Chapter - One

Introduction

Feminists draw a distinction between the sex and gender. The sex is used to refer to the biological differences associated with the reproduction between men and women while the term ‘gender’ is used to refer to the socially erected distinctions. Therefore feminists examine the difference between the power, social position, attitude and behaviour of men and women to formulate social feminist theories. They also explore the possibilities to change the current practices in society in order to free women from their bondage. Those who do this examination of the differences based on the concept of patriarchy and resort to the radical ways of changing them, belong to the group of feminists usually referred to as the Radicals. And those who explore the ways to better the life of the women by linking gender relations with social relation belong to the group of Socialist Feminists. Thus one sees that one can affect society’s gender expectations in many ways. This potential for change allows one to think of the many possibilities for more equal treatment of women.

Even though feminists have raised their voices against the inequality and injustice met out to all women at all times, an impartial observer can see that the women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had enjoyed certain privileges and advantages over men. One advantage enjoyed by married women was the freedom from arrest, partly because of the ‘femme convert’ tradition that made the husband responsible for the wife’s activities. She was not individually responsible for her own actions. This law, made to meet the practical problems that would ensue if a wife and the mother were unable to carry out the normal domestic duties,
it would prove a privilege to men. This can be taken as a continuation of the
tradition that existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries too, as revealed
from the writing of Kenneth Hudson: “In public, the knight acknowledged his duty
and deference to the ladies of his own class all though in his own domestic circle
he could be extremely rude and brutal to them” (17).

Among the middle and the upper classes of these centuries, marriages were
being arranged by the family. The bride had no role in the matter. Love had nothing
to do with marriage, which was only a business-deal to improve one’s fortunes and
to develop useful family connections. The girl who rebelled was often compelled to
yield and after marriage, it was her duty to obey her husband and keep her feelings
to herself. By Shakespeare’s time love matches were more frequent and by the end
of the seventeenth century arranged marriages had become rare, except among very
exalted families.

There was a great deal of disagreement about the education of women too.
Some believed that if wives were uneducated they could easily be kept in their
places. Others like Swift holds, “Poor education as the main cause of frivolity,
gambling and addiction to strange clothes and hair styles, among ladies of fashion.”
(qtd in Hudson 32).

The eighteenth century however, produced women of remarkable power
and intellect like Lady Suffolk, Sarah Siddons, Fanny Burney, Lady Mary Wortly
Montague and Elizabeth Montague. In the year 1800, British women had few
rights and few opportunities. Only a handful ever found an independent voice. The
first feminist essay, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women*,
published as early as 1792 was held up to ridicule by the general public. There was
not much progress in the state of the women before the region of Queen Victoria.
But by the end of the century, Mary Wollstonecraft with her feminist treatise, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* asserted that women ought to receive a liberal education and that they had the right to enter the intellectual world. They were not to be ornaments for the drawing room, intended only for men’s amusement. Wollstonecraft firmly believed in the need for all human beings to decide their fate, and in the influence of environment upon human nature. A woman should be able to decide upon her own interests, instead of depending on men for everything. However, Mary Wollstonecraft was not certain how the cultural conditioning of the girls had come about. Yet she was dimly aware of the fact that the sexual roles that girls learned were connected to deeper but less apparent social factors. She described the powerlessness, which came from the exclusion of women from production and she was quite aware that women would never organize themselves. So in practice, she appealed to men to release women from dependence.

The male domination operating through the male controlled organizations and institutions as well as through family and social codes may be the reason for the radical feminist to see men as the enemies in the struggle for women’s liberation. Hence they argue for complete secularization at least when it comes to organizing and participating in their own political activities and campaigns.

The Socialist feminists, however, reject the notion that men are enemies to women’s progress. They argue that men and women should untie in the class struggle to liberate women from bondage and given them due respect and recognition. Jaydeep Sarangi observes:

> When we examine the sixty years from 1830 to 1890, commonly labeled the Victorian age, from this point of view, we find that it presents many dissimilar features. Yet in several receipts we can
safely generalize. Nearly all the observers of the Victorian age are struck by its extreme deference to the conventions though to a later age these seem ludicrous. It was thought indecorous for a man to smoke in public and for a lady to ride a bicycle. To a great extent the new morality was a natural revolt against the grossness of the earlier Regency and the influence of the Victorian Court was, all in its favour. (1)

There is no feminist theory but it is multi centered and indefinable, and one of the most controversial analyses made by radical feminists who hold love as an institutional weapon against the oppressor. Shulamith Firestone also calls love as, “The pivot of women’s oppression today reasoning that men were thinking, writing and catering, because women were pouring their energy into those men: women are not creating culture because they are preoccupied with love” (121).

The postmodern feminists however, seem to be more concerned with what woman, means than what she is, for them, there is no woman apart from her own interpretation of herself. Feminist scholarship thus has two concerns. Firstly it reconsiders concepts, which were earlier thought as universal but now seen, as having originated in a particular culture to serve some particular purpose. The very theory that women are for the hearth could have originated when, in the nineteenth century women were employed in the industries and later during the wartime when they were absorbed into the mainstream of workers, and as a result, there was a non-availability of women to do the household chores. So a type of pedestalization of women of the nineteenth century should have brought about to serve the particular male chauvinist ideas to chain women to the homes. The second concern of feminist scholarship is to restore a female perspective by imparting knowledge
about women’s experience and contribution to culture: thereby making them aware of what one woman has achieved is something that every woman can aim to achieve.

As Judith Fetterley defines, at its best, feminist criticism is a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but to change the consciousness of those who read, to what they read. Currently, feminist critics are interested in studying relationships between women, including mothers and daughters, sisters, friends, lesbians and female communities. Such studies are extensions of Virginia Wolf’s comment in *A Room of One’s Own* that women constituted in fiction written by men. There are exceptions. In this respect we can certainly state that Ibsen had a high sense of truth and humility to acknowledge facts and give respect to all new ideas. If he had not felt that it was an injustice, he would not have cared to mention the problems of women. This proves very well that he wanted to make the common public aware of the different types of suffering women. So even though Ibsen himself said that he was not a feminist, it only meant that he did not want himself to be branded as a feminist. He could not tolerate the injustices to women, even though he himself belonged to the class called oppressor in this context. This shows his balance of mind, sense of justice and fearlessness of society.

In a world defined by man, the woman is at once an object of desire. She is considered on the one hand, as a person in her own right and on the other, simply as a relational sigh between men. As person she is an excellent being, playing her part very well. Her experience of life is dependent upon her psychological make her individual circumstance as well as her society’s expectations and limitations based on age, sex, creed, etc. One finds her becoming an object of exchange
between the father and the husband in the most primary institution of family. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar observe:

The one plot that seems to be concealed in most nineteenth century literature by women… is in some sense a story of the woman writer’s quest for her own story, it is the story, in other words, of the woman’s quest for self definition. (76)

Such a far-reaching interpretation of the movement was anathema to the nineteenth century feminists. Their aim was to unite women into society, as it existed. These feminists had strictly orthodox views on marriage and motherhood. For them emancipation was only for spinsters. They were also hostile to contraception and they failed to see any connection between emancipation and control over fertility. As observed by Kate Mitchelt:

Mary Wollstonecraft was conveniently forgotten from about 1820 onwards. She was an embarrassment. Not only had she preached sexual equality, but also she had tried to practice it. In Victorian terms, her life was a scandal but it was not even just a case of an illegitimate child and undignified passion for its father, she was also a revolutionary. (127)

The nineteenth century was also the period when women were exhibited their talents in writing. The publicity they received for this was accepted till the nineteenth century because the writing process was done at home and did not take the writer away from her protected domestic scene. As Norman Sherry reports, ‘The demand for novels from the circulating libraries provided the opportunity for a woman at home to support herself by writing if she has the knack—and many did, though there were objections also to women as writers” (35).
Norman Sherry observes that, “No woman with claims of respectability was out alone in public… even during the day, or attending a female gathering. The usual excuse for this protection was that woman abroad alone was unsafe” (60-61).

Bernard Shaw in *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898) links this practice of the nineteenth century to ancient Roman days. When Cleopatra has an audience with Pothinus, she wants Ftatateeta to drive every one out. When Ftatateeta shuts the door on them, Cleopatra asks, “What are you waiting for?” Then Ftatateeta replies: “It is not meet that the queen remains alone with” (211).

Middle class women hold that rationalizing might help elevate the social position. They often interpret these limitations as indication of the family’s concern for the well being of women. In Shaw’s play *Millionaires* (1935), one finds Epiphany justifying this idea when she says: “Besides, it is convenient to be married. It is respectable. It keeps other men off. It gives me a freedom that I could not enjoy as a single woman has become accustomed to a husband” (155). Similarly *Village Wooing* (1933) says, “All want a husband and the usual consequences” (110).

Thus the women of the times seem to have cherished wrong notions of identity and freedom. For instance, when the scene opens in a large garden roof in Bernick’s house in Ibsen’s play, *The Pillars of Society* (1877), Rorlund, the schoolmaster is seen reading aloud from a gilt-edged book. Later the book is revealed to be *Woman as the Servant of the Community*. When the reading is finished the ladies exclaim: “What instructive story” and “such a beautiful moral” (*The Pillars of Society*, 25-27).

