Chapter – Four

East – West Encounter

Bapsi Sidhwa has been recognised internationally for her powers of detailing as she displays the significant encounter between the customs, the values and the traditions of the East, with the West. Her aim is to portray reality through her novels and also enable her readers to differentiate between mere perceptions and actuality on the other side of the World. In all her three novels – An American Brat, The Bride and The Crow Eaters, her characters unfold the surface reality in a unique manner.

In An American Brat, Sidhwa gives a sensitive portrait of how the West appears to a new arrival like Feroza, a sixteen year old Parsee girl from Lahore and the impact of the West. On her very arrival in America, Feroza is taken back by the rude behaviour of the airport officials. This is symbolic of the Western world’s distrustful and inferior attitude towards the third world people. At the airport, she has to go through a unique passport check. The official mutely checks the pages of the passport. He asks her about “how long she wants to stay? And who will support her?” (32).

Feroza’s third world identity and her new born confused attitude fill the officer with doubt. This is Feroza’s moment of realization that she is now in a strange country. She is quite breathless. Hence she is not able to answer, and the official places a slip of paper on the counter and asks her to write her uncle’s name and orders her to go through secondary inspection. She becomes utterly confused by the cryptic instruction and her legs start trembling. As she feels, the East is characteristically produced in Orientalist discourse as (variously)
voiceless, sensual, female, despotic, irrational and backward. By contrast, the West is represented as masculine, democratic, rational, moral, dynamic and progressive (45).

When Manek comes to support Feroza at the immigration cabin, he also has to face humiliation, because of the officials’ antipathy. Both the officers at the immigration checkpoint think that Feroza and Manek are lying. As the novelist writes the racist taxonomy of human kind came to play a major role in the ways in which European came to view the world (ii).

The officers think that Feroza has come to America to marry Manek. One of the officials speaks out you and your ‘uncle’ has concealed the truth. You’re both lying. Isn’t this man your fiancé? Aren’t you here to marry him? When they try their best to convince the officials they are not willing to accept Manek as Feroza’s uncle because he is only 5 years older than Feroza. And After a long discussion, the immigration official loses his patience “Are you kidding? We know y’all marry your cousins.” But Manek’s answer, “Yes, officer; but not our nieces somehow compel the officer to be quiet.” Later, Manek assures him that he will submit all the relevant documents related to him, as he says: I can get a letter certifying she’s my niece. Here’s my visiting card. I promise to send you a copy of my passport and visa and a letter from the University stating I don’t work anywhere else. I will send you copies of the bank drafts from Pakistan. (Brat : 64-65)

The next problem Feroza faces is of carrying her oversized suitcases. Approaching an immensely tall porter with a large cart evokes no response.
Thrown to her own resources, Feroza finds people carrying the luggage on carts and asks a gray-haired woman where she should find her cart. Directed to a shining caterpillar of stacked carts, she struggles to extract one but fails. She finds young men coming and taking away carts one by one after inserting a dollar bill in a slot.

As the next man hustles up with the same intention, Feroza steps right in front of the box, barring access and say: ‘It’s my turn.’ Jolted by her somewhat rude and strange behaviour, the youth comes to an astonished halt. Feroza explains in a manner which is half-apologetic and half-appealing for help: “I don’t know how to get this… Can you show me?” (57). The man smiles flirtatiously and shows her how to insert the dollar bill. As she loads her suitcases and luggage on the cart, Feroza’s mind is filled with images of the slender young American and his candid admiring eyes. As she feels, “How easily he had talked to her, his gestures open, confident. She wished she could have responded to his readiness to be friends, but she was too self-conscious” (58).

Feroza realizes that this is the world, which could define her new experience. The people around here are busy with their own concerns; none of them have even bothered to glance her way or stare at her as they would have in Pakistan. Feroza’s wide-open eyes soak in the new impressions as she pushes the cart. A strange awareness seeps into her: she knows no one and no one knows her. It is a heady feeling to be suddenly so free of the thousand constraints that have governed her life.

Another problem which almost every new comer has to face is related to the use of daily products. When Feroza comes to stay with Manek, he shares with her, some of his personal experiences that have caused him an extraordinary amount of difficulty and embarrassment, when he came to America, a few years
ago—such as opening the milk cartons, which like Feroza he had tried to open with a knife, with resulted in a spill. Now, with his experience he shows Feroza how easy it is to turn the top and open it.

When Feroza tugs at plastic wrappers and impatiently tears at them with her teeth, Manek advises her to open them in a right manner. “You’ll only lose your teeth that way.” He tries his best to mould Feroza into the new life-style and tries to influence her with his views about America, as he says, “Remember this: If you have to struggle to open something in America, you’re doing it wrong. They have made everything easy. That’s how a free economy works” (Brat : 40).

