence in the community with hard work and craft. This flashback continues through the first seventeen chapters, roughly the third of the book.
In the second portion of the novel, the focus shifts from Freddy to his children. Two daughters, Hutoxy and Ruby, are married off, and the third Yasmin too gets married later. The son receives more importance. Yazdi falls in love with Rosy Watson, and Anglo-Indian with troubled family background. Freddy dissuades his son from this involvement, reminding him of the oath that Parsi took (to marry only within the community) when they came to India many centuries ago. Meanwhile Rosy is forced into prostitution and shockingly, Freddy himself sleeps with her. When Freddy tells Yazdi about this, Yazdi is shattered. Soli, Freddy’s eldest son suddenly grows sick and dies fulfilling the astrological predictions of the mysterious Gopal Krishnan. This alters Yazdi completely. He renounces the world, using his monthly allowance to help the poor and homeless.

The third and final section belongs to Behram Junglewalla or Billy, the youngest son, who not only carries on Freddy’s business but goes on to become one of the richest men in India. Most of the section deals with Billy’s attempt to find a wife how he courts and marries Tanya, the daughter of the enormously wealthy Easy Moneys of Bombay, their honeymoon and marital conflicts and Billy’s total domination over his wife. An interesting interlude is Freddy’s trip to England with wife and mother-in-law. The novel ends on hot days in June 1940, with Freddy’s peaceful death at the age of sixty-five.

Faredoon Junglewalla the protagonist has to face some confrontation with his old mother-in-law Jerbanoo. This conformation between mother-in-law
and son-in-law serves the writer’s purpose of fun and comic situation throughout the novel. Novy Kapadia puts it thus:

*The Crow Eaters* first published in Pakistan in 1978, describes the social nobility of a Parsi family, the Junglewallas, during the British Raj in the early twentieth country In just one generation they increased their business from a single general merchant sore in Lahore to a chain of stores, in several North Indian cities and license for *handling all traffic of goods between Peshawar and Afghanistan*. It also traces the attempt of Parsis, migrating from the west coast and settling in the more salubrious climate of North Indian Cities, in the late nineteenth and the turn of this century. This is the hallmark of Bapsi Sidhwa’s work, deceptively Perceptive, she accurately depicts historical facts interwoven with satirical fiction and lampoon, which aptly recreates the Parsi milieu and yet makes for delight full reading.(1987:104)

The authenticity of Bapsi Sidhwa’s work is evident in her experiences in Karachi, and Lahore where she continues to live. Her family, the Bhandaras, a leading business family of Lahore for generations, had migrated there in the last century, so Bapsi Sidhwa belongs to the third generation of Parsi settlers in North Indian Cities and was reared on tales both fictional and otherwise, on the entrepreneurial skills of the elders of her community. Hence her description of the exploits of Faredoon Junglewalla and his
family is not mere fictional or fractional or historical but mingling of all of them with autobiographical elements.

Faredoon Junglewalla, the protagonist, is a shrewd man who exploits his relations with the British officers and others to his maximum benefits. The novel begins with a note of praise for him:

Faredoon Junglewalla, Freddy for short was a strikingly handsome, dulcet–Voiced adventurer with so few scruples that he not only succeeded in carving a comfortable niche in the world for himself but he also earned the respect and gratitude of his entire community. When he died at sixty–five, a majestic grey–haired patriarch, he attained the rare distinction of being locally listed in the Zarathusti calendar of Great Men and Women. (CE 1980: 18)

His character is interesting as well as influential. His likes with the British officials are deep–rooted. He is gifted with a type of wonderful progressive mind in every respect. His progressive and pragmatic outlook keeps him on the top in business, politics, money making, religion and social service. He mints money, by unfair means and strangely enough spends a part of it on charity, being active in every field of human activity; he is invited to the party hosted by His Excellency, the Governor. He also visits brothels to enjoy his sensual pleasures. He is the Man who would not hesitate to kill his mother – in law Jerbanoo for money by way of insurance. Unfortunately Jerbanoo’s survival of the time of pre-planned fire incident is a big loss to
him. He never fails to exploit every available opportunity in life to promote his own interest.

As his skills grow and his strategies work, he becomes a man of consequence among the Parsis. This is the reason why people travel thousands of miles to see him in Lahore, especially if they wish to escape tight stops they have got themselves into. He has zest for life and existence. Bapsi Sidhwa offers a fairly lengthy description of her hero Freddy:

He had a longish, nobly contoured, firm chinned face. His slender nose was slightly bumped below the bridge, and large and heavy lidded, his hazel eyes contained a veiled mystic quality that touched people’s hearts. His complexion was light and glowing. (CE 1980: 23)

Faredoon speaks the last words following a query by his son in law Bobby Kartak about the future of the Parsis after independence. He gives a prophetic reply:

We will stay where we are … let Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or whoever rule. What does it matter? The sun will continue to rise and the sun continues to set in their arises …..!

(CE 1980: 283)

Bapsi Sidhwa has portrayed Freddy’s character with much care. His dynamic personality and strong determination makes him what he is when
he dies, he is fortunate enough to be listed in the Zarathusti Calendar of great men and woman.

Freddy’s character has some drawbacks for instance, he tries to acquire money by unfair means but on the whole his character is quite impressive. He is really dynamic and enterprising like most at the members of his Parsi community.

Another typical trait of Freddy’s is that he has a deep – rooted distrust of the national movement. He exhorts his children to be loyal to the British. If anyone goes against the wishes of the British, he would be worthy of denunciation. DadabhaiNaoroji is to him nothing but, that misguided Parsee from Bombay who has had temerity to launch.

Something called congress and keeps shouting off his mouth like a lunatic, “Quit India! Quit India! (CE 1980: 283)

Freddy is obviously perturbed by the trend of events in India:

He is stirred by (the) talk of rebellion, self rule, and Independence from the British and most of all by the role of a few Parsis (like Naroji) in all this (CE 1980: 282)

Such people, he believes, are making a monkey of themselves.
While other communities will benefit by breaking the country, he feels, the Parsis will be wanted nowhere. Asked where then the Parsees will go in the event of the Independence, he says:

Nowhere ..... We will stay where we are... let Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, or whoever, rule. What does it matter? The sun will continue to rise and the sun will continue to set in their areas .......! (CE 1980: 283)

This necessarily brief and sketchy account of the Parsee’s role in Indian politics is sufficient to make us inquisitive about the Parsee’s view on Indian politics and politicians as found in their novels. The Parsee’s decisive influence through their chosen leaders was confined to the period 1885 – 1915.

The community developed later apprehensions and distrust towards the congress politics. These Parsis who became especially active in the national movement, were opposed by the majority of the community as traitors to the British and, consequently, to their own community. Right from the day their settlement in India the Parsees were strictly loyal to every ruling authority, keeping themselves generally out of tension and conflicts between various groups and powers in the state. It is for this reason that even Naoroji when he vehemently advocated secular nationalism, was called *hypocrite*. Freddy’s thinking is in line with that of most other members of his community.
Through his narcissistic personality Sidhwa takes us in to the heart of the Parsi Community, portraying, its varied customs and traits. Novy Kapadia says that:

Sidhwa turns autobiography into art by her clever use of irony. The use of irony prevents the novel from becoming either laudatory or disparaging, an inherent danger when an author writes about his or her own community (Kapadia 1987: 114)

It is right that inherent danger of community can create not only short coming but also achievements of typical kind. According to the Karachi Herald of May 1987 'This novel made Bapsi Sidhwa the Parsi whom, Other Parsi love to hate.' (May 1987).