This attitude seems to have undergone a change later, as Sheela Rowbotham reports in her book *Hidden from History* (1980). She refers to
Caroline Norton, an aristocratic woman, who struggles hard to limit the legal control of husbands over wives, when her alcoholic husband, whom she had left, prevented her from seeing her dying child. Women were beginning to resent the freedom that was dependent on others. The words of Jasbir Jain in *Reading Women’s Writing* prove the point:

> And Freedom means to breathe freely, to meet people, to have an openness of experience. But women have been kept in kitchens and parlous, in pariah and in luxury but deprived freedom. Virginia Woolf in her two lectures on ‘Women and Fiction’ (1928) later developed into *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) develops this at length. The narrative begins with the young woman being shooed off the lawn and being denied entrance to the library, both acts of exclusion. She is treated as a trespasser and must have a chaperon.

> Her freedom is curtailed and made dependent on other people. (3)

After having gathered idea from men’s exceptional perception of women, it is now appropriate to foreground feminist criticism which would help evaluate Bapsi Sidhwa demands reading in two perspectives. The first is text-centred while the second centres on receivers of texts. The first reading as interpretation is, one critic’s version of what a piece of writing has to say. A feminist reading of text, in this context would be an interpretation of a test assuming gender’s centrality to what the text means. Therefore, in a feminist reading of a text, gender can come into play as something represented in the text, as something shaping the experience and therefore the writing of the author, or as a significant influence in the life of the particular reader who is trying to understand what the text says.
Reading in the literary sense refers directly to that reactions of readers. Feminist reading then would be the reception and the processing of texts by a reader, who is conceived of not only as possibly female, but also as conscious of the tradition of woman’s suppression in patriarchal culture.

Judith Fetterley’s *The Resisting Reader* (1977) is one of the first attempts to conceptualize feminist reading. Feminist reading is a process that occurs when a female reader confronts a male centrist system in a text. Establishing American Literature treats male experience as universal, Fetterley argues that reading the American cannon requires one to identify as male to sympathize with masculine heroes whose troubles are overtly or covertly associated with the women in their stories. This has led, to the evolution of elimination of identity in women. Today the dominant mode of feminist criticism is ‘gynocritics’-- the study of woman as writer of history, styles, themes, genres and structure of writing by women. The shift from ‘feminist (phallocentrism) critique’ of the French feminists to ‘gynocritics,’ firmly puts from emphasis on woman as reader and woman as writer. This is done to develop a feminist criticism that is genuinely woman centered, independent and intellectually coherent.

Feminism has thus, the ambition to give every woman “the opportunity of becoming the best that her natural faculties make her capable of Fawcett” (357). It also has another goal, the liberation of women from women. Feminism thus begins, but cannot end, with the discovery by an individual of her self-consciousness. It is not the recognition of her reasons for anger or the decision to change her life, to go back to school, to love, and to marry. It means finally that regardless of class and clan women renounce their subservience to patriarchy and
recognize that the world they have described is not theirs. As Barbara Smith observes:

Feminism is thus the political theory and practice to free all women—women of color, working class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbian, old women as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. (61)

Quite interestingly, Benjamin R. Baber comments, Feminism have liberated from its abstractness, its apolitical, it’s up rootedness etc. As observed, feminist perception:

Will no longer have to require enmity to men and alienation from self as the price of emancipation; instead it will promise to both women and men, the only kind of freedom the human condition permits—self realization in the distinctively human environment of loving families and the just polity. (21)

The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is therefore by creative work of her own.

Betty Freidan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) an early critique of the unhappiness of middle class American woman in the affluent post war society, describes the psychology of suburban American woman based on questions and interviews with Smith College Graduates. Her idea was that consciousness rising within an individual context would be sufficient to energies the reforms of sexism.

Coral Pearson and Katherine Pope in *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* (1981) give the picture of a new woman as undergoing the various stages of the archetypal journey to be united with powerful mother-image than the Freudian father-image for self fulfillment. They write:
She destroys the myth of virginity addition and goes out into the world to be raped by experiences. When the female hero either literally or symbolically journeys to her ancestral home in search of her father, she discovers instead that it is her mother with whom she seeks to be rejoined, allowing her to develop within herself qualities such as nurturance, intuition and compassion which culture delineated as female. Thus she is able to develop positive sympathetic affiliation with other women. Because of this integrated selfhood she does not assume the role of the dominating matriarch because she believes that all humans are candidates for full heroism, no one is to be mastered or master. (178)

And the hope present in the description of her experience is that “if one woman has made that particular journey beyond convention, so can others” (260).

Pakistani English literature refers to English literature that has been developed and evolved in Pakistan, as well as by members of the Pakistani Diaspora who write in the English language. English is one of the official languages of Pakistan and has a history going back to the British colonial rule in South Asia; the national dialect spoken in the country is known as Pakistani English. Today, it occupies an important and integral part in modern Pakistani literature. Dr. Alamgir Hashmi introduced the term ‘Pakistani Literature in English’ with his ‘Preface’ to his pioneering book *Pakistani Literature: The Contemporary English Writers* (New York, 1978; Islamabad, 1987) as well as through his other scholarly work and the seminars and courses taught by him in many universities since 1970’s. It was established as an academic discipline in the
world following his lead and further work by other scholars, and it is now a widely popular field of study.

English language poetry from Pakistan held a special place in South Asian writing, on account of the new trends represented by Shahid Suhrawardy, Ahmed Ali, Alamgir Hashmi, Taufiq Rafat, Daud Kamal, Makki Kureishi and others. Fiction from Pakistan began to receive recognition in the latter part of the twentieth century. The early success of Pakistani English poets was followed in fiction by the prose works written by Ahmed Ali and Zulfikar Ghose, and by such figures as Bapsi Sidhwa, the Parsee author of *The Crow Eaters, Cracking India* (1988) and other novels. In the Diaspora, Hanif Kureshi commenced a prolific career with the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), which won the Whitbread Award. Moniza Alvi published several poetry collections and won British literary prizes. Tariq Ali published numerous novels and plays and broadcast TV scripts. Aamer Hussein wrote a series of acclaimed short story collections. Sara Suleri published her literary memoir, *Meatless Days* (1989). Many short story collections and some play scripts were also received well. The Pakistan Academy of Letters has awarded its prestigious prizes to a number of English writers.

In the early years of the twenty first century, a number of Pakistani novelists writing in English won or were shortlisted for international awards. Mohsin Hamid published his first novel *Moth Smoke* (2000), which won the Betty Trask Award and was a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award; he has since published his second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Kamila Shamsie, who won her first literary award in Pakistan for her first novel, was shortlisted for the John Llewelyn Rhys

There is a growing English press and media in Pakistan. Several English-language newspapers of national and international repute have taken root in the country, with the most prominent being *Dawn*, established in the 1940s and *Daily Times (Pakistan)*, *The Nation*, *The News International*, *The Regional Times of Sindh* and *Pakistan, Observer*. The other important 1940s newspaper, *The Pakistan Times*, closed down in 1990s.

Omer Tarin, Ejaz Rahim, Hina Babar Ali, Waqas Ahmed Khwaja, Harris Khalique, Ilona Yusuf and Mehvash Amin are now publishing poetry. Other household names prominent in English literary circles include Zulfikar Ghose, Kamila Shamsie, and Qaisra Shahraz. Zaib-un-Nissa Hamidullah was among the first generation in English journalism and literary writing in Pakistan. Those who have written and spoken extensively about Pakistani English Literature, following the seminal scholarly and critical work of Alamgir Hashmi, are Tariq Rahman, Muneeza Shamsie and Amra Raza.

With the publication of her third novel, *Ice-Candy-Man* (or *Cracking India*), Bapsi Sidhwa established herself as Pakistan's leading English-language novelist. Pakistan is the location of Sidhwa's first three novels, and in each there is
a strong sense of place and community which she uses to examine the post-colonial Pakistani identity. In her novel *The American Brat* she shifts the predominant locale of her fiction from Lahore and Pakistan to various cities across America as she explores the Parsee Pakistani Diaspora. Multiple alternative voices are heard in Sidhwa's fiction through her choice of narrators and characters from Pakistan's minority communities - members of the Parsi religion, Kohistanis from Pakistan's Tribal Territories, and perhaps most importantly, women.

Bapsi Sidhwa comes as a good illustration of an artist, whose marital life has strengthened the audacity of her character. As Germaine Greer wrote, “The essential factor in the liberation of the married woman understands her condition and the chief means of liberating is replacing of compulsiveness and compulsion by the pleasure principle” (313).

