Chapter – Five

Human Relationships

Baspi Sidhwa is an award winning Pakistani novelist striving above all to bring women’s issues of the Indian Sub-continent into public discussion. In contrast to the persistent orientalise constructions of the Indian woman as a passive victim, women writers from the Indian sub-continent have written prolifically and moving of women negotiating and resisting the multiple patriarchies that determine and shape their lives in diverse colonial as well as Diaspora situations.

Sidhwa in her novels–not only exhibits the position of women but also portrays the different aspects of human relationships. Whether that is the relationship of husband and wife, mother and son or the relationship of humanity and sympathy. Her works really provide fine sketches of a certain time and place, and the people who inhabited them. Sidhwa not only shows the subordinate position but also portrays the feelings of love, warmth and care of man for his various relations; in this way Sidhwa exhibits a true and impartial picture of the society.

Sidhwa presents the picture of conservative societies, where respect for and authority of men is held superior to the self-respect and sacrifice of woman. In her novels Sidhwa shows various incidents where a woman becomes helpless because of her conservative approach. In An American Brat Deepak (Shashi’s brother) who is a businessman from Delhi, goes to America along with his wife, so that his baby will take birth in the United States and this will get their child the most coveted United States’ citizenship. But opposite to their expectation Mala gives birth to a girl child and Deepak sees his dream unfulfilled and shattered. So, he refuses to
pay fifteen thousand dollars, as per the demand of the hospital authorities, and tells them to keep the baby. Mala being a conservative wife is not able to take any step against her husband’s wish; consoles herself with the tears of grief. But she tries to make Deepak aware of her love for the baby, “he gave her away because she’s a girl! I bet he’d have gotten the money if she was a boy” (*Brat:* 253).

Shashi becomes very upset, calls Feroz and tells her all about the situation. On Feroz’s insistence Rhonda, phones her uncle, who is a surgeon at Denver General, so that with his approach, the baby can be brought back. Mala becomes happy at this and she makes Deepak agree to pay one thousand dollars and get the baby back from the hospital. Next day, Deepak and Mala go to the hospital and bring their little daughter home and this fills Mala’s eyes with the brightness of joy, happiness and gratitude.

Another incident is portrayed by Sidhwa in *The Bride*, which shows the control and possessiveness of a tribal husband, Sakhi for his wife Zaitoon. Sakhi is filled with jealousy, when he is reminded of the support of the jawan given to Zaitoon and her father all the way down to the river. He is not able to understand the things like courtesy and help. ‘I saw you,’ he shouted. “I saw the jawan hold your arm all the way down to the river. ‘Sakhi’s face was contorted with fury’” (165). Zaitoon becomes confused, but Sakhi accuses her continuously. “You laughed together as if your were lovers. I could hear you all the way across the river” (165), cried Sakhi, burying his face in his hands. Zaitoon stares at him unable to fathom his accusations, feels stricken, and then starts weeping. But she is not able to answer him. She does not understand the reason of Sakhi’s furious behaviour.
After the marriage, Sakhi starts treating her cruelly like some inferior being and beating her on the slightest excuse. Being brought up in a conservative household he thinks himself as a controller and the authority holder. He wants to treat his wife as a prized possession. He always tries to control her every activity. *The Reader’s Digest* has the following remarks for this context:

… The belief in women according to which they assume that they are powerless. This belief is based on a lie, perhaps propagated by men. This lie leads them to get into complicity with men the powerful. (36)

Even when Zaitoon goes to the river to fill water, he forbids her to go there again. His aggressive behaviour disturbs her and Zaitoon feels herself a prey in her superior’s hand. After his inhuman treatment Zaitoon runs away. He searches her everywhere and he regards it as his biggest failure, and the feeling of loss of his control intolerable to him, as he speculates, “The thought sickened him. No most likely, she had slipped and hurt herself. Possibly even now a mountain leopard was at her. He prayed it might be so. She couldn’t have run away. She wouldn’t dare…” (189).

Like Zaitoon, another woman suffering from a similar predicament is Carol. Carol is brought up in a very independent and free atmosphere. As such she is not able to understand the restrictions laid on her by her husband, Farukh. Farukh even before their marriage begins to control her. He tells her to give up her job. “I don’t like to see you waiting on all kinds of men” (107). This hurts Carol terribly, but she accepts his decision as her respect of his deep and unique love. But then, he also announced another wish that he does not want her to go out with anyone except himself. This time Carol becomes confused as she is not able to
understand him. After their marriage the intensity of the control and the grip of bondage grow. Carol tries her best to adjust herself in Pakistan, but all her efforts are ignored by Farukh, and he continues even to criticize her always. He becomes angry when she speaks to his friends and her genuine behaviour disturbs Farukh, “don’t you know if you look a man in the eye it means he can have you?” (108). Every time Farukh becomes more and more insecure and so every time he wants to tighten the grip of control with much intensity.

Another factor of this problem is shown by Billy and Tanya in *The Crow Eaters*. Billy always tries to influence his wife, Tanya. When she is introduced to Billy, he is impressed by her dressing sense and appeal, but later in the novel, after their marriage, he expects from her a change in dress-code, so that no one may be able to measure her beauty. He orders her, ‘Button up your cardigan! (260), when the hotel clerk admires her beauty. He always instructs her to behave as per his own conditions: “Tanya … Don’t’ look straight into people’s eyes. I know you don’t mean anything – but men misunderstand. They get bad ideas” (216).

Billy now becomes the king of his household and the controller even of Tanya. His commandments are directed at her, in order of preference.

Thou shalt not spend money!

Thou shalt not waste

Thou shalt give me a minutely detailed account of expenses

Thou shalt obey thy husband, and jump to his bidding

Thou shalt bring up thy children to obey and love me

.................................................................