Sidhwa was disliked because she revealed the communities secrets to the world. *The Crow Eaters* breaks new ground as for the first time in literature, the Parsi community is portrayed.

As we appreciate Freddy’s achievements, doubts are raised about it. About his career Rani Nirupa said:

He not only succeeded in carving a comfortable niche in the world for himself but also earned the respect and gratitude of his entire community. When he died at sixty five a majestic grey – haired patriarch; he attained the rare distinction of being

The achievement is stupendous, yet doubts are raised about it. Freddy’s fame and wealth are portrayed to have dubious roots. The maintenance of identity, in spite of being a microscopic minority, of which Freddy is so proud, is portrayed as more public relations, boarding on sycophancy. The sycophancy towards British is shown as a “need to exist” neither lauded nor condemned. There is a protective irony in the novel, balancing personal inadequacies against the contradictions of life itself.

Hence irony is also a mode of acceptance a type of philosophy. Parsi learned to realize that only loyalty to the ruler generates that political climate in which they could remain undisturbed as a minority. The only condition for their loyalty was that they were not hindered in the practice of their religion. Hence the exaggerated servility of Freddy his son Billy and other Parsi towards the British is revealed as an act to ensure legal security, peace and economic prosperity with ironic perspective, the flattery of the Parsis is humorously revealed in the novel, but it also expresses an underlying identity crises and quest for security amongst the community as a whole. In the novel many characters of the Parsi community such as Freddy Junglewala and his family, Mr. Toddywalla, the baronet Khan Bahadur, Sir Noshirwan Jeewanji Easy Money desire to identify themselves closely with English themselves. Being a shrewd observer of human fallibility Sidhwa reflects this identity search in several situations and aspects in The Crow Eaters.
A striking manifestation of this identity crises in the dying Faredoon’s vehement protests against the nationalist movements and exhortations to his offspring to remain loyal to the British Empire. Dadabhai Naoroji is referred to as that misguided Parsi from Bombay.

The majority of the Parsi community shared the views expressed by a dying Freddy on the freedom struggle.

He utters ideas. People like Gandhi pick them up- People like Vallabhbhai Patel and Bose and Jinnah and Nehru …. And that other fools in Karachi, Adil Mama. What does he do? He scarifies his business and abandons his family to the vicissitudes or poverty. He wears a Gandhi Cap, handloom shirt and the transparent diaper they call a dhoti. He goes in and out of jail as if he were visiting a nautch – girl at Hiramandi! Where will it get him? Nowhere! If there are many rewards in all this, who will reap that? Not Mama! Not DadabhaiNaoriji ! Making Monkeys of themselves and of us! Bitting the hand that feeds! I tell you we are betrayed by our own kind by our own blood! The fools will break up the country. The Hindus will have one part, the Muslims the other, Sikhs, Bengalis, Tamils and God knows who else will have their share; and they won’t want you!(CE 1980: 282)
The apprehensions of Freddy are not the figment of a dying man’s fevered imagination but based on social reality. However, displaying remarkable adaptability, the Parsis on realizing the inevitability of Independence altered their allegiances. With dying Man’s perceptiveness Faredoon hints at the necessity of changing allegiances. Following a query by his son-in-law Bobby Katrak about the future of the Parsis after independence, Faredoon makes a prophetic reply:

We will stay where we are … Let Hindu, Muslim, Sikhs or whoever rule. What does it matter? The sun will continue to rise and to set in its axis. (CE 1980: 283)

The novelist has fully brought out the Parsi attitude, before the Britishers come to India; they were loyal to the rulers of Sanjana. With British Raj they dignified themselves with English people and now they will identify with the present rulers. Novy Kapadia says:

The Crow Eaters is a rambunctious mixture of gentle perceptiveness and wild barnyard humour. The satire of Bapsi Sidhwa, though sharp is never castigating and censorious like that of Swift, but a genial tolerance of the foibles of a community, full of paradoxes with an identity crisis caused by their minority status and ideas of loyalty to the ruling authorities (1996: 133)
Novelist’s tone that both shocks and entertains shows that Freddy developed his philanthropic image to increase his business contacts and to appear selfless and counter the impression of being toddy of the British. Charity for Freddy is neither a pocketful of poses nor is it totally philanthropic. Bapsi Sidhwa uses irony to create humour and to present the ambivalent attitude of Freddy toward charity. So in the part of characterization she uses an extraordinary device Freddy’s character is life like rounded and realistic one. Taking Freddy’s character as a mouth piece of Parsi community, Sidhwa pinpoints their identity crisis, their paradoxes and attitudes towards British and native Indian.

Knowledge of English education in a Christian missionary school was another important consideration not because of superior instruction or knowledge but as it offered a chance for rapid social nobility. The interaction of two cultures naturally produces tensions when for instance Putli, the wife of Freddy, resist change:

> What revolted Putli most was the demand that she, a dutiful and God – fearing wife, must walk a step ahead of her husband. She considered this hypocritical and pretensions and most barbarous. (CE 1980: 185)

Putli adapted to what she considered new fangled customs, when she and her husband were invited to the formal tea parties on the gracious dawn of the government house. She is cajoled to these functions by her husband for whom it is an opportunity for advancing contacts and consolidating
friendships. The Parsi milieu of Putli had a different value system, which the author highlights:

Deep rooted in the tradition of a wife walking three paces behind her husband, their department was as painful to Putli as being marched naked in public (CE 1980: 185)

So, Putli’s character is traditional bound. She doesn’t like to change with time. Sidhwa makes her character life like. Using Putli as her mouth piece Sidhwa tries to focus Parsi orthodox women and their attitudes towards life.

As regards adapting customs of the British the novel shows the gradual assimilation of British value systems in the Parsi milieu. Pulti tries to preserve certain customs like walking behind her husband. However her daughter Yasmin after marriage ignores such notions as old fashioned and vehemently protests at the servile attitude of woman.

Anyway it’s stupid to walk behind your husband like an animal on a leash oh mother! Hasn’t papa been able to modernize you yet? (CE 1980:187)

Putli, the earlier generation Parsi, is scandalized by Yasmin preceding her husband down the steps and into the carriage and her seeming relationships of equality with her husband. Initially adapting the manners and customs of the ruling colonial power was gradual and Putli’s inability to understand change is seen as the generation gap. However the scope of the novel is
large, it portrays the reality of a whole family and its network of relationship, spreading out of encompasses a wide variety of human being. Bapsi Sidhwa portrays the changing generations in the Junglwala family. The new generation, with their increasing economic contacts with the British, like Billy’s scrap iron deal, becomes increasingly westernized. This is best exemplified by the life style of the youngest son Billy and his fashionable wife Tanya.

They made friends with modern couple equally determined to break with tradition it amounted to not more than a fanatical faith in the ways of English society in India and a disciple’s knock of imitation they were not of the masses, this young crowd. If their wealth did not set them apart their ability to converse in English certainly did. They were utterly ashamed of traditional habits and considered British customs, however superficially observed however trivial, exemplary.