Feroza finds those Americans as having been engaged in a rat race constituted by the junk commercialism. The majority of Western society is unanimously bound together by the structure of feeling, which is aptly summed up in the words of said: “… We are number one, we are found to lead, and we stand for freedom and order, and so on. Now, the non-western countries are awe-stricken by the sense of the Western world’s superiority in technology and economy” (16).

The incredible lights in New York excite Feroza so much that she utters in Punjabi: “Vekh! Vekh! Sher-di-batian. Look, look, the lights of the city” (19). The next day Feroza’s tour of New York starts. Uncle Manek and Feroza ride the ferry to the Statue of Liberty and explore the iron innards of the stern figure presiding over the ocean. They gape giddily from a top the Empire State building mid town and their twin World Trade Towers at the tip of the island. They stroll with the nannies and babies through the zoo at The Central Park, marvelling each time they lift their incredulous eyes from the wild animals in their native habitats to the shimmering glass and steel embankments of the Manhattan skyline reflecting the
sunlight. This is followed by a quick look at the enticing window displays of
dresses, shoes, sportswear and jewellery on the Fifth Avenue and Madison.

The opulence and shopping in New York simply mesmerize Feroza. Enchanted by
the appeal on the skinny mannequins, the colourful patent-leather shoes, the
gleaming handbags at Bloomingdale’s on Lexington Avenue, Feroza simply
refuses to budge from the place. As the novelist writes:

It was like entering a surreal world of hushed opulence festooned by
all manner of hats opposed up on stands an scarves and belts draped
here and there like fabulous confetti. The subtle lighting enhanced
the plush shimmer of wool and leather and the glowing colours of
the silk. Feroza felt she had never seen such luxuriant textures or
known the vibrant gloss of true colour (*Brat* : 73)

Feroza moves amidst the dazzling wares, bewitched by displays of
merchandise which attract her with a suction-like force. Later she insists on
window-shopping of Fifth Avenue and ogling the strands of pearls and diamonds
displayed at Tiffany’s and elegant skirts and jackets displayed at Christian Dior’s.

When they have lunch at McDonald’s, Feroza is struck with wonder at the quick
service and the quantities of fires, ketchup, and the ice in the Coke. She is
enhanced by the America and those Americans she encounters. She takes great
pleasure in shopping malls, fast-food restaurants, and modern kitchen appliances.

The sudden swing from Lahore to New York seems to have pitched Feroza into the
next century. She has a surrealistic impression of blurred images; a kaleidoscope of
perceptions in which paintings, dinosaurs, American Indian artefacts and Egyptian
mummies mingle with hamburgers, pretzels, sapphire earnings, deodorants, and
glamorous window displays.
During her stay in America, Feroza tries to fit herself in her new atmosphere. While studying in America, her room-mate Jo helps her to learn new customs, and the western life-style. Being an American by birth, Jo takes full charge of Feroza’s transformations. She puts Feroza’s Pakistani outfits and outrageously dangling earrings into her suitcase and her wardrobe is filled with pairs of jeans, some T-shirts, sweaters and blouses. But Feroza is not willing to wear skirts. Instead she brings a pair of pleated woollen slacks for more formal occasions.

Feroza has a horrifying experience when she is locked out in the YMCA fire stairs. Returning from shopping around one o’clock, Feroza is surprised by the long lines of people waiting for the elevators. Wondering which lines to stand in, Feroza sees one line being rapidly absorbed through open doors into an elevator. Only when the elevator sails past the fifteenth floor where she is staying does she realise that the different elevators are meant for different floors of the building. The elevator stops on the twenty-second floor, the level reserved for women and she steps out, not knowing what to do. A sympathetic soul asks her to go down again, get into the correct line, and then takes the elevator that goes to the fifteenth floor, the numbers being marked on the top. Feroza feels that this will take a long time and the amiable woman shows her the fire stairs – she can run down to the fifteenth floor.

