

I. Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat* as a Third World Text

This research project analyses Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *An American Brat* (1993) which recounts the story of a Pakistani Parsee girl and her experiences both in America and in Pakistan. Particularly, this project delineates the conflictual journey of the protagonist, Feroza, who makes different steps going beyond the tradition and creates the alternative spaces for herself by dismantling the cycle of the patriarchal cum religious dogmas and barriers. While doing so, this study borrows Third World feminism as its theoretical tool in order to explore the assertive self and individual freedom of the protagonist.

Basically, this study focuses on the continual and gradual transformation of the protagonist's self from rejection to assertion thereby taking Third World feminism at hand. Feroza, a sixteen years old Pakistani Parsee girl, is victimized by the religious orthodoxy of both Muslim and Parsee. The sole cause behind Feroza's timidity and meekness is Islamic fundamentalism that is functioning in Pakistani politics. She is repressed and perplexed by such practices, which are full of biases and prejudices. That results her expatriate living in alien country America. For her, America is such a place that provides her freedom and exploration of independent self and also provides her space to shed down the previous conservative preoccupations. Her wider outlook leads to see human as not having any racial or religious differences. But her own mother and own religious practices make her realize such differences. Because of the religious impositions, she has to lose her lover but she is not ready to give up her acquired freedom throughout her lifelong struggle. She rejects to return back to Pakistan because the orthodox religious practices will thrash her rights and freedom. She discovers herself as a human rather not as a normative being by keeping herself far from the religious and patriarchal bondages. She wishes to face readily the

religious and patriarchal obstructions even she fails to fulfill her decision to marry with non-Parsee Jewish man, David Press.

Bapsi Sidhwa, a prominent leading Pakistani English writer, was born in Karanchi, then part of India, in August 11, 1938 as a member Parsee/Zoroastrian community. However, her immediate family was actually based in Lahore where she grew up. At the age of two, she became a polio victim and as a consequence received no formal schooling until she was fifteen. However, she read virtually numerous books from Indian, American and European writers which shaped her life as an influential writer later. Married at the age of nineteen, she gave birth to three successive children but her marriage life with her first husband ended in divorce.

A turning point in Sidhwa's life came when she and her second husband, Noshirwan Sidhwa, were invited to a vacation in Northern Pakistan for their honeymoon. There, she heard the story of a young Punjabi girl taken across the river Indus into totally ungoverned territory to be married to a Kohistani tribe. After some time the girl ran away. Her husband, with his clansmen, hunted her down and murdered her. This incident gave Sidhwa a deep suggestion to depict the same girl's plight into the literary work. The intense and compelling experience of such incident has been sketched into a long narrative in her first novel *The [Pakistani] Bride* (1983). She, then, published subsequently her other works like *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice Candy Man* (later published as *Cracking India*), *An American Brat* and *Water*. She had successfully become the recipient of the prestigious awards like Pakistan National Honors of the Patras Bokari award for literature (1985), the highest honor of art The Sitari-I-Imtiaz (1991) by the government of Pakistan, National Award for English Literature by the Pakistan Academy of Letters (1992), Literaturepreis prize (1991) in Germany, *Cracking India* was nominated for Notable Book of the year from the

American Library Association (1991) and mentioned as a New York Times “Notable Book of the Year” (1991), received Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Award (1993).

Randhir Pratap Singh in his book *Bapsi Sidhwa* (2005) argues, “Bapsi Sidhwa was a first English writer in Pakistan to receive international acclaim” (4).

All her novels are about her perceptions of life as Parsee, Punjabi, Pakistani and American woman. She cleverly picks up the significant incidents from her own life or from the lives of other and fleshes them out to create a larger reality of fiction. She beautifully makes best use of the colorful experiences of her life, as an eight year old girl having witnessed the horrifying scenes of arson and violence at the time of Partition, a young bride in the city of Bombay, as an active social worker, as a Parsee woman and as an expatriate in America. She, either consciously or unconsciously, depicts women characters as protagonist in her works. She carefully brings the facts of history, especially of Pakistan, in her fictional world to give lively experiences of the characters.

Different reviewers and scholars have reviewed and analyzed Sidhwa’s novel *An American Brat* from different perspectives. Some of them have read her works relating them to her personal experiences whereas the others did the same by relating them to the socio-cultural scenario of the then society. Groffrey Kain, in his essay “Rupture as Continuity: Migrant Identity and “Unsettled” Perspective in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*”, deals with Feroza’s struggle to acquire her new identity as an immigrant in the new world. He states:

She helps us to see not only the power of culture to “select” behaviors and values, but also invites us to ponder the struggle of immigrants to retain their hold on what they value of their native (and - over time - increasingly distant) culture and, simultaneously, to relinquish those

values and behaviors that are not reinforced by their present environment. (238)

This analytical perspective is based on the struggle of the immigrant, say Feroza, in the new world. Along with the immigration from the native land to the new land, the immigrant should make a struggle to cope with the new environment and slowly should give up his/her previous native cultural practices because such change is obvious and inevitable.