(CE 1980: 242)

Most important aspect which Sidhwa portrays is Parsis’ maintaining of group identity by their dress. But even in the matter of dress generational change is evident. Freddy and his family take pride in their traditional mode of dress. Whenever Freddy goes to Government House for formal parties or to pay homage to the British Empire he would consciously be:
Rigged out in a starched white coat wrap that fastened with bows at the neck and waist and crisp white pyjamas and turban. (CE 1980: 25)

His wife Putli and his Mother-In-Law Jerbanoo never appear in public:

Without “Mathabanas” white kerchiefs wound around the hair to fit like skull caps. The holy thread circling third waist was austerely displayed and sacred undergarments [“Sudra”] worn beneath short blouse, modestly aproned their sari – wrapped hips. (CE 1980: 16)

Here description of Parsi dress and its value system is given to highlight the Parsi custom by Sidhwa. The next generation of Parsi Behram and Tanya slowly discard the traditional dress. Tanya, for instance, still wears a sari, but it is more revealing.

She became daring in her attire and tried her sari in a way that accentuated the perfection of her body. She took to wearing a little make-up and outlined the astonishing loveliness of her lips. (CE 1980: 243)

However in the form of dress even Behram is still traditional. He urges and argues with Tanya, not to reveal her midriff so glaringly or to look boldly and mix freely with other man, as the intentions are misconstrued. Even in the relationships between man and woman, Faredoon and later his son

Another aspect of identity crisis is the abnormal tendency amongst the Parsis to suspect and mistrust is exemplified by the escapist behavior of Yazdi. He is aggrieved at the clearly visible commercialism and sycophancy in the Parsi.

A human dimensions to his revolt is also introduced as his father, refuses him permission to marry a childhood sweetheart, Rosy Watson. Yazdi takes charity to extreme. He initially returns from school barefoot having given his shoes to an orphan in his class. He is transferred to a boarding school in Karachi. There he becomes a drop-out a modern day hippy, drifting about city, Squandering his allowance and fees on beggar sand sleeping on park benches and pavements.

He sought solace by assisting the lepers outside Karachi. Yazdi uses his share of money to feed dying children and buy medicine for sick. He becomes a follower of Mazdak the first communist. The characterization of Yazdi adds to the richness and variety of the novel as it shows all Parsis are not types, nor do they have stereotype reactions. However there is a structure flaw in the presentation of Yazdi. For The Crow Eaters Novy Kapadia rightly says: The Crow Eaters is a very compact novel and through it shows a network of human relationship and reality of a whole family (1987: 134)
The title, *The Crow Eaters*, refers to the Parsis meritorious ability to talk ceaselessly at the top of their voice like an assembly of crows. It is taken from an idiom which belongs to the subcontinent: *Anyone who talks too much is said to have eaten crows* so the title is quite revealing of theme and of major characters and their attitudes of life.

Bapsi Sidhwa here presents the hilarious saga of a Parsi family which is not just the social mobility and value system of a man and his family but the movement of the times. Her most perceptive insights are in presenting the marginal personality aspect with the Parsi milieu. Most Parsis in the novel are shown as cultural hybrids, living and sharing intimately in the cultural life traditions, languages, moral codes and political loyalties of two distinct people which are never completely interpenetrated and fused.

So, Bapsi Sidhwa has tried her hands to portray the realistic picture of the life of Parsi family and their problems to adjust with other communities. She successfully pinpoints the Parsi paradoxes, their identity crises, Problems created by generation gap with her scholarly use of irony and gentle comedy.

The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 is one of the greatest tragedies, the magnitude, ambit and savagery of which compels one to search for the larger meaning of events, and to come to terms with lethal energies that set off such vast conflagrations. Bapsi Sidhaw’s third novel *Ice-Candy Man* examines the inexorable logic of partition as an offshoot of Fundamentalism sparked by hardening communal attitude. First published in 1988 London, this novel is set in pre partition India in Lahore. My attempt
here is to examine how Bapsi Sidhwa portrays the communal discord through the eyes of an innocent Parsee-girl and the theme of partition in *Ice-Candy Man*.

There have been a number of novels written on the horrors of the partition holocaust on both sides of the Red Cliff Line. Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) and Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) present the Indian perception of the traumatic experiences, while Mehr Nigar Masroor’s *Shadows of the Time* (1987) presents the Pakistani version of the tragic events, though both the versions are free from religious bias and written more in agony and compassion than in anger. *Ice Candy Man* also belongs to this genre of the partition novels.

What distinguishes Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy Man* is the prism of Parsi sensitivity through which the cataclysmic event is depicted. It is, so far, the only novel written by a Parsi on the theme of partition. It is widely admired in Asia and abroad. It was named a New York Times notable book for 1991. During the same year it received Germany’s Liberator Award. When the novel was originally published in London it appeared under the title Sidhwa had intended *Ice-Candy Man*. In the 1991 American edition, the title was changed to *Cracking India* because the publisher thought American would misunderstand ‘Ice Candy’ and confuse it with drugs. Unfortunately, the new title diminishes Ice Candy Man’s centrality and blurs his symbolic role.

*Ice Candy Man* is the second novel on partition by a woman author; the other novel being *Sunlight on a Broken Column* by Attia Hosain. Both these
sensitive women writers share similar perspectives on the calamities of partition. Both stress a similar vulnerability of human understanding and life caused by the horrors of partition which relentlessly divided friends, families, lovers and neighbors. Dealing with the theme of partition of India by non-Partisan writer as Sidhwa being a Parsee, doesn’t belong to either of the two communities which perpetrated mayhem on each other Subhash Chandra states:

> It is likely to be more neutral and objective account of the traumatic event of partition which caused divisiveness disharmony mutual suspicion, hardening and then turning into hostility of feeling of friendliness and good neighborliness and the eventual holocaust (1996: 176)

While Attia Hosain doesn’t go deep into the bloody details of the massacres, Sidhwa depicts the events overtaking the partition in their naked cruelty and ruthlessness. It is a bold attempt on the part of a woman writer to take up a theme which is different from traditional issues of romantic involvements and the sentimental stuff Subhash Chandra says:

> The novel becomes a significant testament of a geocentric view of reality in which the feminine psyche and experiences are presented with a unique freshness and aplomb (Ibid: 177)

In both *The Crow Eater* and *The Bride* partition has been important, but not the shaping force and as in her earlier novels, Sidhwa chooses a
marginalized narrator – a child, a female, a Parsi, a victim of polio – a narrator who is so marginalized that in less skilled authorized hands she could easily have vanished off the page altogether. Sidhwa uses a narrator to tell the tale a precocious eight year old Parsi girl Lenny narrates the story of her changing world with sophistication and wonder. With the wonder of a child she observes social change and human behavior nothing interesting side lights, seeking and listening to opinions and occasionally making judgments Novy Kapadia says:

Lenny is like the persona that Chaucer adopts in this Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, rendering credibility by belongs almost a part of the readers’ consciousness. Her childish innocence is like the seeming naïve display of Chaucer’s persona, a source of sharp irony (1996: 35)

Sidhwa treats a historical moment as horrifying as partition without morbidity, pedanticism or censure. So Anita Desai points out that:

Lame Lenny, Sidhwa’s autobiographically based heroine can be related to Oscar of Gunther Grass’s Tin Drum. (1988: 29)