Bapsi Sidhwa feels that it is wise to form household co-operative sharing their work and liberating each other for days on end. She discusses the frustrations of the educated middle class woman, who is expected to fulfill the traditional woman’s role and ideal of femininity, while attending to other duties outside the home. She emphasizes on liberating the sexuality of woman, and that women must develop their sexuality and express it in their personalities. In fact, Bapsi Sidhwa is also part of history and then literary history. She was well aware of the conventional societies that never hesitated to nail down women’s aspirations. Nearly all observers of the Victorian age are struck by its extreme deference to the conventions though to a later age these seem ludicrous. It was thought indecorous for a man to smoke in public and for a lady to ride a bicycle. To a great extent the new morality was a natural revolt against the grossness of the earlier Regency and the influence of the Victorian Court was, all in its favour.
The Postcolonial studies represent a new chapter in the emerging dialogues about the importance of boarders on a global scale. It ushers in an emergent discipline, an indissoluble part of the development of the national imagining and an alibi for the emergence of a violently assertive new world order committed to the management and obliteration of difference. For some time now, globalization, cultural exchange, and post colonialism have been the catchwords in literary studies. Looking at postcolonial studies from a sociological perspective, Graham Huggan observes that “academic concepts like post colonialism may be turned into the watchwords for the fashionable study of cultural motherless” (25).

Though the postcolonial theory sounds very ambitious, in practice it concerns itself with things that are historically marginal. Today, with the issues of race, class and gender at their core, postcolonial theories deconstruct the prevailing ideals of history and uncover the ways in which political, economic and social systems have been constructed and transformed in societies where cultures have been forcibly meshed by imperialism and colonization. Tracing the origins of forms of cultural expression in the postcolonial societies, postcolonial studies elucidate the interconnectedness of the colonizer as manifested in linguistic, semiotic and aesthetic traditions.

Postcolonial literature in English enables one to listen to and participate in a cross-cultural and multi-voiced dialogue and introduces new aesthetic norms and modes of appraisal and challenging notions of English exclusiveness. The postcolonial writers are laying bare “submerged histories, bringing minority interests and ethnic diversities to the forefront, and reconfiguring cultural forms and ways of life previously relegated to the periphery” (Huggan 26). The Literary postcolonial is projective of subaltern voices and cultural crisis-crossings,
the issues of immigration and ethnicity, tensions between modernity and tradition
the ideas of development and progress that address the various issues of race,
gender, caste, sub eternity, and religion.

Post colonialism has institutionalized itself and established hierarchies, spinning ‘high theory’ works by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. However, the question often posed towards post colonialism remains quite pertinent. Is post colonialism on its way to becoming limiting and old-fashioned? Is it, like feminism, moving towards waking itself obsolete? Rukmini Bhaya Nair’s response in *Lying on the Postcolonial Couch* (2002 seems quite-relevant and final) “Post colonialist awaits consignment to oblivion” (xi). She remarks, “Post colonialist is a condition requiring a cure, and the passage to that cure involves a return to bury memories of colonial trauma” (xi). Hence, while being aware of the limitations as well as the institutionalization of post colonial studies, Bapsi Sidhwa demands postcolonial perspective. As Anita Loomba says, “Postcolonial studies, with all its limitations, have managed to place European imperialism in relief” (20). Furthermore, despite the institutionalization and the self-seeking, co-modifying, commercializing, and neo-colonial zing forces, the field of postcolonial studies, as Graham Huggan rightfully observes, “has provided a catalyst for some of the most exciting intellectual work to be seen today” (40).

The above mentioned perception allows for a wide-ranging investigation into Sidhwa’s portrayal of power relations in various contexts. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, write in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, that postcolonial theory is a discussion of “migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race,
gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being” (49). One can find Bapsi Sidhwa’s fiction conveniently fixed in these issues.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s ideal of humanity maintains a certain dogmatic intolerance, for it promptly condemns various European modes of thought and life. In this regard, Herder’s observations Warrant mention:

Herder is not only the ancestor of cultural nationalism, but he is also one of the founders of racialism, in which respect he can even be regarded as the predecessor of Gobineau. For, he too considered the mixture of races as a cause of decline. His hostile and disdainful attitudes towards the Black and Yellow races allow him to be ranged alongside the originators of Aryanism. One naturally understands that the mixture of races is also one cultural consequence of immigrant experience. Sidhwa wishes to see humanity as one organic whole. (128)

Herder in his Reflection on the History of Mankind had argued that:

All humankind should be seen as belonging to the same race. From the eighteenth century to the Enlightenment and then privileged by opening the doors of the twenty-first century there has been a historic sea change in the conception of race. Human beings have met, mingled and the mixtures of the races have taken place. (140)

Historical anxieties of cultural impurity accompanied the nomadic progress of colonialism and the victims are the immigrants. One finds in Sidhwa’s novels a severe experience of the restlessness and footlessness which draw the
colonial traveler further away from the self-defining spirituality. Herder laments the horror of hybridity and cultural miscegenation which must attend the unnatural mingling of disparate nations. These anxieties are framed by the apprehension that the immigrants wish to go native. The evangelical activities of colonial missionaries frequently required the paradoxical and threatening indigenization of the gospel. In colonial India, the Curzon administration chose to proclaim its hegemony through the transculturated form of the displaced Mughal Darbar.

To be more specific, one must be aware of the fact that Sidhwa’s fiction is centered on those hopeless immigrants in a postcolonial ambience. Paul Gilroy’s book, The Black Atlantic, discusses the dimension of colonial hybrid ties, the intellectual and political cross fertilization that resulted from the black Diasporas or the movements of black people from Africa to Europe and the Americas engaged in various struggle towards emancipation, autonomy and citizenship. These movements created what Gilroy calls a black Atlantic, which he defines as an ‘Intercultural and transnational formation’ which provides a means to re-examine new urges in Postcolonial Literature. Sidhwa’s fiction is naturally representative of the problems of nationality, location, identity and historical memory. Gilroy shows the extent to which the African, American, British and Caribbean Diaspora cultures mould each other as well as the metropolitan cultures with which they interacted. Such Diasporas have generated new and complex identities whose analysis demands conceptual tools. If on the one hand, there is no such thing as an uncontaminated white or European culture, then, on the other, as Stuart Hall points out that “the immigrants are constructed historically, culturally, politically” (25). The term ‘Diaspora’ has dominantly been used to indicate biologically and culturally stable identities. For Hall, the new
ethnicities visible in contemporary Britain are results of the ‘cut and mix’ processes of cultural diazotization

Diaspora account has frequently been used in postcolonial discourse to mean simply cross cultural exchange. This use of the term has been widely criticized, since it usually implies negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it references. By stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political imports on both the colonized and the colonizer, it has been regarded as replicating assimilation policies by masking or whitewashing cultural difference.

The idea of Diaspora also underlies to stress the mutuality of culture in the colonial and postcolonial process in expressions of syncretistic, cultural synergy and transculturation. The criticism of the term referred to above stems from the perception that theories that stress mutuality necessarily downplay compositionality. There is nothing in the idea of immigrant experience as such that it suggests that mutuality negates the hierarchical nature of the imperial process or that it involves the idea of an equal exchange. This is however the way in which some proponents of decolonization and anti-colonialism have interpreted its current usage in colonial discourse theory. It has also been subject to critique as part of a general dissatisfaction with colonial discourse theory on the part of critics such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Benita Parry, Aijiz Ahmad.

Hybridity, then, naturally is a supplementary term. Hybridity is politicized and made contemporary. It embraces the subversion and challenge of division and separation. Sidhwa’s fiction sets different points of view against each other in a conflict structure, which retains a certain elemental, organic energy and open-endedness. It is this potential awareness of hybridity helps Sidhwa to reverse the
structures of domination in the colonial situation. Her fiction demonstrates an active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant colonial male power, depriving women not only of the authority but even of its claims to authenticity.

Sidhwa’s protagonists refuse to adapt to colonialist and tries to keep alive a sense of sustenance which is not identity. Alternative or binary opposition between colonizer and colonized in an idea that has enormous force and power in the construction of anti-colonial narratives, by subjects who are themselves complex mixed up products of diverse colonial histories. Neilten Kortenaar's sensible reminder is that neither authenticity nor realization has ontological validity. But both are valid metaphors that permit collective self-fashioning. Neither, she insists, is an inherently progressive or regressive position. Authenticity can be an enabling metaphor.

Hybridization is a metaphor that does not define a particular political program. It is most often invoked by the advocates of pluralism and tolerance. It has intersected in the multiple histories of colonialism and women.

In her fiction, Sidhwa demonstrates the ways in this philosophy can be used in the reading of texts. She is able to draw out the creative multi-cultural impulses inevitably present below the apparently antagonistic surface structures of the text. Although on the surface, post colonial texts may deal with divisions of race and culture which are apparently obdurately determined. Each text contains the seeds of the subaltern which, as they germinate and grow in the mind of the readers, crack asunder the apparently inescapable dialectic of history.

In Sidhwa’s formulation, women are constantly struggling to free themselves from a past which stressed tradition. They attempt to replace a temporal
linearity with a spatial plurality. The complication of ethics with its attendant clash of the male and the female is well-illustrated by the contradictions that have arisen in the Postcolonial situation. In India, and Pakistan, where the model of the colony has been an important cultural determinant, Sidhwa’s fiction breaks away from a nationalist stance, arguing for the mosaic as characteristically feminine.