Thou shalt never require anything

Thou and thy children shall not disturb me. (1-3, 6-7)
His commandments continue endlessly. Billy’s tyrannies begin with sunrise. He opens his eyes and from that very moment everybody in the house starts work, the newspaper is rushed, he refreshes himself and the cup of tea is served; as soon as the cup of the tea is empty, it is replaced by another. Then, he meets his business audience the contractors, land-agents, purchasers and dealers. After that Billy takes bath, and his clothes are laid out, his breakfast is ready, and the moment he walks into the dining room the cook puts the buttered egg on the stove, and serves breakfast. Tanya always misses her things; a watch on the bathroom shelf, a bit of jewellery left carelessly on the dressing table, but now she has finally learnt to be as careful of her belonging as Billy wishes.

Another couple whose relationship reflects the conservative attitude is Faredoon Junglewalla and Putli. Putli takes full care of Freddy’s needs, from his belonging to his food. She respects him and considers him superior to herself. Putli understands Freddy and takes care of his every necessity. She has a team of servants cooking for her, but she insists on doing little things for her husband. She rises very early and does her prayers; her religious song fills the house with cheerfulness, good-health and prospering vibrations. She serves Freddy with tea, pastries, cakes, bread and butter and on this time she discusses and reports him about the household. Like any other good housewife, she keeps the servants busy; carpets are cleaned, furniture moves aside and floors are scrubbed with soap and water. Putli also instructs her children to respect their father. She refers to herself as a dutiful and God-fearing wife. She revolts against the demand of Freddy that she must walk a step ahead of Freddy in the parties on the Englishmen and other officials. She considers this as hypocritical and pretentious. But as an ideal wife
she has to perform these kinds of activities, for Freddy. Putli tries to convey her ideas of respect to her husband, also to her daughters.

When her daughter, Yasmin visits them in Lahore, Putli is shocked to see her push aside, her husband, Bobby and rush forward to greet them like any other bold English girl. But again when Putli notices Yasmi precedes her husband down the steps and into the carriages, she is not able to control herself and she rebukes Yasmin for her ill-mannered behaviour.

In *An American Brat*, Aban who lives in America is very conservative in her approach to life. When her husband Manek talks about divorce, alimony and her share in their house, she becomes upset. She takes this discussion as an ill-omen. Being brought up in Pakistan, she feels the customs from heart. “Aban had heard ever since that she could remember that a wife only left her husband’s house feet first, in her coffin” (259). After this incident, she is not able to sleep. Aban is sensible, bright, candid and cheerful. She has wisely shed many of her illusions about marriage and romance, some within a few days of her marriage in Karachi and some in the United States; with grace and without showing her pain.

She tries to adjust herself in every situation, even when Manek changes his name to ‘Mike.’ She starts calling him Mike when they are with the Americans, but she always feels hesitant about it, “But it’s taken me a while to get used to it.” (260). Aban likes cooking and feels happy to serve food to her husband and the guests. When Feroza visits them, she prepares delicious prawn patia, the fragrant saffron and lentil rice; everybody praises Aban for her tasty meal.

A unique type of relationship is exhibited by Zareen, a somewhat conservative wife of Cyrus. She always tries to be modern, but she is traditional at heart. She respects her husband, takes good care of his necessities; she welcomes
him when he returns home from his shop, she dutifully helps him putting off his blazer, gives him pyjamas and slipper from the dressing room and like many other wives every report of the household to Cyrus.

The most fascinating aspect of human relationship is ‘love,’ which has various forms of expression whether that may be spiritual, intellectual or physical. Sidhwa portrays different attitudes of this factor. She exhibits physical love between various characters with sensational expressions. In An American Brat, David and Feroza love each other. Feroza shifts, to David’s house as one of the paying-guests. Her living in the same house with David affects the level of their intimacy. Their feelings become more intense.

After this, it is natural for them to be physically close to each other, to tenderly touch each other, to abandon themselves to the ardent intoxication of their youthful hormones. Feroza was a swept off, her feet as she could wish, as David wished her to be.

In The Bride, Sidhwa presents the physical relationship between Zaitoon and Sakhi. Initially, Sakhi behaves in a very lustful manner, but when Zaitoon screams with fear, he comes to his senses and apologies silently through his eyes. They both try to trust each other. As the novelist writes:

Sakhi was above her. She lusted to graft herself to him, and not knowing even how to hold him to herself, lay stiff beneath him. Sakhi tried to penetrate her. Obstructed by her straight stiff legs, he sat back on his heels. His heart welled with tenderness and pride at his bride’s obvious innocence. (163)

But, later this love vanishes when Zaitoon’s romantic imagination encounters with the savage reality of her new world. In her novels, Sidhwa exhibits
selfless love of a mother for her son, a father for her daughter and vice-versa. She
gives a very high standard of his kind of intellectual love. The central significance
of the parent child relationship in these works illuminates the primary social role
that families play in Asian communities.

In *The Bride*, the whole story revolves around Zaitoon, and her father
Qasim, Sidhwa presents a heart touching, emotional bond of father-daughter
relationship. Zaitoon, an orphan, is adopted by Qasim. During the Partition of
India–Pakistan, Zaitoon’s parents were killed. Her parents Sikander and Zohra are
in that very train, in which Qasim was travelling. In an attack, they are killed.
Qasim somehow escapes and saves his life. He moves silently in the dark night
then, suddenly a short form is hurtled out of the dark at him. As he says:

Clinging to his legs, she sobbed ‘Abba, Abba, and my Abba!’ For a
moment Qasim lost his wits. The child was the size of his own little
Zaitoon lost so long ago. Her sobs sounded an eerie, forlorn echo
from his past, and then brutally untangling her stubborn grasp, he
plunged ahead. The child stumbled after him, screaming with terror.
Fearing the danger from that noise, Qasim waited for the child to
catch up. (29)

The little girl feels satisfied and presses herself to him for protection. A
great tenderness sweeps over him. He holds the girl in his arms and hurries towards
Lahore to reach a refugee camp. When they reach the refugee camp, the girl now
perched on Qasim’s shoulder is filled with hope. “Will we find my mother and
father here?”(30). They try their best to find Zaitoon’s parents but the search ends
in futility. Then, Qasim tries to console the little innocent soul, as he says, “I think
your people are dead... you saw what happened last night... I am your father, your new father. You are my little Zaitoon babe... Aren’t you?” (33).