Sidhwa uses first person narrative technique in the novel by narrator Lenny who refers to herself as ‘I’ using this method Sidhwa makes the story of novel more realistic and more credible.
The childish perspective in many of the works of the writers has been used to challenge rationalism of the adult world. There are books about boys growing up. The best example is *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain where the hero comes to knowledge about himself and his country. Another such novel is R.K. Narayan’s *Swami and Friends* where Swami comes to an awareness of himself and his family and his culture at the same time about political events. However, Sidhwa’s novel is unique as it established the girl child’s point of view. Told in the present time at the book’s beginning the history of the partition struggle becomes secondary, the human struggle foremost, the narrator who is recovering from polio announces *My world is compressed* taking full advantage of this limited view. Bapsi Sidhwa relates through the eye of her child narrator the partition story from a domestic standpoint, and more significantly from a feminine view Subhash Chandra says:

> By making Lenny the narrator of the novel, the novelist lends weight and validity to the feminine perspective on the nature of surrounding reality (1996: 177)

Even though Lenny belongs to the upper class she experiences all level of society, and being a clever observer, she provides a variegated account of life in the homes and on the streets of Lahore. Robert L. Ross states:

> Lenny’s naiveté her privileged position and her religious background lend her version of partition a quality that order novels about this tempestuous period in Indo - Pakistan history lack. The momentous events leading to partition and the
aftermath are constructed incrementally through the child narrator’s point of view, as she repeats overhead adult conversations, tells of strange sights and sometimes even misrepresents or misinterprets situation (1996: 183)

The novel shows in the beginning the committal attitude of the Parsi community towards the flux in which the various communities of India found themselves in the beginning of the twentieth century, it distills the love hate relationship of the Hindus and Muslims through the consciousness and point of view of Lenny. Ice Candy Man gives us a glimpse into events of the turmoil on the Indian sub-continent but the historical truth is only a back drop of the novel and personal fate of the Ice Candy Man the focus. Ice – Candy Man is a close associate and admirer of an eighteen year old Ayah, Shanta, working in a Parsi household to look after Lenny that we come to know of the action of the novel and the seriousness of the narration is marred because of this. At this point K. Nirupa Rani says:

It is an adult that speaks through the child memory and keeps the reader on guard and creates a sense of impressions that the child is capable of reminiscing (1996: 122)

The parallel theme in the novel is the slow awakening of the child protagonist to sexuality and pains and pleasures of the grown up and to the particular historical disaster that, overwhelms her world. There is an element of exaggeration in all instances with regard to characterization and imagination Alamgir Hasmi says:
Ice Candy Man concerns the partition events of 1947 and is more interesting for its characterizations, developing narrative techniques and the child’s point of view then what it actually has to tell about the event. (1990: 135)

The novel opens with Ayah surrounded by her thirteen admirers Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs etc among these many admirers one is the Ice-Candy man. The novel is tilted after this man of the group. In a way a sequel to The Crow Eaters, Ice Candy Man in its opening passages draws a similar picture of variegated Asian life, takes the same delight in the comic spectacle of human kind, and stresses the familiar devotion to community. But gradually the specter of violence only possibility for Faredoon and his group, moves to the forefront. Still community is to be guarded, treasured, preserved, no matter how often the evil an invisible forces of the outside world threaten to dissolve it. In this novel, the unseen threats are manifested through the endless talk and rumors about what the political leaders are doing, then the danger turns real once independence and partition are inevitable. Several communities interplay in the novel. Lenny’s immediate and extended family; Ayah and her circle of admirers the Hindu neighbors; the Muslim villagers; the Sikhs.

As the novel progresses, each group is affected by partition, the historical forces that encroaches on their lives and over which they have no controls. Lenny’s family moves apart, Ayah’s circle of admirers disintegrates and they turn on one another, the Hindu neighbors flee to India, and the Muslim
villagers are massacred. Even though *Ice Candy Man* depicts the tearing apart of each community that is lovingly established the outcome remains the same as that of *The Crow Eaters*. Simply, life goes on, because community is fluid and can be reformed again and again. Lenny’s house resumes its routine Ayah the innocent is possibly restored, and the once villain Ice candy Man becomes a truly harmless fellow. In Sidhwa’s quest for the continuation of community even the destroyers are spared, for the narrator watches Ice candy Man is his disgrace and admits that, My heart not only melts it evaporates when I breathe out leaving me faint with pity (ICM 1988: 288) and she takes comfort in the fact that Even the guard lets down his guard (ICM 1988: 288)

The personification of evil and the present menace to community, Ice Candy Man emerges as a feckless kind of villain. It is no small wonder that the narrator Lenny, who has succumbed to his charm and inadvertently betrayed her beloved Ayah, still pities him. Sidhwa has said that Ice Candy Man represents the remote politicians who decide the fate of millions their opinions shifting with the winds, their motives sometimes noble and sometime selfish. Robert L. Ross rightly states

Ice Candy man as a metaphor for those who wield power provides an inventive and indirect way to explore the role the politician played in the bloody birth of Pakistan and the new India (1996: 75)
Ice –Candy Man changes, slipping from one role to another. When Ice Candy sales plummet in cold weather he turns into a birdman who takes pride in dealing his customers at another point, he becomes telephone posing as a holy man with a direct line to the almighty and apologizing to his clients that Allah has been busy of late….. you know all this Indian Independence business…(ICM 1988: 107)

First a seller of an Asian Luxury that melts and has no sale stance, then a trickster with flying things, then a holy pretender Ice candy Man weaves in and out of the action to take up at last the despicable profession of pimping the role of ice –candy man is central and he is a key of all events. Some time he quotes national leaders and does a poetic mould confessing that he belongs to kotha. Ice Candy Man is life like and round character in the novel.

When Ayah becomes a riot victim it is Ice-Candy Man that saves her and rehabilitates her in Hiramandi. Finally Rodabia, God Mother saves Ayah and we come to know that she has left for Amritsar to be with her parents, leaving lone torn Ice Candy Man to his fate that forcefully marries her and also changes her name from Shanta, a Hindu name into Mumtaz, a Pakistani or Muslim name. Ice Candy man complimenting the vulnerable Ayah says:

She has the voice of an angel and the grace and rhythm of a goddess. You should see her dance. How she moves  (ICM 1988: 247) and he goes into a poetic outburst Princes pledge their lives to celebrate her celebrated face. (ICM 1988: 247)
As one of the critics from London, Anatol Live states:

Ice Candy Man is great for its enormously refreshing challenge to the prim and stilted norm of modern Indian fiction (March 1988)

So Ice Candy Man turns into the unlikely symbol of those who were making history or at least thought they were.

But real history stems from the people and its pieces come from the communities they form. If only it were possible for those communities to embrace all human kind, the way Ayah’s circle did at one time: Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, and Parsi. Then the circle might enlarge to include Christian, Jew, Black, and White, male, and female, indeed all the polarities that divide and destroy. For a time Ayah’s beauty and innocence broke down the barriers, thus letting us imagine a future when the larger community will attain the oneness of the smaller community. This is the moral vision of Ice candy Man.