Bhabha and Pratt observe that the colonized ‘native’ is instrumental in the hybridization of colonial meanings. Pratt maintains that metropolitan modes of understanding are seriously confounded when the native combines a selective appropriation of colonial idioms with indigenous themes. Bhabha considers the colonized subject ontologically incalculable. The ‘native’ is herself affected by the slipperiness of her own interactions with colonialism. If the single figure of the colonized native becomes the unstable site of cross cultural meanings and interaction, instability informs the abhor fabrication of wider anti-colonial solidarities of anti-colonial nationalism presuppose a unity of differences. The heterogeneous community shouldered together under the shallow rubric of the postcolonial nation state speaks its own political hybridist.

Hybridity is more self-consciously invoked as an anti-colonial strategy by some Caribbean and Latin American activists, most notably the Cuban writer Roberto Fernandez. In a landmark 1971, Retamar writes that “our matzo America is unique in the colonial world because the majority of its population is racially mixed: it continues to use ‘the languages of our conceptual tools.’ Caliban is the most appropriate symbol for this hybridist” (79).

Michael Sandel points out that the bounded and ‘pure’ ethical agent inhabits a disenchanted world. One’s moral character cannot remain immune to the contaminating attachments of human existence. The contingencies and
contradictions of lives fashion us. No ethical action or decision proceeds from the commands of a single imagination or a single set of feelings.

Over the past few decades, there have been major changes in expatriate and immigrant literature. Expatriate writing occupies a significant position between culture and countries. There is a need to recognize the evolution of the Diaspora sensibility in terms of its continually changing consciousness. Expatriate writing is not only the nostalgic reminiscence of place, but also of time. Time is the most important dimension in that it is the passage of time that leads to the development of groups and sub-groups within the Diasporas.

Cultural theory is today being created by people who live on the margins. Some of the expression who gain their popularity with regard to migrant writing is ‘expatriate’ and ‘Diaspora.’ The expression, ‘Diaspora’ according to Jabir Jain in his book, *Writers of the Indian Diaspora* observes:

A Scatter is carrying with the ambiguous status of being both an ambassador and refuge. The requirements of the two roles are different, while one requires the projection of one’s culture and the ability to enhance its understanding, the other seeks refuge and protection and relates more positively to host culture. (11-12)

The expression ‘immigrant’ brings to our mind a location, physical space and a positive attitude. The word ‘exile’ on the other hand denotes some kind of isolation and nostalgia. The word ‘exile’ to quote Jabir Jain again, “evokes multiple meanings which cover a variety of relationship with mother-country alienation forced and the self imposed exile that political exile and so on” (12). In the words of Bhikhu Parekh, the Diasporas Indian is:
… like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, He spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world. (Writers of the Indian Diaspora 12-13)

Expatriation or exile is a phenomenon and a problem which has drawn much debate and controversy, especially after the second half of the twentieth century. In the twenty first century, expatriation is getting its importance due to large number of immigrants. Though the people migrate in search of work they contribute to literature and have won honors. These writers use new themes and techniques. R.K.Dhawan in his book India in Canadian states:

Expatriate or Diasporas writers in the recent years have created a unique form of literature which indulges in nostalgia, yet at the same time forging identity with new place and people. Diaspora in thus no more a painful experience in an alienation or marginalization, for the individual’s writers of the South Asian Diaspora, in their writings has made a rich and response to the experience of migration. (11)

Sidhwa’s fiction thus takes on as subject the experience of women groaning under patriarchal tyranny and the long tradition of male rule in society which silenced their voices, distorted their lives and treated their concerns as peripheral. Even the canon taught at school is predominantly male and women who graduate under this canon were won to hear recognizably male points of view, some of which were misogynist declared universal. However, Sidhwa’s fiction focuses on the question of the nature and genesis of the oppression of
women and the social subordination. The question is peculiar to it and is not to be sneezed at. The answer to the question will in all likelihood determines Sidhwa’s visions of the future and one’s evaluation of whether it is worthwhile to hope for a sexually egalitarian society. In fact, the question calls forth a proper analysis of the causes of the oppression of women with a view to assessing what would have to be changed to achieve a society freed from gender hierarchy. If innate male dominance and aggression are thought of as at the root of female oppression, then the feminist programmer should aim at exterminating the offending sex or require eugenics project to modify its character.

The gender question is crucial to the scope of this thesis, which deals in some detail with how women are being oppressed. No theory has yet been postulated to account for the oppression of women with anything like the explanatory power of the socialist theory of class oppression. It is not surprising that numerous attempts have been made so for to apply Marxist analysis to the question of women being a reserve labor force of capitalism, that is to say, women serve the ends of capitalist consumerism in their roles as administrators of family consumption.

The researcher is sincerely involved with the sole object of locating the oppression of women in the heart of Sidhwa’s literary dynamic by pinpointing the relationship between housework and the reproduction of labour. To do this entails the placement of women in the definition of capitalism which is itself a process in which capital is produced through the extraction of labor. For instance, the worker gets a wage for the things he or she has made during his time of employment and the capitalist gets the thing in exchange of the wage he has paid to the worker. If the total value of the things that the workers has made exceeds the total value of
his or her wage. The aim of the capitalism has been achieved; Women are lower wage-earners than men, because they are considered weak and are susceptible to oppression and repression. The awareness of this is reflected in Sidhwa’s fiction. In the course of discussion the researcher has brought up a reference to marriage while talking about the female characters in the selected novels.

The male dominance is not shown as responsible for the shattering of the conjugal happiness. The cause of the shattering of the conjugal happiness lies outside of the domain of marriage. The long message suggests that the conjugal rift and familial problem are psychological and they come out of mal-adjustment between the two partners. It is often agreed, thought unjustly, that the tendency on the part of male partner to domineer over female partner relegates her to a secondary position. Besides, the traditional values the Hindu Shasta’s epitomize dominate the minds of men and women. The Shasta enjoin upon them the task of fulfilling obligations of ‘Garhasthasram’ thus ensuring an indissoluble bond between men and women, husband and wife. And this structure upon marriage is still adhered to avidly. Women educated and imbued with Western thought start questioning the bond, without going deep into the Western thought vis-a-vis women’s movement. Women have every right to wriggle out of male dominance to regard themselves on par with men. It is not wise to blame the problems women are facing on marriage.

The term ‘Diaspora’ literally refers to a scattering which signifies the dispersal of people from a single homeland across many continents and nations through migration. Diaspora is generally concerned with the idea of cultural dislocation associated with immigration. Diaspora studies analyses migrant experiences in detail. The migrant experiences do not end with the first generation.
It continues through generations and consciously or unconsciously contributes to the social life of the host country.

Originally the ‘Diaspora’ stands for the Jews who dispersed from Israel or Palastina to all kinds of places in the world. But these people carried with them a profound attachment to their last place of residence. But right now ‘Diaspora’ stands for anyone who migrates from one country to other to seek employment or permanent residence. In their respect Indian Diaspora means an immigrant from the Indian subcontinent. John Oliver Perry observes:

… ‘Diaspora’ has become the world of choice among students of the phenomenon. It designates all those people from India who have ever immigrated to other areas around the world mostly to the U.S., the U.K., and various commonwealth nations including those postcolonial ones now independent in South and West Africa and West Indies as well as South Asia, Fiji and so on. (83)

The Diasporas communities have succeeded in creating a new life for themselves in different social contexts. The cultural and ideologies of the first generation immigrants are different from that of the succeeding generations. The new generations of immigrants’ personal lives and self-images have been conditioned by circumstances very different from those familiar to their parents. The first generation immigrants’ way of life opinions, perspectives and beliefs were highly influenced by the homeland culture. And at the same time they were partly conditioned by the experience of imperialist domination and partly which is influenced by the social, political and cultural environment and includes responses to the rejection and oppression experienced by non-White minorities.
Diaspora literature concentrates on typical diasporic experiences. The Diasporas communities face a number of problems in their host countries. The social, political, cultural and economic problems faced by Diasporas communities are reflected in Diasporas literature. In general, Diasporas literature deals with typical Diasporas issues like racism, multiculturalism, hybridization, in-betweens, and identity crisis, generation gap and gender issues. These are the major characteristics of Diaspora literature.

People emigrated to the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the other commonwealth countries like the Caribbean Islands. Wherever they go, these migrants carry with them a profound sense of attachment with their former place of residence. They also experience an identity crisis. Having partakers of a powerful Indian culture these Diasporas Indians struggle hard to constitute their identity in their choice of the new location. Writers of the Indian Diaspora in foreign countries like Bharati Mukherjee, Uma Parameshwaran, Rohinton Mistry and Jhumpa Lahiri often explore the crucial issues of racism, alienation and attendant social tension that crowd the world of an immigrant.

Among Diaspora writers-fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. Many of Indian woman novelists focus on women’s issues. They have their own perspectives of the world. There has been a great need for an interest in working in this subject. While comparing to other writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Lahiri has written in both genders. For writers dipping into this East-West Cauldron which deals with the tensions and connections between India and Abroad, one can use the term ‘Diaspora Literature.’ Diaspora in the modern world
may have different contexts. In expatriate writing, the sense of homelessness and restlessness is reinforced with each experience in the new land.