Feroza steps inside the door hesitantly. As the woman shuts the door at her back, Feroza has a feeling that she has been shut out of New York. She feels disoriented – the air is rank with the smell of stale cigarette smoke and food. She gets a whiff of urine and of delaying refuse too. After a minute or so, she tries to open the door but fails to do so.
Like any other person from the East, by now Feroza is aware of her dissimilarity with the Native Americans. She also becomes aware of her different colour and the reaction it appears to have on strangers like a saleswoman and also some of her classmates. Not that her classmates are discourteous. A few tend to avoid her, and she disregards them. But some, in their anxiety to be civil, are exaggeratedly effusive and awkward in her presence. Sometimes, she senses that she is not accepted as one of them. She feels herself inferior to them. But, when the news of Bhutto’s hanging is broadcast on all news channels, everybody’s sympathy is diverged towards Feroza. It is as if the school has suddenly discovered Pakistan – and recognized Feroza as the country’s sole representative. The sympathetic expressions and the students’ consideration touch her. Teachers also show their concern. Feroza’s counsellor, Emily Simms also tries to console her, as she says, “I know how you must feel, honey, being to so far away from your family and home. But please think of us as your family. We are very fond of you, we love you” (182).

Sidhwa has a keen eye for the differences in the life style of Americans and Pakistanis. While moving around in Bloomingdale’s on Lexington Avenue, Manek announces with profound certitude: “I can smell a desi! I bet there’s an Indian or Paki in the room. One can smell a native from a mile” (73). After carefully scouting the area with his nose, like a hound on a promising trail, he returns to the spot from where he has started and realizes that it is none other than Feroza who is “the smelly desi” (74). However, she cannot smell her own as she tells Manek: “I can’t smell anything (74). Later, Manek shows Feroza how to use the deodorant stick before putting on clothes” (85).
Sidhwa uses the differences in USA and Pakistani cultures to highlight Feroza’s evolution of character. When Feroza meets some children being brought out by Jo’s brother Tom, she is shocked to learn that they are foster children. As she feels:

It was so unlike anything in Pakistan. She had never heard of children being sent to foster homes. If a man could not for some reason provide for his family, usually because of sickness, death or some other calamity, his wife and children would be provided for by relatives. (*Brat*: 212)

Zareen’s emphasis on the difference between the Zoroastrian and the Jewish cultures frightens David away from Feroza. When Zareen insists on fulfilling her traditional obligations by giving fabulous gifts to David’s relatives and making the marriage a big affair, David feels compelled to defend his position. A Jewish marriage is an equally elaborate 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 into mourning and pretend I was dead. We have Jewish customs, you know. My family will miss my getting married under a canopy by our rabbi. We have a great dinner and there’s a table with twenty or thirty different kinds of desserts, cake, and fruit. Then there’s dancing until late at night. David stopped to catch his breath and looked angrily at Zareen. I belong to an older tradition, too (*Brat*: 298)

The West particularly America has its own influence on the people of the Eastern economy as well as politics. The citizens of the East who live in Western
countries are considered ‘lucky’ by their countrymen. And when they visit their native countries, they act as the influential representatives of the West.

This aspect is perfectly portrayed by Sidhwa in her novel *An American Brat*. When Manek goes to visit Pakistan, to marry a simple-Parsee-Pakistani girl, everybody gathers to hear him speak about America. They all gather in Khutilbai’s house and Manek expresses his audience with the wonders of America, as he says, “Western culture, with its economic and technological superiority is penetrating the Third World or pen capitalist spaces with its entire system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions and more important, mode of production.” He compares Pakistan with America, and criticises his native country’s condition thus:

You think we eat well because we’re rich? You should see how the poor in America eat! Everyday chicken! Everyday baked – beans ham, and sardines! What the Americans throw away in one day can fill the stomachs of all the hungry people in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan for two days. (*Brat* : 197)

Then, Manek describes the basic facilities that America provides to everybody a supply of electricity, water, gas, etc:

You can drink water straight from the tap without worrying how many cholera and jaundice germs you’re swallowing. You can have tub-baths ten times a day if you want to: there’s no shortage of water. The landlord usually pays for it and for the electricity. Everybody keeps their lights and air-conditioners on all the time. Huge football stadiums and offices and shopping complexes are air-conditioned all summer. You have to wear a cardigan indoors, one forgets what summer is: it’s as if you are always at a Hill Station.
The same thing in winter; everything is centrally heated and you can walk about in shirt sleeves. (*Brat* : 197)

After that he also lays emphasis on the need of adjustment—to the new culture, people, life-style and society. When one adapts to the new life-style, then one’s life becomes smooth. He says:

You have to learn to function within it, otherwise, you can have hard time, like I did in the beginning. But if you want to understand what makes America trick, if you want to ‘succeed,’ you have to go when you’re young and get your higher education there. It’s difficult for an old dog to learn new tricks – you’ll be like a fish out of water and lose all your money like thousands of other middle-aged and muddle-headed desis already have. (*Brat* : 199)

Although Manek is Pakistani by birth, he now wants to be recognized as an American. His niece Feroza is shocked to see his new business card, when she notices a change in his name from Manek Junglewalla to Mike Junglewalla. And she is not able to control herself “You’ve become a Mike” (260). Manek in a very casual and calm way explains, “The people I have to deal with at work find it hard to remember Manek. It’s too foreign, it makes them uneasy. But I’m one of the guys if I’m Mike” (260). But Feroza refuses to call him Mike instead of Manek. And Manek also agrees with her, “I don’t accept you to; Aban only calls me Mike when we are with Americans” (260).