In the essay “Within the Subcontinent and Beyond: A critical Study of Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*”, Jaydipsinh Dodiya focuses his study on Sidhwa’s consciousness of her Parsee identity. He talks about how the novelist rejects all the non-Parsee influences like intercommunity marriage. He posits his argument:

On the theme of marriage, she maintains a clever balance, implicitly opposing the rigid code but not appearing overtly rebellious. It has always been a controversial issue among the Parsees who wish to preserve the chastity of their ethnic group even at the cost of extinction. In making this issue the central concern of the narrative, Sidhwa reveals her awareness of an issue that is serious ramifications and consequences for the very existence of Parsee community. (94)

This study basically deals with the conscious projection of Parsee culture by the novelist. On the one hand, Sidhwa rejects the rigid codes in the case of intercommunity marriage and she tries to preserve her unique cultural practices with some reformations on the other. Either the Parsees are in native land or in other alien world; she calls for the protection of their culture.

Another critic G. A. Ghanshyam in his article “A Synthesis between Tradition and Modernity in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*”, deals with Feroza’s tactful

solution to her native tradition of Pakistan and her new experience of modernity in America. He is of the view:

From the innocent naive child, Feroza has now become a confident young woman. She has decided chart her own cultural heritage.

Journeying through the Pakistani Islamic culture and western culture of America, hers will be a new way of life. Her personal religion intact coupled with the western freedom to her life style. Thus, Feroza achieves a synthesis between tradition and modernity. If the new world offers Feroza adequate social space to grow, Zoroastrianism provides the ultimate emotional and social space to her. (7)

With the critical eye, this proposition focuses on the successful balance maintained by the novelist between tradition and modernity, elders and youngsters, Western and Eastern cultures, and so on. It analyses Feroza as a balanced character who maintains a balance between dynamic aspects.

Janet M. Powers, in his article “Bapsi Sidhwa”, presents Sidhwa as a westernized woman who criticizes the traditional patriarchy that is functioning in South Asian societies. His article argues, “As a Westernized woman Sidhwa is critical of traditional patriarchy and the way in which the lives of South Asian women are controlled at every steps of the way by their fathers, husbands and sons” (351). This argument posits Sidhwa as having westernized mentality. Because of her western feminist consciousness, she hits on the head of patriarchal practices that are prevailing in South Asian region.

The another critic Randhir P. Singh, in his essay “The Cultural Difference”, talks about modern construction of mental uncertainty especially of expatriate because of multicultural position. He argues:

Feroza's mental turmoil typifies the predicament of the modern multicultural society. She also represents the youngsters especially ones, striving hard to strike a balance between tradition and modernity, past and present, dependence and freedom and so forth. While flying and falling alternately, they are trying to soar to the state of being self contained where there is no falling. (84)

The above mentioned remarks analyzes upon the state of multi-cultural existence of modern people. Feroza's position has been roughly compared with all the modern youngsters who, because of their multi-cultural existence, have tried their best to keep the balance between the native culture and new culture, tradition and modernity and so on.

In the above mentioned reviews, different reviewers have analyzed the text from different perspectives. In nutshell, Groffery Kain has analyzed the text from the perspective of immigrant, Dodiya has focused his study on the issue of inter-community marriage and Parsee identity, Ghanshyam has studied Sidhwa's tactics to balance the dynamics of tradition and modernity, Powers has dealt with the issue of female from South Asia and Singh has focused on the issue of multiculturalism. However, the issues regarding Third World female depicted in the text has not yet been analyzed from the perspective of Third World feminism. This present research clearly attempts to analyze the role of religion, which (to some extent) carries the patriarchal presumptions in suppressing women. In the novel, there is no any visible male character to regulate the patriarchal norms thoroughly. But the fundamentalist religious practices are functioning to perpetuate patriarchal norms and ideologies. While dealing with male and female characters, these practices clearly show their double but biased stances. Not only this, females themselves are appointed to perform

and fulfill patriarchal and religious norms and values. There is no passive endurance rather active resistance of the protagonist against these religious, patriarchal and cultural barriers and boundaries. Sidhwa shows the uniqueness of socio-historical conditions and religious-cultural circumstances of the Third World, especially that of Pakistan though Feroza is living in America at present. Feroza realizes her culture as more rigid as soon as she encounters with the American culture. To be more precise, she has no such consciousness regarding the rigidness in the beginning. Sidhwa draws the religious conditions and historical time period of the then Pakistan that the characters have to undergo to give the live experience. As most of the characters and the setting of the novel belong to Third World, Third World feminism can appropriately and justifiably analyze the text incorporating the essence of the Third World. In order to prove my arguments and hypothesis, this thesis borrows the theoretical propositions of different Third World feminists like; Chandra T. Mohanty, Ketu H. Katrak, Uma Narayan, and Leela Gandhi.