Qasim fulfills his duty as a father with great dedication and affections. He loves Zaitoon and tries to give her every happiness in childhood. She plays with other children of the street, and feels happy in the company of Nikka and Miriam. Recollections of the horrible bloodshed of that night, of her parents soon fade into oblivion. As the novelist observes:

He saw to it that Zaitoon attended school for a full five years. Awed by her recital of the mysterious Urdu alphabet and by her struggle on the Tahiti, a wooden slate coated daily with mud-paste, he tried to learn from her. When she began writing in a book he gave up. (Bride : 52)

And when, Zaitoon becomes a young lady, Miriam suggests Qasim to search for a suitable match for her. Qasim becomes nostalgic about his life in the mountains and he finalises Zaitoon’s marriage with his cousin’s son, Sakhi, who lives in Karakoram Range of mountains. Zaitoon dreams about her would be husband, the new atmosphere and the life-style but on their way, to Qasim’s ancestral village, Zaitoon comes to know about her parents’ murder and her getting adopted by Qasim. This hurts her a lot; she weeps silently and tries to convince herself. “Just the same he is my father…” (Bride : 136).

Somehow her heart is filled with the pain that her parents are dead. A tenuous echo from her past surfaces to her consciousness and she talks to herself tonelessly, “my father and my mother are dead”. These worlds rock eerily in Qasim’s mind and he fills with sympathy and loves for her and tries to fill the gap by consoling her, as he says, “Zaitoon, why’d you say that? Am I not your father?
Haven’t I loved you dearly? I had three children, once. But now you’re all I have in the world. Munni, please stop crying. Am I not dear to you?” (Bride : 41).

Qasim’s painful expressions, melts Zaitoon’s heart and she sobs “Forgive me, Abba” and she kisses his fingers and weeps to forget her pain and sorrow. Qasim arranges Zaitoons’ marriage with Sakhi, but Zaitoon is not satisfied with this decision. She is thrilled with the thought of life which is completely different from the life on the plains. But somehow she thinks that Qasim does everything, which is best possible for her. After their meeting with Carol in the camp, Zaitoon realizes the problem of adjustment with different environment. And she tries to convince Qasim, “Abba, her ways are different from ours?” (Bride : 40). But on this remark Qasim rebukes her.

In the depth of her consciousness Zaitoon is now aware of her origin, adoption and pedigree. She relates no more about herself with the tribal people and her beautiful imagination starts to collapse. “But, I am not the hills. I am not of your tribe. I am not even yours” (140). After two days of her marriage Zaitoon is shocked when she comes to know that her father is leaving for Lahore.

Zaitoon’s total past seems to depart from her with the departure of Qasim. She feels piteously vulnerable and weeps continuously, Qasim tries to console her. “Hush Munni” (167), but she sobs and cries, You will be coming to Lahore soon – to have your first – born. I’ll visit you often, I promise. I’ll bring Miriam and Nikka to see you…? Now, Zaitoon realizes the change that occurs in her life. ‘Father ... Don’t go! Don’t go! Qasim is touched by his daughter’s affection while Zaitoon’s heart is sinking at the thought of separation from her father. Abba, I’m coming with you. Abba! But Qasim tries to make himself rigid’ …Breaking the old woman’s hold and running to Qasim, Wait for me! She reached him and
panting, wrapped her limbs round him in a frenzied hug. ‘I’m coming with you. Take me, Abba, she begged. A village dog bark excitedly about them (Bride :167).

In An American Brat, Sidhwa represents another realistic picture of Father – daughter relationship. Cyrus’ daughter Feroza loves him and never wants to do anything which disturbs Cyrus. When she is a young student in a school, he tries to convince her to take part in the play; that she feels very confused and later, when she sees Cyrus’s rude and strict expression towards her, she politely refuses him, saying ‘I’m sorry, I don’t think I’ll be able to act in the play. You know how it is my father won’t like it. Please don’t come again. Don’t ‘phone, please’(16).

Cyrus is very excited at the thought of Feroza’s visit to America and when Feroza returns to Pakistan during her vacations he is very impressed with the transformation in his daughter. But later Cyrus is shocked to see David’s photograph, and his heart is filled with anger, pain and worry for Feroza’s future. When Zareen goes to America to solve the problem, he gives her ‘bribe money’ to save her daughter’s life.

Another father-daughter relationship in An American Brat is of Jo and her father, Mr. Miller. He loves Jo, but like many other American parents, he never interferes in her life. Jo takes her decisions independently. Sometimes she even does not consider his advice. But Mr. Miller has very high dreams about Jo, because he loves Jo more than her siblings. He shares his feelings and problems with her and complaints about Mrs. Miller’s habit of gambling to Jo. He is a very nice and patient man, kind by nature.