Migration of people is perhaps the definitive characteristic of the twentieth century and in crucial ways Diaspora identities have come to represent much of the experience in post colonial identities. Post-Colonial literatures have been preoccupied with issues of hybridist, in-betweens and Diasporas, with mobility and crossover of ideas and identities generated by colonialism. Diaspora is invoked as a theoretical device for the interrogation of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism. It is the reflection of the communities resisting traditional patterns of assimilation and integration. Anita Singh in her article Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* brings out:

Diaspora is today an incontestable fact of world culture. It is beginning to occupy a greater place in transnational economic and cultural exchange. Diaspora communities do not sever their connection with their homeland, but construct different, often transnational, linkages staying in touch with the ‘home.’ (The Atlantic Review Quarterly 2)

Diaspora writings raises question regarding the definitions of ‘home’ and ‘nation’ Schizophrenia and nostalgia are often the pre-occupations of these writers as they seek to locate themselves in new cultures. It becomes important to question the origin and to examine the different strategies. They adopt in order to negotiate the cultural space of the countries of their adaptation.

There is the inevitable process of exchange of thoughts and ideas, social cultures and individual identities as a writer migrates from one country to another. The character of these writers transpose from one nation to another. Almost all the
Diaspora writers have exhibited and alienated from their roots, language and culture.

At the core of Diaspora, the idea of the literature is international. Although fiction is not in any way just an aesthetic of political theory, immigrant writers with their focus in India primarily deal with the fiction caused by desperate culture. In a world without nation states, these writers would have merged with others who deal with cultural confrontations of all kinds. But Diaspora literature focuses cultural states that are defined by immigration counters and stamps on one’s passport.

Sidhwa is one of the writers who were displaced from their homeland for various reasons. Their sense of migrant has made them come out with themes like dislocation, alienation quest for identity, restlessness, cultural collision, hybridization and cultural assimilation. Apart from these, postcolonial writers never fail to voice forth their colonial experiences for it has become a significant theme which cannot to be shed off from their memories. Salman Rushdie, Bharathi Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Farrukh Dhondy Kamala Markandaya, Raja Rao, Upamanya Chatterjee, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee, Divakaruni, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, V.S.Naipaul, Pankaj, Mishra, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, M.G.Vassanji, Vikram Chandra, Deepak Chopra and Amit Chaudhuri come under this category of migrant authors. The literature of Indian Diaspora produced Diaspora writers of such diversity as Kavitha Daswani, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Uma Parameswaran, Meena Alexander, Meera Syal, Aba Daweswar, Suniti Namjoshi, Rishimi Dunlop and Rau Badami.

Much of the fictional materials of the South Asian immigrant Writers deal with the dilemma of the East-West Conflict and they skillfully present the
protagonists’ state of mind and the ability to shed off their past memories in order to assimilate into the New World. The voice of Immigrant Women speaks in many languages, each having a rich regional flavor of its own. The thoughts of women, writing in regional Indian languages and in English, significantly from post-independence times, have guided the shaping of Diaspora writings. Of the many South-Asian Women Writers of Indian Diaspora, Mukherjee believes the cultural synthesis is possible even if one is torn between East–West Confrontation of social, political, colonial and cultural conflicts. Sidhwa’s Protagonists are from various ethnic backgrounds with the Diaspora consciousness of expatriation, immigration, marginalization and the nostalgic and spiritual quest Sumathi aptly remarks:

Through her immigrant protagonists, Sidhwa offers, though with a tinge of romance, a glimpse into the realistic, kaleidoscopic images of the psyche, cultural prejudices, and striking imagination of Indian Women immigrants, in the process of acclimatizing, being victims, or getting powerful by their American experiences. In brief, the whole idea is, if things do not work in the past country which they do in the new world, why do embrace it, be a part of it one’s own self? (53)

Bapsi Sidhwa occupies a special place in commonwealth fiction. She belongs to India, Pakistan and the United States simultaneously, as she prefers to be called a “Punjabi-Pakistani- Parsee Woman” (vii) as pointed out by Pratap Singh.

Bapsi Sidhwa is one of the leading Diaspora writers, recognized internationally for her prowess in detailing the issues of abuse against women, the Partition of Indian subcontinent and the consequent immigration to the West. It is
difficult to categorize her as just a comic writer or a Parsee writer or a feminist writer as her interests are varied and vast ones.

Though there has been a continuous tradition of Pakistani writing in English since 1947, as a body of works with artistic merits, Pakistani English fiction recently has started to have a unique identity. Zulfikar Ghose has brought out several volumes of poetry, ten, novels and a collection of short stories. Besides Zulfikar Ghose, Ahmed Ali has emerged as yet another Pakistani English novelist of some stature. As Eugene Benson and L.W. Connolly observe: “Today Pakistan is heir to a rich polyglot, multivalent and progressive literary tradition in all its major contemporary languages but particularly in English and Urdu which are of central importance and are shared across the national cultural spectrum…” (11).

Since moving to the United States in 1983, Sidhwa received numerous literary awards both in the U.S and abroad. These include the Pakistan National honours of the Patras Bokhri award for *The Bride* in 1985. In 1987, she was awarded both a Bunting Fellowship at Radciff Harvard and a Grant from the National Endowment of the Arts that allowed her to finish *Cracking India*.

In 1991 Sidhwa received the Sitara –I –Imitaz, Pakistan’s highest National Honour in arts. Her third novel, *Cracking India* won a nomination for the Notable Book of the Year from the American Library Association and was mentioned as a *New York Times* “Notable Book of the year,” all in 1991. In 1993, she received the Lila Wallace–Reader’s Digest Writer’s Award, which, pleasantly enough, included one hundred and five thousand dollars.

Bapsi Sidhwa also won Italy’s Premio Mondello 2007 designated for foreign authors. Previous winners of the award include Joseph Brodsky, Doris Lessing, V.S. Naipaul, and Gunter Grass. She had also worked as the Voluntary
Secretary in the Destitute Women and Children’s Home in Lahore for years, and was appointed to the Advisory Committee to Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Women’s Development.

In 1983, Sidhwa conducted a fiction writing workshop at St. Thomas University, St. Paul, Minnesota. From 1984–86 she conducted novel writing workshops, at Rice University, Houston, Texas. In 1985, she became the Assistant Professor of Creative Writing Programmer at the University of Houston. In 1989, she was appointed as the Assistant Professor: Writing Division, MFA Graduate Programme at Columbia University. In 1997, she was appointed as Professor of English and Writer in Residence, Mount Holyoke College, and South Hadley, Massachusetts. From 1998 – 99, she was Fannie Hurst Writer in Residence which is a creative writing position at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts. In 2001, she received the Post-colonial Teaching Fellowship, Southampton, England. She had taught at a number of American Universities such as Princeton, Rice University.

Bapsi Sidhwa was born on August 11, 1938 in Karachi, now in Pakistan, and migrated shortly thereafter to Lahore. Sidhwa witnessed the bloody partition of the Indian sub continent as a young child in 1947. Growing up with polio, she was a part of surgeries and as such, was not sent to school. She did not have an extended family and this resulted in her being a little isolated. She had to lead a lonely life. But she had to while away her loneliness by reading books by Charles Dickens, Naipaul, Leo Tolstoy, etc. Thus, she became a voracious reader who used to read anything that came on her way. In an interview to Feroza Jussswalla, she observes:
From the age of about eleven to eighteen I read non-stop because I did not go to school. I had nothing to do, no other form of entertainment to fill my life with, and a big slack was taken up by reading. This did turn me, I now-realize, into a writer. I must have read *The Pickwick Papers*, at least four times during that period. I would laugh out loud. I recently re-read The *Crow Eaters* and re-read *The Pickwick Papers* and realized there were so many parallels. I think all that I read then was an influence. A lot of Tolstoy has influenced my work. (qtd. in Dhawan11)

As middle class, Sidhwa’s father did very well in his business and became a wealthy man later in life. Her mother came from a wealthy family and so she never took up a job but she did a lot of voluntary social work. She had two brothers; Bapsi Sidhwa was given her first novel, Louisa Alcott’s *Little Women*, as a kid by her private tutor. It introduced her to a world of fantasy.

Sidhwa graduated from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. At nineteen, Sidhwa was given in marriage and soon after gave birth to the first of her three children, Mohur, Koko and Parizad. Marriage as admitted by Bapsi Sidhwa, in an interview with Julie Rajan, in a way was liberating at the same time she moved from the stern atmosphere in her home in Pakistan to the very open and fun loving Parsee community in Bombay. She was in Bombay for five years, before she got divorced, and then came back to Pakistan. There, she remarried a Parsee business man in Lahore, Noshir Sidhwa. Thereafter, her life was more of the idle type in fact, a very constricted sort of life. She played a lot of bridge, went to coffee breakfasts and did volunteer work, And for Bapsi Sidhwa this was a mindless kind of life, as she observes in an interview, “Whenever there was a
bridge game, I’d sneak off and write. But now that I’ve been published a whole world has opened up for me” (12). Julie Rajan compares her with Jane Austen, because her secretive process of writing reminds Rajan of the secretive writing by Jane Austen, who as the story goes wrote a book by hiding herself under the tablecloth, after cooking and before ironing the clothes.