As a branch of philosophy, Third World feminism has emerged in 1990s to deal with the unique experiences of the women from so-called Third World countries. The feminists who advocate in favor of the experiences of the women from the Third World are known as Third World feminists. The term 'Third World feminism' designates the unique experiences of Third World women that are different than the experiences of the women of the West. The politics behind the emergence of Third World feminism is to counter the ethnocentric and Eurocentric orientation of Western First (?) world feminism. Furthermore, Third World feminism vehemently criticizes the false representation of the experiences of the women from the Third World. Western feminists think that they are burdened with the responsibility to represent the Third World women because, for them, Third World women are immanent, religious,

traditional, family bounded, and uneducated . Thus, in Leela Gandhi's words, First World feminists think that the Third World women "cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (*Postcolonial Theory*, 86). This is to say, Third World women's representation by First World feminists is biased and full of prejudices.

Similarly, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, one of the leading Third World feminists, in her book, *Feminism without Borders* (2003), posits her arguments based on a deep belief in the power and significance of feminist thinking of struggles for economic and social justice. She emphasizes on an enterprise and project that embodies an internationalist vision of feminist commitments and struggles which is the best feminist practice for her. Through this feminist commitment, she speculates on the possibility of the borderless feminism. However, the inclusive visions of feminism need to be attentive to the borders formulated by western feminism while transcending them. She writes:

Feminism without borders is not the same as "border-less" feminism. It acknowledges the fault lines, conflicts, differences, fears, and containment that borders represent. It acknowledges that there is no one sense of a border, that the lines between and through nations, races, classes, sexualities, religions, and disabilities, are real- and that a feminism without borders must envision change and social justice work across these lines of demarcation and division. (2)

In such proposition, the call for the emancipatory potential of blurring the narrowness of these borders and the establishment of feminism, which is without silence and exclusion, is evidential.

Though she urges for the possibility of solidarity among feminist practices throughout the world, she is equally conscious of the apolitical and ahistorical

representations of Third World women in the western texts. She argues that some of the First World texts represent Third World women as a “singular, monolithic subject” (17).

Regarding the misrepresentation of Third World women and their experiences in so called masterpieces from the west, she argues that the western writers designate various textual strategies to codify and define other as Non-Western and themselves as Western. So the political and intellectual construction of the ‘Third World feminism’ must address itself to two simultaneous projects:

[T]he internal critique of hegemonic “Western” feminisms and the formulation of autonomous feminist concerns and strategies that are geographically, historically, culturally grounded. The first project is one of deconstructing and dismantling; the second is one of building and constructing. (17)

Here, Mohanty is firmly moving in her project of decolonizing feminism from the colonial clutch of western feminism with her deconstructing ethos. The process of deconstructing and dismantling the western feminist formulations and creating the new history of Third World feminism is essential because the women of the Third World can no more follow the risk of marginalization thereby occupying the subservient position of women. Only after doing all these, Third World women can establish and search for their own space, individuality and self by opposing the oppressors.

In the same vein, Mohanty denies the construction of women as coherent, already constituted group by the Western feminism. Western feminist writings make an assumption of coherent and already constituted group on the basis of universal shared oppression and identical interest and desire regardless the historical,

sociological, geographical and ethnic locations. These writings even assume the universal oppression of patriarchy which can be applied cross-culturally. For Mohanty, this representation, in turn, produces the average image of Third World women as, “[. . .] religious (read: not progressive), family oriented (read: traditional), legally unsophisticated (read: they are still not conscious of their rights), illiterate (read: ignorant), domestic (read: backward), and sometimes revolutionary (read: their country is in a state of war; they must fight)” (40). In contrast, this suggests the western women as self-presenting, modern, educated, having control over their sexuality and body. The act of homogenizing and systematizing the heterogeneous experiences of the Third World women “erases all marginal and resistant modes and experiences” (40-41).