Sidhwa also exhibits human relationships through the portrayal of mother-son relation. In The Crow Eaters, she shows the intensity of this relationship through Putli’s character. She has four daughters and three sons. Putli loves her
children but Soli is her favourite and she always takes care of all his needs. But unfortunately Soli dies at the early age of twenty one. And this shock fills Putli with grief and sorrow. In his prolonged illness Putli always attends him. When Soli is in coma, Putli sits on the bare floor of the room and weeps hopelessly, as she is aware of her son’s critical condition. On the third day of this, Soli dies. But Putli is not able to separate herself from Soli. She sits near the corpse. She weeps continuously.

Jerbanoo and Hutoxi try to console her. They embrace and support her and wipe her tears but Putli is not in the condition to understand anything. She stares at the body as if it will return to life. Putli weeps uncontrollably, when the pall-bearers drape a white sheet over the corpse, and lift the body on to the iron bier and take it away on their shoulders. But after Soli’s death, her youngest son, Billy tries his best to fill Soli’s absence and bridge the gap. He takes good care of Freddy’s business and the household. Putli at the time feels happy about Billy. Now, she loves Billy the most and the vacuum left in her heart by Soli’s death is somehow filled by Billy.

When Junglewalla family receives a marriage proposal from Sir Easy money family for Billy, Freddy, decides to send Putli with Billy to Bombay. Putli faces a very different problem in Bombay, when Billy likes his would-be wife’s (Roshan) sister (Tanya) and wants to marry her. Putli tries to change his decision but is not able to do so. Then, she has to write a letter to Easy money family for the marriage proposal for Tanya. And the proposal is accepted. After Billy’s marriage Freddy and Putli present a new house to the new couple. On their return from honeymoon, and their arrival in the new house, Putli performs the honours and all religious rituals for the happy life of Billy and Tanya.
Putli always worries about her third son Yazdi. Putli feels upset about the disputes and differences between Freedy and Yazdi. The problem begins when Yazdi tells his wish to marry an Anglo-Indian girl, Rosy Watson. And Freedy does not permit him to do so, because it is against their religion to marry a non-Parsee and later he also discovers that she is a prostitute in Hira Mandi. Yazdi is very sympathetic by nature, so, Putli always takes her side to save him from Freddy’s anger.

Putli is disturbed one day when Yazdi returns from school barefoot. He has given his shoes to an orphan in his class, but Putli quietly replaces them. After few days he returns without his shirt and the day after in only his underpants. He has distributed his clothes to the beggars. And this act fills everybody in the house with suspense and shock. Freddy decides to send Yazdi to a school in Karachi. But, he runs away from that school. Putli is very upset and she remembers him and weeps.

Later, when Putli, Jerbanoo and Billy go to Bombay in order to attend Billy’s engagement, the latter meets Yazdi on the beach. Billy tells Putli, about his meeting with him and the poor condition of Yazdi, whose condition fills her with grief. Billy tells her that he has invited Yazdi to meet her and Jerbanoo, and this arouses excitement in Putli. She waits for him, all night but he does not come to meet her.

Jerbanoo, as the grandmother of Billy, Soli and Yazdi, loves them from the core of her heart. She always takes the side of her grand-sons when Freddy is angry with them, and she tries to protect them. When Freddy gets angry with Yazdi for his wish to marry Rosy Watson, Yazdi locks himself in his room for three days. He refuses to answer the knocks. He does not eat anything but accepts only a jug of
water from Putli. Then Jerbanoo decides to confront Freddy for Yazdi’s sake. As the novelist puts it:

God knows what her son-in-law had told the boy? He was so tender, so green, and so sensitive; and didn’t she know how brutal her son-in-law could be! How unfeeling, how selfish! Her grandson would sicken; he would die. Even now he was nothing but skin and bones and eyes. What kind of father was Freddy? (Brat : 157)

When Soli is ill, Jerbanoo is in constant attendance upon the patient. She wets his forehead, gives him medicine and takes care of his necessities. Soli’s death is a big shock for her and she sobs aloud and weeps continuously; she also consoles her daughter, Putli. After, the ceremony for the welfare of the departed soul, the entire family visits the site of the grave on the fifth day. Jerbanoo’s heart is filled with grief and separation from her grandson. She declares to be alive with Soli and after his death, she announces—“I want the plot right next to Soli reserved for me. Putli, promise you will bury me here” (Brat : 180).

In An American Brat, Sidhwa puts light on the motherly love of Khutlibai for her son, Manek. When he reaches Lahore airport from America, she welcomes him with motherly love and affection. Tear fills her eyes with the shine of happiness. Khutlibai and Zareen search for suitable wife for Manek. And they select Aban—a slight, velvet – eyed, fair-skinned girl with a nightingale’s voice for Manek. During the preparations, Khutlibai’s house takes a festive air. The ceremonies relating to the wedding are to be arranged. And Khutlibai and Zareen take the whole charge. She is happy with Manek’s choice and she never wants the dowry, as she says, “Her daughter-in-law would be welcome if she came with
nothing but the clothes on her back. She would cover Aban with diamonds.' She gifts a three-karat solitaire to Aban” (*Brat* : 222).

Bapsi Sidhwa not only describes blood relations, but she also submits the picture of human relations filled with the colours of sympathy and concern. The noble men help the women in their problems and unfortunate situations. In the novel, Feroza who is with Manek somehow gets separated and so feels lonely and fearful; a policeman – Ben, helps her out of the situation. He inquires about her address, but Feroza becomes upset “Sorry, I think I’ve lost it” (131). She even does not have the money. She does not know the nearest Pakistan consulate. They try to console her, but Feroza is close to tears, she does not know how to react. She is not even able to locate Manek, as she observes, “Lemme get this straight. You have no money, no passport. You don’t know where you’re going, and you have no address. You have an uncle who appears to have abandoned you and no phone numbers. What’re we to do with you?” (*Brat* : 132).