Sidhwa is well-versed in many languages like English, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, etc. She prefers English to other languages. English comes to her spontaneously without a feeling of guilt or any compunction. She has admitted this in an interview to David Montenegro as she says:

I find myself computable writing in this language. My writing is not very good, though I speak it fluently. As per Gujarati hardly anyone in Pakistan knows the language. In Britain of all people say, ‘why don’t you write in your own language?’ And they are using very hearting political overtones to bear on this. But I think well, the English don’t have a monopoly on the language. It is a language of the world now. And it is a means of communication between various nationalities and the most immediate tool at hand. So, I use it without any inhabitation or problems as far as I am concern. (12)

Sidhwa’s English carries words from Urdu and Guajarati. Her writing is punctuated by Parsee proverbs. Her style of writing has an elaborate word play and her narrative has a racy flow. As a writer of the postmodern era, she makes full use of pastiche. She calls her style ‘a salad of languages because it corresponds to her way of speaking.

Bapsi Sidhwa began her writing career at the age of twenty six. As, she herself expresses in an interview with Julie Rajan, that writing came about
accidentally after her second marriage. By this time, she had two children. While on her second honeymoon, Sidhwa and her husband were invited for a vacation in Northern Pakistan. The army was building a road through the Karakoram Mountains into China the most tumultuous range of mountains. They stayed in a very remote camp. There, she heard the story of a young Punjabi girl who suddenly appeared in the camp. She had been taken across the river Indus into a totally ungoverned territory to be married among the Kohistani tribes. These tribes still belong to the cave era as they had not even seen transistors or safety pins. When they discovered that she had run away, her husband and his clan hunted her down.

In those parts, a run-away wife is like a pet running off by itself. Because of poverty wives are bought like sacks of wheat or goats. The punishment for running away is only death. They found her decapitated body in the river.

Bapsi Sidhwa, first wrote a couple of short stories and articles about the beauty of the ‘Karakoram’ mountains. However, when the feeling compelled her to tell the girl’s story, she decided to write a short story which eventually, became her first novel, _The Bride_, also called _The Pakistani Bride_. It is a work of fiction, based on the events from the tribal girl’s life.

Through her first novel, Sidhwa discovered a love for writing. According to Gitangali Singh, “_The Bride_ is fast moving and interesting enough. Sidhwa’s genius however, libels in her style. She has a rare sense of fun that is irresistible. The naturalness of her descriptions of the physical is the look; the body or the sexual act is a unique feature among the subcontinent women writers” (79).

_The Bride_ took four years, but it was an experience which Sidhwa enjoyed utmost. A Reviewer in _The Financial Times_ has observed, “Sidhwa shows a
marvelous feel for imagery – at a breathless pace she waves her exotic cliffhanger from passion, power, lust, sensuality, cruelty and murder” (43).

Beginning at the time of partition in 1947, the story of *The Bride* is set in the bustling city of Lahore. The novel takes a turn towards the mountainous stretch of Kohistan. The Hindu – Muslim conflict and the consequent bloodshed takes the reader on a venture into the wilderness of the dark melancholic days during those bloody riots. Qasim, a tribesman from the upper region of Pakistan, travelling on a refugee train carrying hundreds of passengers, struggles through a safe exit, while most of the passengers are butchered mercilessly. He comes across a five year old little girl, whose parents have also been victims of the insane killings. He names the girl Zaitoon, after his own deceased daughter, and raises her with all fatherly affection and love. Nikka, Qaism’s friend arranges for Zaitoon to be left under the care of his wife, Miriam. Under Miriam’s maternal supervision, Zaitoon finally reaches the age of adolescence. She is nurtured by a sound religious education.

As Zaitoon turns fifteen, Miriam suggests Qasim to find a suitable bridegroom for her. Qasim, excited with a sudden deep feeling of affection grows nostalgic for his very own people, the tribal. He seeks friendly ties with a tribesman Misrikhan in order to give Zaitoon’s hand in marriage to his son, Sakhikhan. The hasty decision enrages Nikka and Miriam, who are immensely disappointed with Qasim. A wave of confusion and discontent runs through Zaitoon, but her naivety leaves her speechless. She has always believed that Qasim would have chosen the best possible way for his dear daughter.

Zaitoon as a new bride is desperately unhappy in her marriage. She is not able to adjust herself in that savage and uncivilized society and more so, with her
cruel and inscrutable husband. At last, she decides to run away though she knows that by the tribal code, the punishment for such an act is only death. She is fortunate enough to be saved by the army Major Mushtaq and his companions. A Review in *Indian Abroad* reads thus, “Ingenious and dramatic, Sidhwa’s forceful literacy traits make *The Bride* one of the finest books to come out of the expanding South Asian literary scene” (27).

The translation of *The Bride* is also published in France as *La finance pakistanaise* in 1997. Immediately after completing *The Bride*, Sidhwa started working on her second novel *The Crow Eaters* which is a lively and humorous story about the Parsi community of Pakistan. The title of the book is the translation of a derogatory term used for the Parsees who are stereotyped as being excessively loud and talkative. The Parsees, without reading the book, are offended by the title. As Sidhwa in her interview to Julie Rajan says:

There was a bomb threat at the hotel where the book was being launched in Lahore. We were all ushered out and a crowd waited outside for the place to blow up. Every one wondered, ‘Why?’ Later I realized how angry some Parsees were. This was the first book to be written about the Parsees and it was very difficult for them to read about Parsee characters and customs. The community, like all small communities, is very secretive and they felt I had revealed too much about it. They felt disturbed that I had written so openly about its customs, values, and religious practices. (35)

*The Crow Eaters* is a comedy which signals an abrupt change from her earlier work. The Parsees or the Zoroastrians are the socio-religious group to which Sidhwa belongs. It is a prosperous, yet dwindling community of approximately,
one hundred thousand based predominantly in Bombay. *The Crow Eaters* tells the story of a family within the small Parsee community residing in the huge city of Lahore. Complete with historical information and rich with bawdy, the novel never diminishes in its cultural significations. Carolyne wright has the following observation:

*The Crow Eaters* is a rollicking comic tale, with daring shifts ... Throughout the novel, Sidhwa’s prose is boisterous, and *The Crow Eaters* never fails to entertain. She writes with zest and affection for her characters that makes us hope for subsequent novels continuing the Junglewalla clan story. This is a comic novel stuffed with rich, spicy characters. Sidhwa makes every step of Faredoon’s journey through time and culture a joy to read. (20)

Success did not come to Bapsi Sidhwa without a lot of hard work. She wrote her first two novels in Pakistan where no one was publishing in English at the time. So, after receiving many rejections, Sidhwa decided to publish and self distribute *The Crow Eaters*, as she says “It was very frustrating to peddle your own books as I did in Lahore ... I would go from book store to book store saying ‘Please read The Crow Eaters.’ Bookstore-owners would show little interest and often criticize the title of the book” (23).

This process was so discouraging that Sidhwa stopped writing for about five years. *The Crow Eaters* was published in Lahore in 1978, by Orient Longman in India and by Cape in Britain. In 1980, after receiving a copy of Sidhwa’s self-published *The Crow Eaters*, Britain’s Jonathan Cape decided to publish it. “An agent showed (The Crow Eaters) to Jonathan Cape their editor, Liz Colter, wrote a
delightful letter of acceptance within two weeks of receiving it. Sidhwa says in her interview with Julia Rajan.

Through the protagonist, Faredoon Junglewalla (Freedy) of *The Crow Eaters* Bapsi Sidhwa depicts the life and customs of the Parsees. In *The Irish Times*, Gillian Somerville has pointed out, “Sidhwa a Parsee writes with love and affection about her people. Her charming account of the rise of Faredoon Junglewalla is an attractive portrait of a hard-working delightful scoundrel Ironic neat and funny” (16).

Sidhwa displays the period before the partition. The customs, the rituals and the life style of the Parsees are presented in the novel. The whole story revolves around Freedy, a businessman. When he reaches Lahore, the other Parsees help him to settle him in his business. Later, he becomes one of the most successful businessmen in Lahore. Other Parsees come to him for help and guidance. He helps everybody who comes to him, in order to perpetuate the good will of his community. He loves all his four daughters and the three sons but, Soli is his favourite who unfortunately dies at the early age of twenty one. After this unfortunate storm, Billy, his other son takes his business to the pinnacle of its glory.

Sidhwa portrays the Parsee culture very minutely. Freddy in his old days feels very satisfied with his achievements and he always shares his experiences with his children to give them, a new way of thought and smartness. She puts light on the relationship of the Britishers and Parsees, also on the position and role of the Parsees before, during and after partition, and their consequent grief of being a minority.
Today, the Parsee people remain as a distinctive minority community. Originally, they migrated to South Asia from Iran to avoid religious persecution. The word Parsee is an ethnic term which means ‘a native of Fars’ an ancient Persian province. Many Parsee writers live as expatriates in Canada, England and the U.S.A. Like Sidhwa they have encountered double migration. The Parsees now enjoy a ‘double Diaspora’ since their first arrival in Gujarat around 750 A.D. Narendra Kumar has the following observation to make in this context:

Dislocation is part of Parsee. Exiled twelve hundred years ago, they came to India. Now they are migrating to the West in search of greener postures. Thus there is ‘double migration’ in the case of Parsees. The flight in the eighth century was forced on them by the Arabs whereas the second is the result of a conscious and deliberate choice. (14)

Thus the Parsees’ different Diasporas, express their dynamic state of mind which is always ready to adapt a new challenge, and thereby evolving new methods of survival. Besides, their works display the Diaspora features of the sense of loss, nostalgia and the problems of identification with host countries.