Aban deeply misses her country-life environment and society. She always tries to convince Manek about living in their native country, Pakistan, and she always regrets her decision to live in America. She expresses her views to Feroza, thus:
I thought coming to America was such a big deal, so wonderful —my Prince Charming carrying me off to the castle of my dreams. Everybody back home thinks I’m so lucky, but I’m tired of coping, tired of doing everything on my own… Oh, I miss home. I’m longing to see my family and my friends and longing to talk to them. Just sit and talk to them. Sometimes I wish I’d never come here. (Brat : 315)

Manek is irritated by her attitude and he always defends the American society by counting on the luxuries that America provides. He observes:

Will you get thirty-one channels in Karachi? You won’t even get two. You have your Thunderbird, your washing machine and dishwasher, and so many other gadgets. And Gerber food and Pampers for Dilly. The Karachi pollution would have her wheezing all day and give her asthma, and the water would give her non-stop diarrhea. You’d be pumping asthma medicine into her lungs from morning to night and scrubbing her diapers with sunlight soap. And even if you had the gadgets, they would not work because of the shortage of electricity and water. Aban’s response to this is in defence of Pakistan, as he says, Karachi has nine million people; how many do you know with asthma? I would wash all the diapers and dishes in the world to be with my friends and my family. (Brat : 316)

Another aspect of the practical versus emotional is exhibited in the issue of divorce between Aban and Manek. Manek is westernized to the extent that he thinks of everything from the materialistic American point-of view as he asserts,
“Look, If we get a divorce you’ll get half the house by American law. You might as well contribute to it so there will be no hard feelings later” (Brat : 259).

However, Aban is upset, because for her marriage is a sacred institution and the mention of divorce is not only insensitive and cruel, but also on affront to all that is lucky and auspicious. She is not able to sleep the whole night and finds it difficult to compromise her cultural background for the American one.

To remove the effect of Manek’s ill-words she prays for three days. She tries to ward off the evil by purifying the corners of every room in their house, including the bathrooms, with a small silver fire altar of sandalwood. Aban insists on going back to Karachi. Then, Manek is forced to apologize and admit that he is only joking and not quite serious about divorce.

The language problem is also highlighted by Sidhwa. The basic difference in pronunciation between the Western natives and the people from the East is the cause of discrimination. Almost like all migrants Feroza has to deal with this problem. Feroza is very formal and particular in her speech and this is very unfit in the contemporary American atmosphere. So, Jo decides to improve Feroza’s pronunciation and teaches her well. She teaches her how to pronounce ‘may-o-neeze’ as ‘may-nayze’ and ‘mother fucker’ as ‘motha-fuka’ with the accompanying curl of nose and emphasis. She makes Feroza use Gimme! Or Hey! Instead of May I? or can I? And soon Feroza starts using her new accent as “Hey, you go in’ to the laundry? Give me a coke!” (156).

Bapsi Sidhwa in An American Brat, portrays the actual shape and picture of the Western and the Eastern society. Feroza praises ‘the space’ and freedom that western people give to their children. On her visit to Jo’s house, Feroza finds Jo’s parents as understanding and unobtrusively hospitable. She compares their sober
attitude with her uncles and aunts in Karachi and Bombay, where everybody considers it their duty to offer advice on how to conduct every aspect of your life.

Although from Jo’s behaviour, Feroza already guesses that the Millers do not meddle in their children’s affairs or impose restrictions, the close observance and discovery of the way they associate with each other is a unique experience for her. Edward W. Said has observed: “formal independence for colonized countries has rarely meant the end of the First World’s hegemony, rather, Westerners after their withdrawal from these countries, continued to rule there morally and intellectually” (27).

However, Feroza does not like Jo’s blithely independent attitude and disregard for their opinions. Back in Pakistan, things are not like this. Feroza’s parents, her aunts and uncles except unquestioning obedience on certain matters, like the relationships between the family members and between the boys and girls. Even though Feroza finds the Western way of living admirably tolerant and desirable, she cannot imagine it to be transported to any community—a Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Parsee, in her part of the world.