That so profound a vision emerges from Lenny proves much of Sidhwa’s skill as a novelist. She not only tells the complex story of partition through the eyes of a child, but also relates it in the present tense. The story is told in increments through overhead conversations, wide eyed observation, misunderstanding of adult actions, child like conduction. At this point Robert L. Ross states:
Gradually Lenny loses her naiveté but never her innocence – the basis of her moral vision, which is reinforced by the second narrator, the one behind, the scenes who speaks occasionally at the end of chapter. (1996: 76)

This shadowy double, which represents experience in the larger world, appears for the first time at the end of chapter when she asks: Is that when I learn to tell tales. At the conclusion of chapter 10 the experienced narrator speaks more fully:

I wasn’t until some years later – when I realized the full scope and dimension of the massacres that I comprehended the concealed nature of the ice lurking deep beneath the hypnotic and dynamic felinity of Gandhi’s non-violent interior. (ICM 1988: 96)

The second narrator emerges again as chapter 20 closes, blending easily into the child’s recollection of the day she sees a picture of Jinnah’s Parsi wife and comments:

But didn’t Jinnah too, die of a broken heart and today, forty years later, in filling of Gandhi’s and Mount Baltons life, is books by British and Indian scholars, Jinnah, who for a decade was known as “Ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity “ caricatured and portrayed as a monster (ICM 1988: 171)
After these comments the sub-narrator quotes Sarojni Naidu’s praise of Jinnah as *pre-eminently rational and practical*.

It is appropriate that this narrator does not make her presence known until Lenny has established her own authority, then, by lending the child’s ‘compressed world’ the resonance of an experienced voice, she enlarges and interprets the moral vision of community that permits the novel. Sidhwa present unique narrative technique with the use of Lenny’s remarks and that of sub-narrator’s presentation.

As the action of the novel unfolds we confront a pattern of communal amity – of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. But the intimation of an imminent death and destruction lurk in the symbolic significance of Lenny’s nightmares at the break of dawn. In one of these nightmares she faces on immaculate Nazi soldier coming to get her on his motor cycle. Another nightmare that she recalls from her childhood which is more telling and suggestive is that *Men in uniforms quality slice of a child’s arm here, a leg there.* (ICM 1988: 21) She feels as if the child in the nightmare is herself she pictures her god mother as stroking her head as they *dismember* her, she says: I feel no pain, only an abysmal sense of loss and a chilling horror that no one is concerned by what’s happening (ICM 1988: 22)

Jagdev Singh points out:

The nightmare symbolizes the impending vivisection of India which was as cruel as the dismemberment of that child. Lenny’s lack of pain, however, is suggestive of her community’s indifference on account of
its aloofness from the religion – political convulsion. (1996: 166)

Still another nightmare that Lenny has is that of a zoo lion breaking loose and merciless, mauling her’

The hungry lion, eating across Lawrence road to Bird wood road, prowls from the rear of the house to the bedroom door, and in one bore-fanged leap crashes through to sink his flanges in to my stomach – whether he roars at night or not, I awake every morning to the lion’s roar. He sets about it at the crack of dawn, blighting my dreams (ICM 1988: 23-24)

The hungry lion which invariably appears at the crack of dawn seems to be a symbol of the blood of mutual hatred that the dawn of Indian independence released to cause havoc to the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs on both sides of border. Thus, with these three nightmares that Lenny has, the novelist prepares the reader for the gruesome and gory pattern of communal discord that become palpably obvious during partition.

Lenny narrates the story of the changing pattern of communal relations on her maiden visit to Pirpindo a Muslim village thirty miles east of Lahore. Lenny has her first experience of rural life. She finds the Muslims of Pirpindo and Sikhs from the neighbor village of Deratak Singh sitting together and sharing their concern about the worsening communal relations in the cities. Sharing the village Mullah’s concern about it is the Sikh priest
Jagjeet Singh. His words have the ring of the religious concord in Pirpindo and adjoining villages.

Brother, our villages come from the same radial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other? (ICM 1988: 56)

In the words of Chaudhary of Pirpindo, we have a glimpse of the contrasting communal attitudes of townsmen and country folk.

Our relationships with the Hindus are bound by strong ties. The city folk can afford to fight, we can’t we are dependent on each other bound by our toil, by mandi prices by the Banya – They’re our common enemy those city Hindus. To us villagers what does it matter if a peasant Is a Hindus or Muslim or Sikh? (ICM 1988: 56-57)

A renowned sociologist M.L. Darling echoes the Chaudhry’s remarks when he says: A class of Hindu money lenders had arisen in the Punjab which had enriched itself by exploiting the helpless peasantry. (Darling 1925: 172)

In fact the roots of communal amity in rural Punjab go so deep that the members of the two communities are ready to sacrifice even their lines for protecting each other as Jagdev Singh says
If need be, will protect our Muslim brother with our lives and I am prepared to take on oath on the Holy Koran” declares the village Chawadhry that every man in this village will guard his Sikh brothers with no regard for his own life (1996: 172)

One gets the impression that Punjab is an oasis of communal fraternity in the desert of communal hatred that is ever expanding to spread its tentacles to engulf the two communities in the cities.

Another incident of dinner party where Lenny’s parents invite guests who are drawn not only from their own community but also from the British and Sikh community Mr. Rogers the inspector general expresses the view that the differences between the congress under the leadership of Nehru and the Muslim league under Jinnah are pushing India to the brink of partition. He feels that it is the English who are acting as a lid on this cauldron of flaming passions between the two communities, but Mr. Singh, however says to Mr. Rogers: You always set one up against the other you just give home rule and see we will settle our difference and everything (ICM 1988:63)

Underlying the basic unity among the various religions of India is the Hindu Ayah and her multi religious theory of admirers – taking their turn one by one. The Mali Hari, the Ice candy man, the Masseur Sharbt Khan, Imamdin and Shersingh all coverage on this focal point. All these characters represent realistic views of partition Sidhwa has created them as realistic and life like they play their role in their limited span of life. Ayah is also one of the major characters of the novel. She is shown as a symbol of the composite culture of India. Ayah is in discriminating towards all her admirers. A similar symbol
of the unity of Indian religious is providing by the visitors to the Queen’s park where men of all religious and creeds rub shoulders with one another. With the imminence of partition the park presents a picture of different religious groups keeping away from one another’s company. The passions run high even when men of different religious communities talk and chat with one another’s. A reference to Gandhi, Nehru and Patel’s influence in London, evokes a retort from Masseur, who feels that in ousting Vavell, they have got a ‘fair man’ sacked. The ice candy man goes a step further

With all due respect, malijee says Ice candy man, surveying the gardeners through a blue mist of exhaled smoke” but aren’t you Hindu expert at just this kind of thing. Twisting tails behind the scene and getting someone else to slaughter your goats. (ICM 1988:90-91)

When the government house gardener tries to cool the passions by imputing the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims to the English, the Butcher remarks:

Just the English” asks Butcher, “Haven’t the Hindu contrived with the anger ignore the Muslim league, and support a party that didn’t win a single seat in the Punjab.It’s just the kind of thing we fear. They manipulate one or two Muslims against the interests of the larger community. (ICM 1988: 92)

Sidhwa has captured the turmoil of the partition days from a Parsi perspective in Ice-Candy Man. Beneath the gloss of good natured repartee,
raucous daughters and humorous banter of *Ice Candy Man* readers can feel the pulsating presence of fearful apprehension about future, and the sense of foreboding.