Though the first two novels brought her recognition, it was her third novel, *Cracking India,* - also published as *Ice-Candy Man,* that earned Bapsi Sidhwa international acclaim and acceptance as one of the most promising English novelists from South Asia, placing her among the likes of Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai and R.K.Narayan. Tariq Rehman has the following to say: “Without a word of protestation of preaching and without histrionics, Sidhwa has written of the most powerful indictments of the riots which occurred during the partition” (17).
The title of the novel pointedly reveals the very nature of humanity as one struggle with the intricacies of life. Through *Cracking India*, Bapsi Sidhwa has indeed brought to life the spiritual, emotional and very reality of the Partition of India. In doing so, she has ‘cracked’ the riddle of India as she reveals the cultural difficulties that had plagued South Asia before, during as well as after its split from the British rule and the creation of Pakistan. A Review of *Cracking India* says:

*Ice Candy Man* is extremely taut, highly sensitive and its heart rending realism is best brought out with the familiar elements. The treatment, much to the fulfillment of the reader, is not only delightfully different but also inimitably exclusive... Sidhwa’s somewhat Joycian insight into child psychology and keen observation of child behavior is what makes the book so compelling and virtually un-put-down-able. (31)

The issues dealt with are as numerous as they are horrifying. Sidhwa repeatedly condemns the dehumanizing impact that religious zealotry plays in promoting mob mentality, separation, and revenge during the partition. The book is both uplifting and heart wrenching. It is filled with characters that the readers grow to love and despise as the story unfolds. Sylvia Clayton has the following remarks on this novel:

In this rich, original novel Sidhwa contrives, without fake naiveté, to tell the story through the eyes of a sharp, inquisitive eight years old girl Lenny, who has a crippled foot and is cared for by a beautiful young Ayah. Lenny is established so firmly as a truthful witness that the mounting unease in Lahore, the riots, fires and
brutal massacres become real through the child’s experience. The colossal upheaval of partition, when cities were allotted to India or Pakistan like pieces on a chess board, and their frightened inhabitants were often savagely uprooted, runs like an earth tremor through this thoughtful novel. (51)

In *Cracking India*, Bapsi Sidhwa delicately threads the story of an eight year old girl, Lenny with the din of violence ready to crash around her world as the Partition moves from political planning to reality. The story is told in the present tense as the events unfold before the girl’s eyes, through moments of an older Lenny’s nostalgia.

Like Sidhwa, Lenny is stricken with polio. She lives in Lahore and is a Parsi. She is a clever and an extremely observant narrator, though for so many times her understanding is limited by her young age. The historical scene of the Partition is integrated well in the novel through Lenny’s young eyes. Bapsi Sidhwa is criticized by some critics for making Lenny’s character too intelligent for her age.

As Lenny becomes more aware, she must confront a reality increasingly reduced into categories and labels. The people in Lenny’s life are reduced to physical and spiritual characteristics. According to Shashi Tharoor: “The story is not about Partition, though partition looms large in its pages ... Ms. Sidhwa’s novel is about a child’s loss of innocence ... and about servants and laborers and artisans caught up in events they barely understand, but in which they play a terrible part” (28).

The characters that surround Lenny include ‘Slave sister,’ ‘Electric Aunt,’ ‘Old Husband,’ ‘Godmother,’ ‘Ayah’ and ‘Ice-Candy Man,’ are also assigned with
significant roles. In an interview with Julie Rajan, Bapsi Sidhwa herself states that, “the major themes of Cracking India are idea of nationality, difference in religions, theme of love, condition of women, theme of power and political selfishness” (30).

Love comes as multifaceted in the book. There’s the cruel, pitiless face of love and also the coziness and warmth of love between the Godmother and the child, Lenny. Even Slave sister and Godmother, in spite of their constant bickering, have a strong bond. Love takes an awful shape when the Ice - Candy Man allows Ayah to be kidnapped by the mob.

There are different forms of love in the novel of religion, of land and of power. With regard to Ice – Candy Man his love constantly changes its shape. He, himself, changes very frequently. He is a slippery character. And, he’s an amalgam of India. Ice – Candy Man shows the obsessive side of love.

A lot of cruelty and evil is shown in the name of love. Love, crime and passion are exonerated because, ‘It was done for love’ (31). The love between the Godmother and the child is found to be unconditional and also the purest. The novel also depicts the theme of Power is the sexual power as well as the political power. Of the dirtiness of politics, Bapsi Sidhwa says in an interview, “As a Parsee, I can see things objectively. I see all the common people suffering while the politicians on either side have the fun” (17).

In France, the translation of Ice –Candy Man was published as ‘Mister Candy’ in 1997 and as ‘La Spartizione del Cuore’ in Italy, in 1999.

Along with the political ineffectiveness, Sidhwa draws out the most damaging effect of the Partition, which is the symbolic desecration of women on both sides. Sidhwa recalls the chilling screams and moans of recovered women at
the time. Thousands of women were kidnapped, and were victims of rape and torture. Due to lasting shame and their husbands’ damaged pride, many victims were not permitted entry in their homes.

Woman’s body is the site of celebration, vengeance and humiliation. In the hatred that has fuelled the political relations between Pakistan and India since that time, this fact is practically forgotten. In one of her infrequent bursts of poetry, Sidhwa writes;

Despite the residue of passion and regret, and loss of those who have in panic fled – the fire could not have burned for ... Despite all the ruptured dreams, broken lives, buried gold, a bricked – in rupees, secreted jeweler, lingering hopes ... the fire could not have burned for months. (29)

Cracking India includes among all this tragedy, a brilliant sense of humor as well. As Sidhwa says, “Laughter does so many things for us. It has quality of exposing wrongs and gets rid of anger and excitement.” Cracking India (13) calls to recollection the pain of old cracked wounds, so that they may finally be healed.

Cracking India is considered by many critics as the most moving and the essential book on Indian Partition. As Elaine Feinstein observes:

Bapsi Sidhwa is new to me, and something of a discovery. She is writing about the hatred and terror which accompanied the partition of Indian sub – continent. The opening section of the novel set a mood in which continuity is taken for granted, and unfamiliar terrain and complex social relationship are suffused with the melancholy charm of awakening sexuality ... The girl’s beloved Ayah is a Hindu and it is one of the most poignant moments in the
book when the girl, trusting the Ice - Candy - Man betrays her hiding place. It is as if her childish innocence is as powerful as a devil, and she cannot help telling the truth. (45)

Bapsi Sidhwa has now become one of the best writers in English from Pakistan. Her books have been loved all over the world especially in Great Britain and The United States of America.

An American Brat is just another one of her classics. A Reviewer in New Statesman says, “A born story teller, an affectionate shrewd observer … she writes with authority and flair” (8). Starting in Lahore, one of the most historic and beautiful cities of south Asia the book moves to the United States. The story revolves around a Parsee girl and her life.

The novel gets off to a fast and funny start. Zareen Ginwalla anxiously awaits the arrival of her husband, Cyrus, the owner of sports emporium. In Lahore, 1978, General Zia has seized power and the liberal Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is in jail, soon to be executed. Zareen’s problem is being a Bhutto supporter; she sees that her sixteen year old daughter Feroza is becoming, like Pakistan under Zia’s military Islamic fundamentalist rule, increasingly conservative. She berates her mother for showing her arms and refuses to answer the telephone even though Ginwalla family is Zoroastrain or Parsee not Muslim. According to Komal Hanif, “Sidhwa has a good ear and she mimics perfectly the Parsees of Pakistan, as also the American personae; but there is something pedestrian about her prose in this novel which leaves one feeling a little flat …” (29).

The only solution is to send her daughter to the United States for a few months, where she will stay with her uncle Manek, a Doctoral candidate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. According to Elaine Feinstein:
The Book is just stunning to read … to see, how a simple girl moves to “gimme coke! From may I have a Coca-Cola?” An American Brat is a coming of age story, a sensitive portrait of how modern America appears to a new arrival … and an exploration of the impact it has on a Parsee girl. (16)

Despite his own early difficulties adjusting to life in America, Manek convinces Feroza to stay on as a student majoring in Hotel Management, a suitably practical field, at a junior college in Idaho. In Idaho she encounters the real America which influences her life and changes her culturally. In the company of Jo, Rhonda, Gwen, Shashi and Bill, Feroza sees life as multifaceted Mike works for the NASA in Houston. Manek is traditional enough to return to Pakistan to find a suitably submissive, wife. Feroza goes much further when she decides to marry David Press, an American Jew, thus precipitating her mother’s frantic flight to The United States to stop the marriage.