Sidhwa also discusses another harsh reality in her novels, that of the citizenship of America, that the people from the Eastern countries are desperate to achieve. For this they practise various methods. In Sidhwa’s An American Brat Shashi’s brother, Deepak and sister-in-law, Mala come to America. Mala is pregnant and she wishes to have her baby in Denver. Deepak plans this, to get the coveted United States citizenship for their child, “God knows what things will be like in India by the time he grows up, and it’s getting harder and harder to get American citizenship” (Brat : 243).
This only generates citizens as victims of power. As Margaret Atwood says’, “Victimization can conveniently be adduced to a necessity decreed by History or Economics or the Unconscious, or any other large general powerful idea” (41). They try all measures to be the part of the Western World. Shashi tries to convince Feroza about the need for his action and shows how in the future the child will shoulder the burden of responsibilities. “Once the child is eighteen he can sponsor his parents, too. It’s good to have some family in America anyway, especially for businessmen” (Brat : 243).

Bapsi Sidhwa shows the different manner in which the people from her own country and those from America treat their relatives and guests. In the novel, one realizes the contrast between Manek’s arrival in Pakistan and Jo and Feroza’s arrival at Jo’s brother, Tom’s house. On Manek’s arrival in Pakistan, his mother Khutilbai places a heavy rose garland round his neck and happiness of his arrival shines in her eyes. After that every relative welcomes him, they ask affectionate questions, other take his luggage and the over-coat. The doors of the car are opened. And in the evening everybody is present to meet Manek at Khutlibai’s residence, for an enjoyable get-together. But this is totally a contrast to the situation when Jo and Feroza reach Tom’s residence. Tom’s house is in a shabby condition. The yard is overgrown with weeds and the house badly needs a coat of paint. Their ancient model car is in bad and ugly condition. The children are familiar and crowd round Jo–she gives them kisses, hugs and presents. But Tom’s wife does not greet them, rather she avoids them. Jo and Feroza hang around for about an hour, making desultory conversation with Tom. He has fancy business schemes and plans in mind and is about to implement them with the help of
partners. Jo plays with the children. Feroza is surprised that they have not been offered even a cup of tea.

One of the most unique features of the western society is the ‘farmed out’ family system, which does not exist in the eastern countries. When Feroza encounters this reality, she is absolutely shocked by this aspect of the western society because this is far different from her eastern set up. On the way home from Tom’s house, Jo tells Feroza that the children have been farmed out to Tom and Elly by the country for a fee. Feroza is not able to understand the way the family unit is formed and how it sustains itself.

Looking at Tom’s condition Feroza worries, what will happen to the children? Earlier, she has never heard of children being sent to foster homes. It is very unlike anything in Pakistan. If a man is not able to provide for his family, usually because of sickness, death or some other calamity, his wife and children are helped by the relatives. The children are not given up for adoption or ‘farmed out’. And after this comparison Feroza feels proud of the emotional appeal of her society.

People from the East are known for a simple life-style, The Western life style’s sophistication is shown by Bapsi Sidhwa through various characters like – Manek, David, Press and Miller families. Manek, who is now a typical American, tries to behave like the sophisticated natives of the West. At every moment, he reveals the influence of the West on him, his habits and life-style.

When Feroza's mother Zareen calls him and asks him to take care of Feroza, when she visits America, he accepts the responsibility with a very casual and calm manner. But, at the very moment that Feroza starts to talk to him with excitement, he embarrasses her for her loud conversation, ‘Don’t yell’, Manek said
“You’re puncturing my eardrum. Why do you Third World Pakistan shout so much? Everybody’s not deaf” (Brat : 26).

As soon as Feroza arrives she has to deal with a problem that illustrates the backward nature of her country. She finds it difficult to use the escalator. In the airport she comes to a dead stop because she lacks the confidence and knows not how to use the escalator. She hesitates to go through it. Then an elderly American couple understands her predicament. The man takes Feroza’s package from her hand and steps into escalator then the woman takes hold of Feroza’s arm and tells her to mind the cracks before the steps fall away and also escorts her down the escalator. And at the time when she has to step off, she holds Feroza firmly round the waist. Feroza laughs in an apologetic and embarrassed manner at her own ignorance. She feels very delighted on her unexpected adventure.

Another argument rises between Feroza and Manek about the proper use of deodorant. Due to excessive heat Feroza’s nylon-satin kamiz starts smelling and becomes sweaty. And Manek loses his temper, when he comes to know that Feroza does not use any deodorant. His own adoption of the sophisticated ways of America makes him impatient with Feroza, and makes him remark in an intolerable manner, as he says “that’s the trouble with you diesis. You don’t’ even know what a deodorant is, and you want to make an atom bomb!” (74). Feroza is deeply hurt by his remark. And the after effect of this is seen two hours later, when Feroza emerges with a pair of jeans, a navy blue polka-dotted shirt, and a stick of deodorant.