The patterns of communal amity which have always been present in the Indian social fabric were form asunder in the holocaust of Partition. As communal tensions increase Parsi becomes more conscious not only of their identity, but also of their neutrality. This change is conveyed to the reader through Lenny’s narrative.

She feels that the verbal skirmishes among the Ayah’s admirers gradually take up communal overtones. As the British prepare to leave, they change their habitual meeting place – instead of assembling near the Queen’s statue in the park they now assemble at the wrestler’s restaurant being a Hindu the Government house gardener insists that Lahore will stay in India as it has too much Hindu Money, while the Masseur and the Butcher coarsely insist that owing to a Muslim majority it shall go to Pakistan. The Sikh Zoo attendant Sher Singh also argues the case of the Sikh peasants. Troubled at this change Lenny remarks: I close my eyes I can’t bear to open that they will open on suddenly changed world. I try to shut out the voice (ICM 1988: 122) these changes also affect the Parsi neutrality. The worsening situation and raising communal discord forces them to shun passive neutrality and work actively, through surreptitiously to help their friends and acquaintances. The compromises with their neutral stand are solely guided by humane considerations. Lenny’s mother and Electric – Aunt smuggle the rationed petrol to help their Hindu and Sikh friends to run
away and also for the conveys to send kidnapped women to their families across the border

The social commitment and willingness to help the needy is best perceived in Godmother’s rescue of Ayah. Ayah was kidnapped by some rogues led by Ice –Candy Man. She is forced to become a dancing girl. Later on Ice candy Man marries her, converting her to Islam and re-Christening her as Mumtaz. Godmother traces Ice Candy Man and in her cold rage reduces him to a state of bafflement calling him a ‘Shameless! Badmas! Nimakharam! Faithless! And Son of pigs and pimps’ (ICM 1988: 248-249)

When she finds that Ayah does not want to stay with him she rescues her, sends her to the Recovered Women’s Camp and then helps her to return to her relatives in Amritsar. Godmother’s deft handling of the situation is an example of the humane acts performed by Parsis during the stormy days of Partition.

It shows that the Parsis, though not directly targeted at by any fanatic group, could not remain passive spectators of the rampant violence and chaotic mayhem surrounding them and thus chose an active neutral role for themselves, helping the needy and the destitute, without compromising their situation. Reader can see the sea-change in the attitude of the Parsi community from the bald egg- shell of passive neutrality to active neutrality towards the pattern of communal discord swirling around them during partition.
Thus being a minority Parsi’s main concern was to safeguard their identity but at the end of the communal discord they become active just to help those who once were with them. In this way the novelist shows the Parsi attitude to the various political happenings at this juncture. Though much has been written on the theme of Partition, Sidhwa’s account of the holocaust is a tale with a difference caught between the conflicting demands of the major communities of the country the Parsis being a pathetic minority did not have much of a choice to make.

In the third novel *An American Brat* (1994), Sidhwa portrays contemporary problems like expatriate experiences, cultural clashes and inter community marriages amongst the Parsis in the novel. Indira Bhatt points out:

> *An American Brat* is a story of a young woman who journeys through the three cultures – her own community’s Parsi culture, her country Pakistan’s Islamic culture and the western culture of the United States of America. It is the story of sixteen years old Firoza’s dilemma of who I was and what I have become. (Unpublished paper)

*An American Brat* is a humorous portrayal of alternately funny and terrifying perceptions of an upper middle class Parsi family about the U.S.A. but the novel functions on two levels one is expatriate experience and the other is the problem of inter community marriage and adjustment of a migrant to a different culture.
This novel chronicles the adventures of a young Pakistani Parsi girl Firoza. The narrative sets in motion with an ironical situation Zareen is worried, brooding over her dark anxieties; she narrates the school – incident when she had gone to pick up Firoza.

In the car she (Firoza) said, “Mummy, don’t come to school dressed like that: She objected to my sleeveless sari – blouse! Really this narrow – minded attitude touted by General Zia is infecting her, too. I took her, “Look, we’re Parsi, everybody knows we dress differently.” “When I was her age, I wore frocks and cycled to Kinnaird College. And that was in 59 and 60’ – fifteen years after partition! Can she wear frocks? No women mustn’t show their legs and women shouldn’t act like that Girl mustn’t play hockey or sing or dance! If everything corrupts their pious little minds so easily, then the mullahs should wear burqas and stay within the four walls of their house!” (AB 1994: 10)

This narrow mindedness of Feroza becomes a problem for her parents – Zareen and Cyrus. She does not consider man and woman equals.

She becomes more orthodox than her mother Zareen though there is a big generation gap. Zareen is disturbed by the thought that her daughter has adopted a Parsi – like orthodoxy in her attitude and outlook, thereby making herself a misfit in her community. Cyrus Ginwalla, the father, is worried more about the loss of the Parsee identity. Both Zareen and Cyrus are
worried about Feroza that she might succumb to the Islamic conservatism in one way or the other and forget her own Parsi Tradition. Her father fears that his young daughter would fall in love and marry a non-Parsi boy. He thinks that the only solution to this problem is to send Feroza for a holiday to U.S.A. as travel would broaden her outlook and get this puritanical rubbish out of her head. Feroza is therefore sent to America with this purpose, where an uncle only six years her senior is her guide, friend and also the bane of her existence. The Ginwalla fails to realize that the journey to the U.S.A. will broaden Feroza’s thinking and open up further avenues for her. She will become modern in the true sense of the world. By thinking for herself she will challenge traditional view, static orthodoxy and grow beyond a patriarchal society. Novy Kapadia says:

Bapsi Sidhwa shows that the journey to the U.S.A. was supposedly learning process instead it makes her ‘too’ modern for her Patriarchal and seemingly liberal family. So this novel of self-realization the self awareness that Feroza acquires, ironically isolates her from Parsi heritage (1996: 188)

After coming to America the shy Feroza who at Lahore hesitantly talked to young men, now flirts with Shashi, an Indian student at the University of Denver, where she studies Hotel Management. Later on she falls in love with an American David Press who is a Jew. She becomes confident and self – assertive. Her love affair with David Press comes to an end because of her mother Zareen’s interference. The novel ends with Feroza becoming in her mother’s words an “American Brat”. She does not meekly return to Lahore
for an arranged marriage with one of the three nice Parsi-boys chosen for her. The novel thus ends ambivalently. Feroza, despite an estranged love affair with David Press and general feeling of depression, prefers a life of struggle and hard work in U.S.A. than a settled family life in Lahore as U.S.A. gives her freedom and individual choice that the Parsee community of Lahore simply suppresses. Bapsi Sidhwa thus stresses the fact that expatriate experiences go a long way in changing the protagonist’s attitudes. The expatriate experience theme is highlighted in Feroza’s initiation to the U.S.A. the ruthless interrogation by the customs, incredibility at the lights, museums; opulence and shopping at New York are portrayed interestingly. Her innocence is shown in getting lost on the fire stair at the Y.M.C.A, in a museum, at Boston and her confusion when confronted by a sex maniac at the Y.M.C.A bathroom Feroza’s initiation, both her naivety and amazement reflect the cultural shock of migrants during their initial trip from the third world to the first world. Sidhwa describes in the novel:

For Feroza, Bloomingdale’s on Lexington Avenue in New York, was like entering a surreal world of hushed opulence, festooned by all manner of hats propped up on stands and scarves and belts draped here and there like fabulous confetti (AB 1994: 73)

During this initiation period in USA, Feroza’s guide is her uncle Manek, the experienced expatriate studying at MIT. Boston. Manek, who sold bibles and did jobs to succeed, displays the characteristic Parsi trait to adapt and endues in order to succeed. Manek’s assimilation to the American way of life,
reflects a certain community of themes in Bapsi, Sidhwa’s novels, In her first novel *The Crow Eaters*, the Junglewalla family who have moved to Lahore, prosper due to their adjustments with the ruling Britishers. Similarly Manek, the Parsi pioneer in the USA displays the same traits of adaptability.