Feroza turns her helpless eyes to Ben and her innocent looks compel Ben to take the decision in her favour. Ben announces, “We’ll cruise around the parking lot again, and if your uncle isn’t there, we’ll go to the police station. But then Manek arrives and takes Feroza with him” (*Brat* : 133).

Sidhwa also exhibits this type of sympathetic attitude and concern through the character of Major Mushtaq, in her novel, *The Bride*. Zaitoon runs away from her husband, Sakhi’s house, though she knows that by the tribal code the punishment for such an act is only death. All the tribesmen search for her, to kill her and save their pride. After struggling for many days, Zaitoon reaches near the bridge which connects the tribal territory with the civilized world. But her husband with his companions is present there in search of her, so she conceals herself in the
dark. Then, suddenly she hears the Major’s voice and she tries to contact him, “Major Sahib? Major Sahib” (238). The Major has instructed her to lie low in her place so that no one is able to find her or even suspect her presence. The instruction freezes Zaitoon in the fury of the winds and the noise of the river. Mushtaq wanders idly on the sand. Her location is fixed in his mind. He somehow is able to stand near her concealment place and assures her, “You’re safe. Don’t make a noise. I’ll take you to safety…” (Brat : 239).

Zaitoon is now aware of Mushtaq’s condition and alerts him of the presence of Sakthi and his tribes’ men. Mushtaq successfully handles the crises and helps Zaitoon to escape from the under-bridge concealment place. As the novelist writes:

Careful not to show his head above the rim of granite, he spread first the girl’s blanket on the ground and then, removing his khaki great-coat, spread that on the blanket. ‘You’ll be all right. Don’t worry,’ he whispered. He pulled the girl down to the coat and helped her arms into the sleeves. He lifted her, huddled in a natal curl in the blanket. He could balance the bundle with one hand. Pear-like in shape, it weighed not much more than his five year old daughter. He bent down and gently shifted the bundle to his back. (Brat : 239)

One of the soldiers sees Major and he offers his help, but Major refuses and inquires about the tribesmen. Then, after the Major’s signal, the Jawans, take their position in a way that they can guard side and back, so that no one can see the bundle and the girl. At this moment, Sakhi appears; on the Major’s signal Ashiq goes to handle him. Ashiq inquires about any news of the girls. Sakhi is active, a jawan slips ahead of the formation and Sakhi sees the bundle on Major’s back and
inquires about it, but Ashiq tries to satisfy him, “Allah knows! He has strange hobbies. He collects thinks: stones and chunks of wood…” (Brat: 241).

Ashiq knows about Major’s habit of collecting herbs and old roots. But Sakhi wants the answer from Major himself, “What have you got there… on your back? And the answer matches. But then, Sakhi doubts about the homespun tribal blaket. Mushtaq now changes the whole situation and very smartly puts Sakhi in an emotional trap.” “Is it yours? I found it by the girl’s body. She’s bad shaped; you’d better bury her. I needed something to hold the roots, so I took the blanket. I will return it. I’m sorry to bring you this sad news” (Brat: 241-242).

Sakhi is not sad about the news, but he concentrates himself on the blanket but Major tackles the situation cleverly. He orders the soldiers to leave ‘the bundle of herbs in the mess and bring the blanket back. Sakhi’s eyes searches for the blanket. In order to control the situation the Major shouts at his fellow soldiers. “Get away, you shameless bastards. The youth has news of his wife’s death and you stand around gaping!” Now, he pretends to console Sakhi for his loss and pain, and he realizes that this is the right time to turn the situation in his own favour, as he attests:

Your wife is dead. Understand me? You have no option. You have to take my word for it. She is dead. I swear no one will say otherwise… If they make a liar of me they will be blasted like those rocks. I give you my word. Your honour will not be sullied. This is no man’s business but yours. (Brat: 243)

Then, Mushtaq tells him about the place where he has seen the body, then Sakhi investigates the place – he sees the prints where the girl has learned, fallen and bled, and also finds the piece of cloth of Zaitoon’s dress, and shed threads of
the blanket. The proof is enough to convince him. Sakhi weeps but this is not out of grief of the separation from his wife. But rather he feels humiliated at his inability to take revenge.

Then, on the arrival of Misri Khan and Yunus Sakhi tells them that Zaitoon is dead, and does not answer their questions. And they go back to their territory. Zaitoon is sheltered in the camp till she is sent away from this orthodox kind of atmosphere to the normal world.

Bapsi Sidhwa also presents the materialistic aspect of human relationships in which a man tries to take advantage of woman and vice-versa. In An American Brat, she describes Mike’s nature of taking advantage of Jo. Mike is a good-looking, charming and phenomenally unreliable boyfriend of Jo. Jo does all kinds of domestic works to keep Mike happy. She washes his clothes, cleans the apartment and lends him her own car. Mike always asks Jo for money. And Jo in order to fulfil financial needs starts working on two jobs and also borrows money from Feroza. Feroza is aware of Mike’s intentions that he only uses Jo. She also finds that Mike is a thief. He steals little things from Jo’s apartment like a gold chain, an onyx bowl, electrical clock etc. Mike’s behaviour takes a violent note when he beats Jo. Jo comes to Feroza, “Can you believe it? That asshole beat me up!” After that, Jo occasionally meets Mike. Mike has a key of Jo and Feroza’s apartment; and one evening he steals the TV, the music system, Jo’s computer, Feroza’s typewriter and other things and disappears for some time.

Feroza suspects him but Jo does not agree with her that Mike can do this. But one night, Mike comes to Jo to borrow her car. Jo refuses, saying, “You’re going to deal drugs or defence stuff that’s stolen. If you think I’m going to allow you to use my car of shit like that you’re crazy!” (169). Mike adopts an aggressive
start and leaves the place. Next evening, Mike goes to Jo’s restaurant and compels her to give him the car, but Jo refuses and accuses him of the theft, “I know you stole the stuff from our apartment” (189). Mike very casually accepts the allegation, ‘so what’re you going to do?’ (185). Jo is shocked on this reaction, and understands the reality of their relationship. Jo’s boss forces Mike to leave the restaurant.