Americans are more practical than others. Feroza has to deal with various tricky situations due to her emotional nature. In An American Brat, Sidhwa displays this through Feroza’s character. In February, Jo Feroza’s friend brings a
small cat and names him, ‘Kim.’ But after two weeks, she feels fed up with him and now, she is not willing to fulfil her responsibility towards Kim. Jo takes Kim for a long ride in her car and dumps him outside the city limits. When Feroza returns from college, she is shocked by Kim’s absence. When Jo returns in the evening she asks her about the cat and with her characteristic frankness Jo says, “Oh, Kim… He was yowling and jumping all over. I left him near some farmhouses. Someone’ll look after him” (160).

On hearing this remark Feroza’s eyes fill with tears. She becomes very upset by Jo’s unsympathetic behaviour; she shouts at Jo—“How dare you do this. He’ll freeze to death!” (160). This is the first time that they have a serious quarrel. Feroza marches into her room and shuts the door. Jo tries her best to console her, but she is emotionally shattered.

Next morning, they are awakened by a heart-rending mewing and Feroza takes the cat in, under her own responsibility. Now, the cat is shifted to his emotional companion, Feroza. Feroza requests her counsellor and Emily Simms to help her for a job and very soon she starts her job in the registration office on the campus and now she tries to support her cat. She brings cans of cat food and she goes home between classes to feed the cat and clean the litter. Now, she keeps the door of her room closed to keep the cat out of Jo’s sight.

Feroza and the cat enjoy each other’s company; she takes him in her lap, enjoys and plays with him. Then, according to Jo and Feroza’s agreement, Jo finds a suitable home for Kim and she succeeds in achieving Feroza’s tearful approval. After Kim’s departure Feroza feels very upset and home-sick. She misses her grandmothers, her parents, friends and cousins. Suddenly she becomes aware of her traditional background and finds herself alone in an alien environment.
In *An American Brat*, Sidhwa throws light on one of the basic contrasts, between the attitudes of the Eastern and Western women. In the novel, the novelist shows the differences between Feroza’s mother and Jo’s mother. Feroza’s mother represents the eastern women; she takes good care of household. She has full control over the servants and she gives them woollen, shoes in the winters along with their pay. She also provides them with medicines and homeopathy cures to their children, when need arises. She fulfils all her responsibilities as a wife, daughter and mother. Zareen shares all her problems with her husband and also takes care of his belongings. She serves him good food and gives attention to even minor things. She takes Feroza to holy sites like – the shrines and the temples.

On the contrary, Mrs. Miller, Jo’s mother represents the bold lady of the Western world. She takes Feroza and Jo to the race course for gambling. She always indulges herself in her passion for gambling without noticeable neglect to her responsibilities. She is the restaurant’s cashier, cook, waitress and solicitous hostess, but she always steals money from the restaurant money – locker. Mr. Miller complaints about this to Feroza and Jo, thus:

> You won’t’ believe this… Guess how much she took today? I went out to get the paper and when I got back; the cash register was empty, cleaned out – nothing but small change. I wish we’d have a real live hold up – a robber with a loaded gun. At least I’d have a fighting chance! But with Teresa, I can to do nothing. (208)

Bapsi Sidhwa in her novel *The Bride* depicts the possessive side of Eastern man’s love for a lady. In the present novel, Farukh represents eastern approach whereas Carol, Farukh’s wife belongs to the West. Sidhwa shows a lot of difference in their thinking and degree of possessiveness in love. Farukh meets
Carol at Capwell in San Francisco where she works as a sales-girl at the cosmetics counter. Farukh goes there to purchase creams, lotion, lipsticks, perfumes etc. for his sisters, cousins and aunts. After their first meeting, the relationship moves forward and they decide to marry. Then, Farukh tells her not to continue her job and Carol at once gives up her job. “I don’t like to see you waiting on all kinds of men” (107). After this, his possessiveness grows further and he tells Carol that he does not want her to go out with anyone, but only with himself, not even with Pam her best friend. This hurts Carol deeply but she accepts this as a sign of his deep love. Carol having been brought up in an independent atmosphere is not able to understand these restrictions.