Manek had weathered the trauma of culture shock which the new world had buffeted him with and emerged toughened. He wants Feroza to imbibe the progressive and stimulation culture at the USA. Uncle Manek wants Feroza to become self sufficient and independent. So she is enrolled in a college at twin falls in Southern Idaho. Now starts another aspect of Feroza’s expatriate experience Manek’s role as guardian angel is taken up by an American, Jo. Feroza begins to assimilate the Independence of mind and spirit and sturdy self confidence offered by the new world, which is alien to her third world experience and sheltered upbringing. She even visits Jo’s family at Boulder and continues to widen her horizons. Ironically Feroza outgrows her initial mentors, uncle Manek and friend Jo.

Manek enjoys the company of liberated women but when it comes to marriage he returns to Lahore and agrees to an arranged marriage. He chooses a docile girl Aban to whom divorce is an ill amended world. Such a choice reflects the Parsi psyche and a curious paradoxical attitude toward women. Surprisingly the Parsi community that prides itself as westernized and liberated community is in fact not so liberalized. Indira Bhatt points out.
Bapsi Sidhwa portrays Parsi community’s traditional dictum of double standards one for the man, another for the woman especially when it is a question of inter faith marriage. (Unpublished Paper)

Westernized education for Parsi women is welcomed yet female behavior is codified and attempts are made to curtail any form of self assertion. Feroza as she understands the values of freedom and self confidence finds her days filled with excitement, joyous activity and ascending wonders. She even outgrows Jo and acquires friendships knowledge and confidence that makes her a happier person. So the admission to a college at twin falls, in Southern Idaho is a turning point in Feroza’s life. Through Feroza’s experiences Bapsi Sidhwa also shows the expatriate’s assimilation to the way of life at the new world.

From here onwards till the end of the novel, the focus is on the changing life style of Feroza her experiences in college, relationships with room-mate Jo and later Gwen, Rhondo and the lesbians Shirley and Laura. The author shows that Feroza is a typical girl of the sub continent initially shy, conservative and helpless but willing to strive. Feroza is also depicted as a representative of the Parsi milieu, with an inherent fondness for a western life style. So she absorbs the cultural shock, alters her life style learns to drive, during, dance use a more direct and less polite form of language. The shy Feroza, who at Lahore hesitantly talked to young men, now flirts with Shashi an Indian Student.
Sidhwa is at her best when she uses her pen to describe the Parsi community or human prejudices and irrationality. In *An American Brat*, as well she is at her best when she describes the Parsi community in Lahore, the bickering, the alliances. Another theme of significant is the controversial issues of prohibition of inter-community marriages among the Parsis. Novy Kapadia says:

The making the question of inter-community Marriage among Parsi as the central concern of the narrative, Sidhwa reveals her awareness of an issue that has serious reminifications and consequences for the very existence of the Parsi community (1996: 26)

Sidhwa has hinted at the problem of inter-community marriages in all her novels. However, the first Parsi novelist to highlight the contentious issue of inter community marriage is Perin Bharucha in *The Fire Worshippers* (1968). Sidhwa also hints at the problem of inter community marriage in her first novel *The Crow Eaters*. In this novel she shows through Faredoon’s character the rationale behind the traditional Parsi opposition to any inter community marriage. In *An America Brat*, Sidhwa merely narrates and comments the Parsi theory about inter – community marriage but she does not offer any critique.

In *An America Brat* Sidhwa describes marriage theme in details and in a Parsi context. Feroza believes that underneath the religion and cultural differences, she and David are alike, her mother does not think so. When
Feroza discloses her intention of marrying David, her family in Pakistan is both agitated and shell shocked. The mother Zareen flies to Denver to prevent this unsuitable marriage. She brings money to bug off David. She tries to explain to Feroza that by marrying David she would cut herself off from her family and religion. She would never be allowed to enter the Parsi places of worship never be allowed to attend the funeral rites of her mother or father. She regrets having Feroza to America when she says:

I should never have let you go so far away. Look what it’s done to you. You’ve become an American Brat. (AB 1994: 279)

This indicates the appropriateness of title. Sidhwa highlights the central theme of the novel by suggesting Feroza as an American Brat Zareen suggests to Feroza that she should forget about men and concentrate on her studies.

The family’s opposition to Feroza’s impending marriage represents the predominant traditionalist view of the Parsi community to such inter-community marriages. However the author also cleverly depicts the growing discontent with such ancient traditions amongst the younger generation of Parsis. Whilst the family is discussing Feroza’s predicament, fifteen year old Bunny implicitly expresses her revulsion at the rigid code by stating:

For God’s sake! You’re crying on as Feroza’s dead! She’s only getting married, for god’s sake! (AB 1994: 268)
Other adolescents in the room concur with Bunny’s sentiments. However they do not express them, as the domination majority of elders quell such rebellious sentiments. This seemingly minor incident is used by Sidhwa to focalize the dissent amongst the younger generation of the community and hints at the demand of some re-thinking of the rigid tradition.

Ironically Zareen when she sees David and find him a suitable match has doubts about the right code. She expresses Sidhwa’s own unease with the ancient tradition. Zareen begins to understand the logic of the younger Parsi’s opposition to the probation when she says:

> Perhaps the teenagers in Lahore were right the Zoroastrian Anjumans in Karachi and Bombay should move with the times that were sending them to the new world. The various Anjumans would have to introduce minor reforms if they wished their tiny community to survive (AB 1994: 288)

Zareen is now trapped in a paradox. She finds David admirable and appealing. Yet she is also aware that such a marriage would deprive her daughter of her faith, heritage, family and community. Zareen recalls the warning from the Athoran Mandal and the Notice from the Bombay Zorastrian Jashan committee.

Zareen describes the difference between the Zoroastrian and Jewish cultures frighten David away from Feroza. When Zareen insists on fulfilling her traditional obligations by giving fabulous gifts to David’s relatives and
making the marriage big affairs, David feels compelled to defend his position. A Jewish marriage is an equally elaborated affair and he tells Zareen:

My Parents aren’t happy about the marriage either. It’s lucky they’re reform Jews; otherwise they’d go in to mourning and pretend. I was dead. We have Jewish customs you know……. I belong to an old tradition too. (AB 1994: 298)

Zareen does this to thwart the marriage. She pretends to agree to the marriage but insists on the rituals and ceremonies which she knows will frighten David, a very private and reserved person. The relationship disintegrates between David and Feroza and Zareen’s play has partially triumphed. Robert L. Ross points out:

As a Parsi writer, Sidhwa does not take a rebellious stance against the dominating ideology of her community. However Sidhwa is no conformist. She doesn’t endorse the traditional Parsi code. Instead through Zareen and Feroza’s reactions she hints at the need for change. (1996: 79)

Zareen ironically realizes that by denying her daughter freedom of choice in marriage she and the educated custodians of the Zoroastrians doctrine were no less rigid and ignorant than the fundoes in Pakistan.