However, only men do not exploit women as another relationship that illustrates the materialistic and exploitative aspect is of Yazdi and Rosy Watson. Rosy is Yazdi’s class-mate; she is aloof and sullen. Yazdi sits with her and shares his lunch with her. Every day she brings a new story of suffering. She tells him about her abominable stepmother, her spiteful brothers and sisters, and even that her father thrashes her.

Every time when Yazdi hears her story, his heart conflicts with pity, without knowing that she is an absolute liar and also a prostitute by profession in the Hira Mandi. Yazdi feels sympathy for her and he determines to end her sorrows: I cannot bear to see you like this… You don’t’ to live like this… I will marry you and take you away from that horrible house. I will marry (127). When Freddy comes to know about this, he changes Yazdi’s school. His new school is quite far from Yazdi’s former school. He is determined to meet Rosy, but it is impossible to go and meet Rosy within the break hours. So, he goes to his teacher and asks for permission to go out for an urgent work. Rosy Watson is not able to marry Yazdi in the novel.

While enacting the materialistic character on one side, Sidhwa also portrays on the other, the bond of understanding between man and woman, where both support each other and are good partners. In An American Brat Zareen and Cyrus
understand each other and try to develop a mutual understanding. When Zareen decides to send their daughter Feroza, to America, Cyrus supports her. After that when Feroza informs them of her wish to marry David, Zareen supports Cyrus’s decision to convince Feroza so that she changes her mind and marry a decent Parsee boy.

In *The Crow Eaters* Sidhwa projects Putli and Freedy as having a very close understanding. If she does or wants to do something that he considers intolerable. He takes a stern and unshakeable stand. Putli recognizes this quickly and modifies her own decision and respects his decision on such occasions. If she does something that Freddy considers stupid and wasteful, but not harmful, he shows his objections and immediately entertains her with his benevolent sanction.

In all other domestic matters Putli is free to decide everything. Freddy praises Putli for her honesty, wise-nature and for the absence of evil and the tendency to gossip, in her. He also appreciates her for her soft-hearted attitude. Putli dutifully performs her duties, serves Freddy his cup of tea with salted pastry, cakes, and bread and butter and also discusses every important detail with him.

At the time of Billy’s marriage, they perform the rituals as perfect life-partners. They stand behind Billy’s chair and bless him. And when priest eventually recites, “… Say whether you have agreed to take this maiden named Tanya in marriage to this bridegroom in accordance with the rise and customs of the Mazda worshippers…” (223) they accept with happiness and praise. Putli and Freedy always understand and respect each other.

Bapsi Sidhwa also shows a pure and indispensable relationship of Brother and Sister, in *The Crow Easters* in which she describes a naughty kind of bond between Billy and Yasmin. Billy finds Yasmin’s gold ring on the bathroom shelf
and he picks it up. Later, in the evening he feels very good to see Yasmin in a confused state. She searches for the ring here and there, but is not able to find the ring, presented by Freddy on her birthday. Later, he returns the ring, because he loves her, and only wants to correct her carless ways.

In *An American Brat*, Sidhwa depicts a sensible human relationship of a pure platonic friendship between man and woman, through Feroza and Shashi. Shashi is Feroza’s Indian friend from Delhi. Feroza likes his company; his readiness to accept people without reservation in this makes him a cherished companion. He gives Feroza his notes and copies of the assignments and papers, he had completed the previous years. He also introduces Feroza to his Bangladeshi, Tibetan, Pakistani, Black, Indian and white friends. She enjoys their discussions, laughter and knowledge. Shashi recommends or borrows for her the important books. She reads books and ventures into psychology, philosophy and literature. He goes to Feroza’s apartment and also makes good bond with Jo. Shashi encourages Feroza to work, and arranges for her a job in a bar close to the campus as an assistant to the bar tender. When Feroza goes to visit Pakistan, in her winter vacations, she buys the stalwart and shirt outfit for Shashi. They feel very happy to see each other. “I thought they’d got you married or something and we’d never see you again” (*Brat* 242). Feroza reports to him about Pakistan and her vacations. When Shashi needs her, during the visit of his brother and sister-in-law, Feroza helps him out of every difficult problem.

Sidhwa examines a wide range of topics including: the bondage of women, the patriarchal pressure of obedience, the regulations on women by religious or caste-basted communities and the burden of ‘home’ for women, which become the
ultimate cage exclusively for her. In all her works, Sidhwa displays the ill-treatment of women.

In *The Bride*, she describes various situations to show the cruelty of the society. The ill-treatment which starts from birth goes till the end of life. In the novel, Zaitoon’s father fixes her marriage, without her consent. She is not even aware of his decisions. As Miriam rebels against Qasim’s decision, “Is it because that Pathan offered you five hundred rupees, some measly maize and a few goats? Is that why you are selling like a greedy merchant? …” (*Brat*: 94). But after some time, everybody accepts this decision.

Higher Education is not imparted to the girls. This is considered as waste of girl’s time. As observed in the novel, “... Now that she’s learned to read the Holy Quran, what will she do with more reading and writing, boil and drink it? She’s not going to become a babbo or an officer! No, Allah willing, she’ll get married and have children” (*Bride*: 52).

After Zaitoon’s marriage, the mode of ill-treatment changes. Her husband, Sakhi controls her. After a few days of their marriage he restricts her visits to the river. Zaitoon likes the clear water and flow of the river but she has to accept his decision. Yunus, Sakhi’s brother advises him to treat his wife as a possession. “How is your wife from the plains? You know, she requires a man to control her…” (*Bride*: 170).