In *The Bride*, Bapsi Sidhwa displays the contrasts and the admiration of the natives for the beauty and personality of the Western races. Zaitoon, a beautiful girl from the plains of Pakistan gets filled with admiration when she encounters Carol, Farukh’s foreign wife. Zaitoon stares at Carol in wide–eyed admiration for her light bright skin, her beautiful golden hair and her strange light trousers. When Carol praises her and considers her beautiful, Zaitoon is confused; she covers her face with her shawl. This shy and confused attitude is very alien to Carol, whereas Carol’s confident attitude is new for Zaitoon.

After Zaitoon’s discovery of her adoption, killing of her parents, the remembrance of the vision of bloodshed of partitions, she weeps silently and is not even able to express her grief. Carol tries to console her. She gives her an embroidered cheddar, a slab of chocolate and some oranges. Zaitoon raises her head and she is full of gratitude for Carol. For an intuitive instant, Carol feels herself submerged in the helpless drift of Zaitoon’s life.
Sidhwa presents one with a conservative picture of the Eastern Culture, in which men are supposed to be superior to women. In the novel, *The Bride Carol*, who is brought up in the Western atmosphere of freedom, individuality, equality and independence, feels very awkward about this approach. When Major Mushtaq asks her what she did before marrying Farukh, she very casually tells him about her studies and her parents. But she has learnt to keep the information about her job at Capwell in San Fransico to herself. Because she has already felt a bewildering snobbishness towards working girls since her arrival in Pakistan. Sheila McLeod’s observation in the context runs as follows:

Women’s work has long been downgraded and devalued when compared to men’s work, male muscular strength has been prized above the female capacity for physical endurance, men have been the owners of wealth and property, the wielder of authority, the holder of power, the achievers, the doers, the go–getters. While women have been barred from such apparently desirable positions and behaviours. (67)

Somehow, by now she realizes Farukh’s behaviour as arrogant which she earlier thought as his unique deep love. In his way, she tries to mould herself in the eastern way of life.

In her third novel, *The Crow Eaters*, Bapsi Sidhwa presents another angle of the encounter between the East and the West. The wives in the East consider their husband somehow more superior to them. According to the traditional customs, a wife should walk three paces behind her husband, when they go anywhere together. In the present novel, Faredoon Junglewalla is close to the white officials in Lahore and is frequently invited to their parties and get together. His
wife Putli is a traditional lady and so she does not want to go out so frequently and especially to such parties. Putli’s problem is that she has to walk a step ahead of her husband and for dutiful and God fearing wife like Putli, it is very difficult to put aside her conservative approach. She does not like the western ways and customs where a wife thinks herself to be equal to her husband. She considers this hypocritical and pretentious, but she has to adopt these manners. “Non-Western world is still ruled by the Western world morally and intellectually…” (27).

The other problem for Putli, relating to Western code of conduct is to shake hand with anyone. Faredoon takes effective measures to introduce his wife to the higher officials and the VIP’s like the Governor, but he has to give a dutiful, husbandly pinch to Putli to make her ready for the action. In The Crow Eaters, Sidhwa shows another aspect of influence of the West on the East. In the novel, Sidhwa shows the Western influence through Tanya. When she is introduced in the novel, she is wearing a white sports outfits and a pair of white tennis–shoes. Her way of introducing herself is very Western, as considered by Putli and Jerbanoo.

Bapsi Sidhwa also exhibits the disillusionment of the migrants from the east and their disappointment when they reach the countries of their dreams and realize that all is not a bed of roses for them. In The Crow Eaters, Faredoon, Putli and Jerbanoo go to visit England. Within two days of landing in London their disillusionment is complete.

For them England is a land of crowns and thrones, splendid attire, cool-eyed noblemen and fair-haired ladies. But now they see the very ordinary life-style and vision of English men which is totally different from the very royal, dignified and magnificent style displayed by them in Pakistan during the colonial rule. They
are looking Englishmen sweep roads, clean windows and cart garbage. They are shocked to see all this and their eyes are questioning, as they feel:

Where were the kings and queens, the lord and ladies and their gleaning carriages? Where were the men and women with haughty, compelling eyes and arrogant mean? They realized in a flash that the superiority the British displayed in India was assumed acquired from the exotic setting, like their tan. (*Brat* : 253)

Mrs. and Mr. Charles P. Allen invite them to stay in their house. And the final blow to them is – when they come to know that Mrs. Allen has no servants except for an insolvent and slovenly maid who comes for an hour each morning. Mrs. Allen has changed greatly since they last remembered her in Lahore. Her stylish languor and dignity as a commissioner’s wife seems to be lost. The hosts are overwhelmingly hospitable. Their guests are charming and thankful–except Jerbanoo.