Similarly Feroza is heartbroken after David’s departure. Initially Feroza feels depressed but gradually she recovers strengthened in her resolve to
continue there. She had experienced freedom in America and refuses to live without it now. She expresses her convictions toward the end of the novel thus:

There would never be another David, but there would be other man, and who knew, perhaps someday she might like someone enough to marry him… It wouldn’t matter if he was a Parsi or of another faith. She would be more sure of herself and wouldn’t let anyone interfere. As for her religion, no one could take it away from her: She carried its fire in her heart (AB 1994: 317)

Feroza realizes that she has changed too much to ever go back to Pakistan. She does not agree to an arranged marriage of her community and decides to stay on in the U.S.A. Novy Kapadia points out:

Bapsi Sidhwa cleverly highlights the sensitive issue of inter-Community marriages amongst the Parsis. On the theme of marriage she maintains a clever balance, implicitly opposing the rigid code but not appearing overtly rebellious (1995: 196)

In an interview to Naila Hussain, Sidhwa says that:

The book deals with the subject of the ‘culture shock’ young people from the subcontinent have to contend with when they choose to study abroad. It also delineates the clashes the
divergent cultures generate between the families “back home” and their transformed and transgressing progeny bravely groping their way in the new world. (1993: 19)

One of the important aspects of An American Brat is Sidhwa’s art of characterization. Here Sidhwa portrays the various Parsi characters like Zareen, Cyrus, Feroza, Manek, Aban. They play their role in their limited span of life. Manek is portrayed as a true Parsi religious man. He tastes a living and culture of America, though he does not give up his religious faith of marriage. He comes to Lahore for marriage and marries Aban, a docile girl. Zareen is portrayed as follower of Parsi female, but at the end of the novel she realizes that by denying her daughter freedom of choice in marriage she and the educated custodians of the Zoroastrian doctrine are as rigid and ignorant as the fundoes in Pakistan. Cyrus’s character reflects the fear prevailed in the Parsis of a demoralization of the younger generation and the sterility of community. So, Cyrus is worried about a Muslim boy who visits Feroza and feels she maybe prevailed upon to marry a non-Parsi, a Muslim. Sidhwa has also portrayed various characters like Laura and Shirley to introduce the subject of lesbianism a subject that nobody likes to talk. By David, a Jewish character, Sidhwa describes Jewish culture attendant on the Sabbath. Different though the rituals are, Sidhwa suggests that basically all religions are the same. Feroza is depicted as a representative of the Parsi milieu, with an inherent fondles for a western lifestyle. So she absorbs the culture shocks, and alters her lifestyle she does not meekly return to Lahore for an arranged marriage with Parsi boy. She rebels and desires privacy, plenty and the freedom from social inhibitions which
first world provide. By providing insights and detailed information about the Parsi and their culture Sidhwa attempts to foster a better understanding of her community and curbs possible prejudicial misconceptions of the Parsis.

Sidhwa indicates fundamentalist attitudes amongst all communities in her novel. *An American Brat*, she criticizes the Mullah mentality that girls must not play hockey or sing or dance. The Parsi community has its own brand of fundamentalism, in their attempts to remain exclusive and forbid all interfaith marriages. The narrow mindedness’s of American society in a variety of settings is also exposed. An example is the way Feroza’s secular finance David in response to Zareen’s intransigence regarding Parsi customs flaunts his own Jewish heritage. Sidhwa shows that ironically people get limited by the various religious teaching and culture mores that shapes them from infancy. R.K. Dhavan points out that:

> It is Sidhwa’s humor, irreverence, astute characterization and positive outlook which enables her to tackle, contemporary problems like fundamentalism expatriate experience cultural clashes and inter faith marriages amongst the Parsis with great aplomb in *An American Brat* (1995 : 24)

Another aspect of the novel is the ambivalent ending which conveys a lot ostensibly the ending of the novel upholds the orthodox view, as Feroza does not marry the Jewish boy David. However Novy Kapadia says:
The novel ends with some repudiation of an empty and rigid tradition. Bapsi Sidhwa hints of such repudiation, implicitly through her mouthpieces Zareen and Feroza (1996: 41).

The novel has two distinctive movements. Initially there is the movement towards self-actualization in the life of Feroza Ginwalla made possible by acculturation to the American way of thinking and life styles. Later Feroza achieves a synthesis between tradition and modernity. Novy Kapadia notes:

The theme of marriage is elaborately examined with reference to the Parsis’ attempt to maintain the status quo as regards the sanctity of their religion and continuity of their inherited cultural traditions. By providing information about the Parsis and their culture Sidhwa attempts to foster a better understanding of her community and curbs possible prejudicial misconceptions of the Parsis (1996: 147).

Niaz Zaman points out:

*An American Brat* fails to come up to the level of *The Crow Eaters* or *Ice Candy Man*. Perhaps this is because it is not America so much that interest Sidhwa, as the politics of her home country. The conflicts that have not ended and discriminations against women. It is when Sidhwa broaches these subjects that she opens out; these things disturb her call
up her anger. Thus Zareen disturbed at Feroza’s relationship with David, is even more disturbed at the unequal treatment meted out to men and women by her religion (1996: 207)

In her earlier books Sidhwa has expounded her religion to audiences unfamiliar with that religion; in *An American Brat* she asks whether the Parsi can continue to ignore change and questions the old Parsi ways that come into conflict with the new Parsi Diasporas.

The novel is issue based. Sidhwa has tried her hand to focus many issues like fundamentalism, expatriate experience, and cultural clashes and inter community marriages with great aplomb in *An American Brat*. Sidhwa’s blending of astute characterization and sharp humors provides insights into the Parsi psyche and makes the novel both entertaining and revealing.

Above all Bapsi Sidhwa is unique for focusing on the Parsis, their customs, rites, rituals, traditions loyalties and mannerism. In her three novels, *The Crow Eater, Ice Candy Man, An American Brat* the description of Parsi mannerism, traditions and Parsi rituals like Navjote Ceremony and death rites in the tower of silence are sketched with relish and care. Parsi words like Ahura, Mazda, Kusti, Sudra, Avasta, Gatha, Asha and Prayers from the religious books are interwoven into the novels. This exercise is not carried on to impose the Parsi identity on the reader but to unfold the Parsi psyche that demands to be defined through a mention of specific rituals and attitude. Sidhwa, in her novels portrays the fears which are haunting the Parsi psyche.
These fears are the sterility of community; the apprehension of marginalization the loss of financially encourage opportunities, political and physical in security, demoralization of the younger generation; the slow but in evitable loss of ethnic exclusivity and these fears are interwoven and given fictional touch. M.F. Salat says:

It is not intended to constitute a maladies slighting or disparaging of the community, it is but a historical fact, a historical necessity for a small community, such as the Parsi Community is to survive, fated as it to be always a minority culture group anywhere in the world. Sidhwa displaying the typically Parsi penchant for self mockery, merely underlies the inescapable predicament of the Parsis (1997: 100)
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