Zareen is more than merely a closet conservative, a comic caricature of an Indian mother. She is a Parsee, and she knows that Feroza’s marrying outside the small Parsee community will mean, both for her daughter and for the Parsees a spiritual exile. This state of mind constitutes the thematic content of the novel. In other words, the novel is all about a pampered young Pakistani woman maturing into an independent Pakistani American in the U.S, being fixed to choose the best of both worlds. The mother–daughter relationship is one specimen, for considering a number of related issues, some feminist, others having to do with religious, ethnic, national and personal identity. This is a novel about the various conflicts or tensions, between husbands and wives, between East and West, India and Pakistan, Parsees and Muslim, the sacred and the profane, haves and have-nots.
Bapsi Sidhwa is a successful novelist with a marvelous appeal to reader’s mind. She plays a significant role as a bridge to project the South – Asian customs, cultures and society to the West. In an interview Bapsi Sidhwa says:

I feel if there’s one little thing I could do, it’s to make people realize: We are not worthless because we inhabit a country which is seen by Western eyes as a primitive, fundamentalist country only.... I mean, we are a rich mixture of all sorts of forces as well, and our lives are very much worth living. (36)

Sidhwa’s main field of interest is women’s rights. Once she was part of a women’s delegation to Iran and Turkey in 1870. In 1975, she represented Punjab at the Asian Women’s Conference at Alma-Ata, in the Republic of Kazakhstan, in the erstwhile USSR. She was a voluntary worker on several social work committees and was actively involved in setting up the Destitute Women’s Children’s Home in Lahore.

As a third world artist, Bapsi Sidhwa like Mulk Raj Anand earlier, does feel that the writer has a proselytizing role to play. She talks about the injustices which she demonstrates through incidents in her novels. Some of the injustices listed by Bapsi Sidhwa are the behavior of superpowers as evident in *The Crow Eaters* and *Ice-Candy Man* or the oppression of women as in *The Bride* or an injustice done to a country as witnesses in the Misrepresentation of Pakistan’s view of Partition in *Ice-Candy-Man* or the injustice done to a political leader presented through Mohammed Ali Jinnah in the struggle for Independence which she later tries to rectify in *Ice-Candy Man*.

Sidhwa is a well renowned writer who enriches language through new means of expression. She adapts the native myths into events in such a way that the
whole narrative pattern gains a new rhythmic elegance. Her art of characterization for instance, capitalizes on the multi ethnicity. That is she also draws very significant American, English as well as the Jewish characters in her fiction.

Sidhwa is known for her empathetic elaboration of the Parsee Community, its customs, culture and beliefs. A reviewer in *Harper’s Queen* says, “A Parsee herself Sidhwa writes out of affection strong enough to allow for farce and satire, and so is free from the blight of folk–art. Her memorably comic characters are living an epic” (31).

People from all over the world always want to read Sidhwa because her characters fully describe every society, culture and religion. Whenever one reads her novels, one feels a kind of similarity and a bit of one’s individuality with these characters. May be Feroza of *An American Brat* or Zaitoon of *The Bride*, the stories of these characters some way or the other demonstrate the hardcore reality of life. To Andrew Sinclair “Bapsi Sidhwa is a powerful and dramatic novelist who knows how to flesh out a story” (7).

The configurations of Sidhwa’s fiction are centered on universal brotherhood, global harmony, equality of men and women, and the importance of education. She attempts to create a universal awareness on the global, social and political situation. For instance, the events revolve around the problems of Iran to Australia and India to The United States. America. As Stephen Nicole observes, “What a wonderfully descriptive writer she is, really introducing the reader into a new world. One hopes that there will be many more novels from the pen of this most sensitive writer” (6).
The thematic content of Sidhwa’s novel sways between the tradition and the contemporary. Hence, her works ignite a multifaceted response. R.K. Dhawan and Novy Kapadia offer the following observation:

In her four published novels, the themes vary—the Partition crises, expatriate, the Parsee milieu and social idiosyncrasies of this small minority community, the theme of marriage, women’s problems, pattern of migrations, the complexities of language and the art of storytelling. (9)

Sidhwa stands tall in her capacity to address the grim historical realities with precision and accuracy. The potential components of her prose remain the most startling and original. Sidhwa projects themes in conflict, that is, Modernism versus Traditionalism, East versus West and man verses women. From the Parsee community of writers, Sidhwa can be regarded as certainly one of the finest Anglophone novelists of South Asia. The brilliance of her writing deserves to be honored by the widest possible readership as described by Sara, Suleri the former Professor of English, Yale University.

Bapsi Sidhwa is one of the few eminent novelists, who have achieved the opportunity to modify their work into Cinema, and she makes direct entry into Bollywood as well as Hollywood. Her novel, Cracking India is transformed into a film named as ‘Earth’ by the famous producer and director Deepa Mehta, starring Aamir Khan, Rahul Khanna and Nandita Das. The purpose of writing the story is to reach an audience, so through the film, that goal is further achieved. Deepa Mehta has also taken inspiration and help, from Bapsi Sidhwa for her next production.
Literature is fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language. Literature is regarded as the product of the highest form of development of aesthetic sensibility. Literature is the criticism of life and mirror of society. A serious work of literature created within the framework of existing social relations is not only a living document of the contemporary happening but also of the historical processes underlying. This assertion of community with its glorious past and terrible present is clearly visible in the writings of Parsee writers. Regional literature means literature dealing with a particular region, culture, community, caste or language.

The Parsee is an ethno-religious minority in India. Although, they are minority in India, their contribution to the society, economics, commerce, science, politics and literature had been remarkable. They are small, yet united religious community. The Parsees are the followers of Prophet Zoroaster and their religion is known as Zoroastrianism. The original homeland of the Parses, ‘Pars’ or ‘Fars,’ an ancient Persian province is located at present in Southern Iran. In seventh century AD, the Parsees were forced to leave Iran following the Arab conquest in order to avoid forcible conversion to Islam Gujarat. A small group of Zoroastrians namely Parsees who seek freedom of work ship, sailed towards the warm shores of Western India. Ultimately, they arrived next to the Gujarat cast line at a place named Sanjan, harbor, which is north of Bombay. When the Parsees landed on the Gujarat coast, they were taken to the local king Jadhav Rana. The Chief Dastur (Priest) of Zoroastrian reached Jadhav Rana and sought for his permission to settle in Sanjan. The king first asked Dastur to give details in sixteen Sanskrit shlokas. Jadhav Rana was initially hesitant to allow them to take shelter in Sanjan. He was not sure about how his citizens would react, and whether they would agree to allow
the refugees from Persia. The king’s first response was a sorrowful inability to accommodate the Zoroastrians on a permanent basis at Sanjan due to the inadequacy of space.

At this crucial juncture, the Dastur requested to bring an Urn filled with milk to the brim of the assembly. Dastur then took of the Ruby studded gold ring and dropped into the urn. Doing the symbolic gesture, he explained the King that just as the content of Urn had split over but became richer by the insertion of the precious ring. Similarly, the Parsee-Zoroastrians would bring further prosperity to that area if granted shelter. Moved by this reasoning of the Dastur, Jadhav Rana invited him to recite their actual requirements. The Dastur replied that they desired freedom of worship, freedom to bring up young children in their own traditions, and land for cultivation so that they become self-reliant. Jadhav Rana agreed to these demands of the priest. The king agreed them to live in his kingdom with certain conditions such as to use Gujarati as their language, women to use sari as their dress code instead of the traditional Iranian garments and men to handover all their weapon, Venerate the cow, The marriage ceremonies shall be performed at night only.

Accepting these conditions, the Dastur responded with one to gesture is more symbolic gesture to assure the king of their and diligence. He swirled a spoonful of sugar in a brass bowl full of milk and said, “We shall try to be like this insignificant amount of sugar in the milk of your human kindness.” The Jadhav Rana stimulated by such genuine dedication gave them shelter and independence goes establish a colony of their Parsee community dwindling fast. It is a dying community. The community is fast diminishing because of low rate of birth, higher rate of death, late marriages and interfaith marriages of Parsee girls.
In the following chapter the researcher proposes to analyze Bapsi Sidhwa’s fiction is a psycho cultural perception and also wishes to fix the novelist in a unique Parsee fictional tradition.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s novels emphasize the importance of human values and concern. The researcher proposes the following hypotheses and analyses them with evidences from the author’s works, in the succeeding chapters.

- Sidhwa as a post colonial writer talks about gender issues and marginalization of women.
- Sidhwa in her works claim for the right position and identity for women.
- Sidhwa conceives the conflicts of the conventional and modern concept of women and strives for emancipation.
- Sidhwa prefers self-realization and self-identity, as the path towards emancipation.
- Sidhwa stresses the need for communication and love in marital relationship.
- Sidhwa believes in the higher order of chastity which is in no way related to the body, but very much related to the spirit.
- Sidhwa establishes her concern to reform the society and social practices that encourage female subordination.
- Sidhwa tries to resolve the tangles of discords and confusions oppressing women in the patriarchal society because of their personal and social misfortunes.
- Sidhwa aspires for female self fulfillment and autonomy in a phalli centric world.
After having established the hypotheses, the researcher describes mainly the themes of specific custom and practice of people who oppose any type of change in their way of life.