Zaitoon is not able to adjust herself to that savage atmosphere–her husband beats her, hates her and ill-treats her and proves traumatic to the point where she decides to run away. Margaret Atwood feels, “…Exposing the various tactics men adopt in exploring women but also the tactic which women tend to use in order to escape the truth or the difficult route to self-realization” (*Bride*: 55).
Though she knows that by the tribal code the punishment for such an act is death, still she runs away from that wild environment. When Sakhi comes to know this, he becomes mad with anger. “I knew that bitch would run away” He remembers the incident when after his refusal; she goes to visit the river. “I should have killed her by the river” (189). They search for her at every possible place, every route, but not able to find her. Sakhi cries on his loss of her honour. Yunus is angry over sakhi’s indifference as he says, “You fool! Your honour why didn’t you think of it when you allowed the bitch to run away? You knew she’d run. Are you a buggered up eunuch? You should have slit her throat right then” (Bride : 189-190).

The ill-treatment is not only visible in Zaitoon’s life, but her mother-in-law Hamida is also very unhappy. Sakhi does not even behave properly with her; she is alone while living with her family.

During her escape, Zaitoon has been sexually molested. When Zaitoon regains consciousness her body screams with pain. She weeps on her own condition. Now, she identifies herself with a mad woman in the Lawrence Gardens in Lahore. Only three month ago, she remembers Nikka and Miriam had taken her to Lawrence Gardens. They bought cone-shaped packets of roasted–salted grams. Zaitoons’ packet was half empty when the mad female, had snatched it from her hand and run on in front, triumphantly waving the packet over her head.

Later when she came to them, she grovelled at Nikka’s feet to give her a packet but Nikka drew back. Zaitoon now realizes herself rushing wild and wanton over the mountains. She now knows that the woman had been raped. “Abandoned and helpless, she had been living on the charity of her rapists… And on theft”
Zaitoon’s heart fills with sympathy for that woman, and grief at her own condition (*Bride*: 231).

In *An American Brat*, Sidhwa portrays the ill-treatment of women folk also by law, under general Zia’s rule. Zareen is upset on a new movie—the Haddon Ordinances, in 1979. The Federal Shari at Court is established to oversee the Islamic laws. The common people are unaware of this code. Zareen is shocked when she reads about the Hamida and Allah Baksh case. The couple, who has eloped to get married, has been accused of committing adultery, by the girl’s father. They are sentenced to death, but on an appeal to higher court, the charges are dismissed, for the reason that the Koran does not make a mention of death sentence.

But the case of Safia Bibi, the blind sixteen–year old servant girl, provokes to massive wave of public indigestion. She has been sexually molested, yet charged with adultery by the court. She is sentenced to three years imprisonment, fifteen lashes and a fine of a thousand rupees. Jehan Main an orphan of eleven–years old and pregnant is similarly charged. In view of her tender age, the judges reduce her punishment to ten lashes and one year of imprisonment.

The victim of rape has the risk of being punished for adultery, while the rapist is often set free. Robert Kiner has the following remarks to offer; for century’s sexual assault and violence against woman has been wide-spread in Pakistan. The country’s often–brutal tribal laws handed down by village councils, “repayments for alleged wrongs… Most of these crimes go unpunished” (19).

Bapsi Sidhwa, very intelligently describes the relationship between son-in-law and the mother-in-law. She portrays this with various colours. Where, on the
one hand, the relationship between Cyrus and Khutlibai is calm, on the other hand, the relationship between Freddy and Jerbanoo is one of a continual cold war.

In *The Crow Eaters*, Sidhwa exhibits the aggressive and power-thrust relationship between Freddy and Jerbanoo. Both are always busy to disturb each other with their actions, comments and suggestions. Freddy always comments Jerbanoo that she eats more than she should. He justifies this to Putli that she is old and this habit of eating all kinds of pastries, cakes, biscuits etc. can damage her health. But in reality he hates his mother-in-law’s habit. Jerbanoo is not able to tolerate her insult, one day on the dining table, after Freddy’s comment, “Jerbanoo surged mightily to her feet, knocking back her chair with a crash... Kicking the fallen chair aside, Jerbanoo stormed out and shut herself up in her room with a shattering detonation of slammed doors and bolts” (25). After this incident, Putli gets angry with Freddy and Jerbanoo complaints about a pain in her chest, and insists on meeting an English doctor. But after her medical examination the doctor declares, “There’s nothing wrong with you that a little dieting won’t cure–stop all that pure butter, pure cream, pure-fat” (28).

Then, the members of the family see a notable change in Jerbanoo’s behaviour. She becomes desperate to revolt against Freddy, even on minor issues. She screams, bullies, and blackmails him. When he even tries to suggest her, Freddy becomes very upset, as he says, “...for God’s sake, keep your voice down—must you always bray like an ass? Can’t you keep your voice human? What will the neighbours think?” (29).

But, Jerbanoo has not stopped moaning, sighing, muttering and quarrelling for a moment. Freddy is now fed up with all these quarrels. One day he decides to consult a mystic. So, he goes to Fakir and begs for help. As the novelist puts it:
I have reason to suspect my mother-in-law has sold herself to the devil. She torments me with evil curses and I cannot sustain the loss to my business any longer. She has also worked a spell on my wife and children—even they are turning against me. O Fakir, you must help me. (*Eaters* : 34)

When Freddy decides to light fire to his shop and house in accordance with his own plan to make money from the insurance company he leaves Jerbanoo in the house, so that no one is able to doubt him and he wants to get rid of her too. But fortunately she is rescued by the fire brigade officials. Later, when Billy is married to Tanya, Jerbanoo tries to control Tanya. Freddy is not able to tolerate this interference. He suggests her to amend her ways. But, Jerbanoo does not even want to listen to him. Her complaints about this to Putli, as she says, “...And now I am forbidden even to talk in this house! Oh Putli take me back… Oh, my child, take me back to my childhood village. I will not spend a single moment in house; not any more… Not anymore!” (*Eaters* : 29).