Due to continuous problem between Jerbanoo and Mrs. Allen, they shift to a hotel in the Oxford Street. Then, a major problem arises for Jerbanoo–their hotel does not provide attached baths. There is one bathroom and three tiny lavatories at the end of the corridor and she is instructed to bathe only once every three days, due to the high expense. Jerbanoo is shocked at this as he says, “Have you lost your self–respect? Don’t’ tell me you dry-clean your-self! Don’t’ tell me you have forced my daughter to dry-clean! Oh God! That I should live to see this dirty day!” (267).

Jerbanoo is brought up to believe that cleanliness is Godliness, and she refuses to fail in her religious practice of bathing daily. When Faredoon and Putli leave the hotel, she goes to take bath and runs across the corridor with her jar. The
jar looks like a handle less, pot-bellied kettle. It is carved and looks like an ancient thing. So, Freddy restricts her to use this jar in the hotel. But, she is dissatisfied and feels cruelly cheated of her daily bath.

One morning, an idea occurs to Jerbanoo. She decides to take her bath in the balcony which is about eight feet long and five feet wide, having wall at both ends. Then, she fills a small tub with water from the tap in their room and places it in the balcony, and starts the action, but her amusement is disturbed by the Englishman, who occupies the room immediately beneath their—“What the hell’s going on up there? Do you hear me? Stop it – whatever you’re doing!” (268).

The management of the hotel has to face a violent protest by that Englishman and he leaves the hotel within an hour. Then, Faredon is seriously reproached and he immediately decides to return to Lahore. Jerbanoo is now happy that she does not have to encounter the problems like good behaviour and sophisticated Western life-style.

Sidhwa compares the prevailing conditions of the Eastern countries (in Post-Colonial era) with the European colonist countries. In An American Brat, Sidhwa presents this aspect through Feroza’s character. In the novel during her visit to Pakistan Feroza discusses the condition of the blacks and the Hispani, the poverty and the job insecurity prevailing even among the whites in America; and her friends, uncles, aunts and her family look at her with surprise. As the novelist writes:

They had their own vistas of uncompromising poverty and could not feel compassion for people in a distant, opulent country that had never been devastated by war, that greedily utilised one fourth of the world’s resources and polluted its atmosphere and water with
nuclear test and poisonous pesticides that could serve as well to obliterate Third World pests like themselves. (238)

When Feroza sees the filthy conditions of jhuggees (huts), she understands the difference of conditions. The poor in America have electricity, running water and a fridge but the conditions are worst in the eastern countries. “…The people who dwelt in the rag-and-tin lean-tos and in infested, stinking, jhuggees without bathroom or electricity” (239).

The unemployment is increasing due to the over-population and the desire for the western accommodates, the native production is vanishing day by day. The western companies occupy the production market, and put the local producer out of the race. Abdul R. Jan. Mohamed’s observation attests this: “European colonists have destroyed the native mode of production in these pre capitalist areas, disrupting their native social relations of production with capitalist social relations and values” (209).

Common people go crazy about the imported goods. And this leads to poverty, economic loss for small-scale industries, and unemployment for eastern labourers. Frederic Jameson has the following remark: “…transforms its relationship to its colonies from an old-fashioned, imperialist control to market penetration, destroying the older village communities and creating a whole new wage–labour pool and lump enproletarait” (94).

Sidhwa depicts the various influential impressions of two different cultures when one encounters with each other in her writings. In her novel An American Brat, Sidhwa shows the effect of the West on the East and vice-versa. Manek, when comes to America for his studies, is impressed by the American life-style, discipline and modernization. The western culture influences him in a way that he
transforms himself from Manek to Mike. He now, considers his native land somehow inferior to America and he praises the West during his visit to Pakistan. The East also influences the West in the novel, by its traditions, customs and the rituals. Mrs. and Mr. Allen are highly impressed by the humble, helpful and respectful behaviour of the eastern people, and due to this co-operation, Mrs. Allen tries her best to serve Freddy, Putli and Jerbanoo, as a reciprocate gesture of respect, during their stay in London.

In a nutshell, Bapsi Sidhwa’s novels are like a canvas on which she portrays every picture with ruthlessly truthful and deeply perceptive colours, which throws light on the western life-style and vice-versa, and display both the cultures with an earthly zest, which is completely alien to the other. Sidhwa presents the encounter of the East and the West with simplicity and with so dignified manner that each culture looks nice and right in its own terms and situations. Through her works Sidhwa spreads an optimistic viewpoint regarding the adoption of the good points of every culture and suggests that one should ignore the weaknesses inherent in it.