As she irritates Freddy, because of her savage and rude behaviour they have to leave Mr. Charles P. Allen’s house, and shift into a hotel. Even in the hotel she exhibits her uncivilized ways. Freddy and Putli try to convince her, to modify her ways, but Jerbanoo even does not listen to them. After some time, because of her actions, they have to leave the hotel and return to Lahore. But, later in the novel, when Freddy becomes ill and unhealthy, he declares Jerbanoo as the winner of this year long cold war. “Know something? I give up, Congratulations! You have won. You will outlive me” (*Eaters* : 280).

Bapsi Sidhwa presents another form of relationship in *An American Brat* through the portrayal of Khutlibai and Cyrus. Cyrus respects Khutlibai, and
somehow takes her suggestions seriously. Khutlibai does not like to visit her married daughter frequently. Zareen contradicts her, “you know Cyrus loves to see you” (Eaters : 35), but Khutlibai’s conservative attitude never changes.

Cyrus is always ready to participate in Khutlibai’s functions. In Manke’s wedding he and Zareen take the whole responsibility. Even on Manek’s arrival, Cyrus goes with Zareen and Khutlibai, to receive him at the airport. And he agrees with Khutlibai, when they receive Feroza’s letter along with David’s photograph. They both insist that Zareen should go to America, and knock him out of Feroza’s life.

Another aspect of the man-woman relationship that Sidhwa displays is one of lust and physical attraction. In, The Crow Eaters, Sidhwa shows the darker side, with the description of ‘Hira Mandi.’ In the novel Prince Kamarudidn, Faredoon, Mr. Allen and Mr. Toddywalla go to visit Hira Mandi. As she writes:

They enjoy themselves in the company of the prostitutes. Each of these men reflects the lust and sexual desire of men. “Come here, you come back to me, my love”, he demanded drunkenly. Eventually, gal vanished into a spurt of energy by his exasperation; he got up and lifting the girl clear off the floor like a baby, carried her to the cushions away from the others… (Eaters : 135)

In The Bride, Sidhwa includes Hira Mandi, to highlight the attraction. Nikka and Qasim go to visit Hira Mandi. As she writes:

Qasim enjoys the new atmosphere he enjoyed the narrow lanes streaming with men… the heady smell of perfume, the tinkle of payals on dancer’s ankles… He watched the gaudily dressed, heavily made-up girls lolling on carpets, chatting with each other…
Door flung wide open showed harmoniums and tables waiting to entertain. The girls smiled their invitations boldly. *(Bride : 63)*

The relationship between Mushtaq and Carol is constituted by sheer physical attraction. Carol hates Farukh for his conservative attitude and somehow her lustful relationship with major Mushtaq is a kind of revenge. And here Sheik McLeod’s quote warrants mention:

…feminism crystallizes in its rejection of power… if men cannot co-operate with and respect women, then women should overcome a feminism has called “the desire to be loved. For the desire leads to a trap. She does not want to be a vulnerable heroine that can be killed and crucified and hung like a trophy. *(Bride : 43)*

Carol’s beauty attracts Major, In Farukh’s absence; they come closer to each other. As the novelist writes:

Hesitating a moment, and then closing the door behind him, he walked up to her. He folded his hands over hers and raised the glass to her mouth. Carol took a slip… moving the glass towards himself, he lightly brushed his lips across her fingers… Her feet flattened in her rubber sneakers and rooted her to the cement floor…. His khaki shirt blurred as he moved closer… he pressed her to him. She felt the rough wool of his trousers and the hard length of his body all along hers. *(Bride : 122)*

Sidhwa presents an absolutely vulnerable image of woman in the so called contemporary world, as she observes, “Woman the world over, through the ages, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved to get impregnately impregnated, beaten-up bullied and disinherited” (226).
Sidhwa takes the readers to a tribal world, in which the status of women is not altogether fine. In *The Bride*, when Zaitoon runs away from Sakhi’s house, the tribal women encircles her mother-in-law Hamida, to consoled her. But Hamida is happy with Zaitoon’s decision, as she thinks, “ Honour! Everything for honour – and another life lost! She loved ones dead and now the girls she was beginning to hold so dear sacrificed” (190). She is aware of the wrong tribal-rules and its consequences. Robert Kiener is of the opinion: “Even in these modern times, over hundred Pakistani females … are killed each year in the name of honour” (73).

Bapsi Sidhwa depicts the secondary status of women in her writings. In *An American Brat* Feroza has to deal with the bondage relating not to marry David Press. In *The Bride*, Zaitoon is forced to adopt the tribal ways of living and customs. Carol is also compelled to behave like other Muslim women in Pakistan. In this regard, it is worth quoting. Thomas Strzyzewski, here who remarks:

... Does not recommend a battle view to the sexes but it aim at creating a consciousness both in men and women of how power vitiates relationship…Operating in the paradigm of victim relationship the women tries to define her identify in patriarchal set up...(27)

Through Sidhwa’s depiction of the man-woman relationship in its various aspects Sidhwa succeeds in exposing the patriarchal society. Apparently, it is a set up in which man is the provider–protector and well wisher of woman but reality proves to be different. Woman more often becomes a victim rather than a ward in his hands. But Sidhwa’s view point is one wilful and wishful proclamation on women’s rights and equality. And the novels, so far discussed, attested the point.