Mohanty’s politics behind undertaking the Third World women as, “a political and analytic category” is to “explore links among the histories and struggles of Third World women against racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism and monopoly capital” (46). Third World women have very different histories and, thus, different experiences than that of Western Euro-American women. Third World feminists have to explore the complex interrelationship among feminist, antiracist and nationalist. Thus, she writes, “Third World feminists have argued for the rewriting of history based on the specific locations and histories of struggle of people of color and post-colonial peoples, and on the day-to-day strategies of survival utilized by such peoples” (52). So she calls for historicizing the experiences of Third World women.

The another prominent Third World feminist, Uma Narayan, in her work *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, And Third World Feminism* (1997) aims at castigating the superficial acquisitions on Third World feminism as merely being a mimicry of First World feminism. She also dares to criticize the western and Third

World scholars' misrepresentation of Third World culture and women. This work directs a philosophical perspective on areas of ongoing interest such as nationalism, post-colonial studies and the cultural politics of debates over tradition and westernization of Third World context.

In Third World countries, there is misconception about the Third World feminist practices which are considered to be only the copy of western white feminism. Similarly, they are accused of being ignoring their Third World cultures and having westernized mentality. In this regard, she says:

Many Third-World feminists confront the attitude that our criticisms of our cultures are merely one more incarnation of a colonized consciousness, the views of "privileged native women in whiteface", seeking to attack their "non-western culture" on the basis of "Western" values. (3)

But, Uma Narayan denies the surface charge and asserts, "[T]hird world feminism is not a mindless mimicking of "Western agendas" (13). For her, Third World feminism is clearly a response to the sufferings of Third World women. Third World feminism is such branch, that deals with feminist practices which acquired feminist views and engaged in feminist politics in the Third World countries. Third World feminist consciousness has its root much nearer to Third World countries rather than in alien First World Western geography. She argues that every feminist movement is the products of the historical, cultural, and political circumstances of the respective society. The norms, institutions and traditions of the society structures women's personal and social lives which ,too, determine feminist consciousness against the status-quo and help to envision the future. Hence, Third World feminism is the by-

product of Third World's social traditions, religious norms, cultural values and political conditions.

She further argues that Western feminist practices cannot response the unique experiences of Third World women. Since western feminism cannot locate the unique experience of Third World women's cultural designation and social locations, it is invalid in such context. She argues:

[W]omen in western contexts might be unfamiliar with the violence against women connected to the contemporary functioning of the institutions of dowry and arranged marriages, they are no strangers to the battery and violence prevalent within their own various forms of marriage and family arrangements. They are no strangers either to the sense of shame that accompanies admitting victimization, or to a multiplicity of material, social, and cultural structures that pose serious impediments to women seeking assistance or to their leaving abusive relationships. (13)

Here, she makes clear that western feminism cannot adequately locate the real experience of women from the Third World, rather it falsely universalizes and essentializes such experiences with surface assessment. Western feminists' continual ignorance to address the cause of dowry- murders, dowry related harassment, issues related to the suppression of woman by her in-laws, husband beating, poverty, multi-child bearing, health, religious barriers and others. So they are unable to cope with the socio-cultural experiences and realities of the Third World societies. Indian mothers cannot express their familial harassments and dominations publicly rather they think that these are the private (family) issues thus, they should either endure or solve privately. However, Uma Narayan argues that it is the duty of daughters (feminists) to

raise the voice and bring them into public debate. Hence, Indian daughters have to play double role as a feminist and as a daughter because those prevailing norms and roles given to women have political implications.

In addition to this, Third World feminists should address the multiple dimensions of the society which are responsible for the oppression of women. They must not indulge narrowly to the apparent institutions and practices that are harmful to women rather they should challenge in larger levels of nations, religions, traditions, cultural codes and norms. She writes:

The political locations of many Third-World feminists makes it particularly clear that the scope of feminist struggles needs to include not only contestations of *particular practices and institutions* detrimental to women, but additionally to include challenges to the larger pictures of Nation, National History, and Cultural Traditions that serve to sustain and justify these practices and institutions. These are often “pictures of History” that *conceal their own historicity and their own status as representations*- suggesting the Nation and its Culture are “natural givens” rather than the *historical inventions and constructions* that they are. (21)

This proposition clearly hints the demand for envisioning of women’s problems and issues in wider sphere. Third World feminists have to confront with dynamic subjects that are related to anti-colonial resistance, westernization, colonialism, colonial and local patriarchy, economic, political and cultural traditions, and others. Then only, Third World women’s issues can get justifiable response.

Likewise, the another prominent Third World feminist Ketu H. Katrak in her book, *Politics of Female Body* (2006) proposes a politics of the female body in post-

colonial women's texts, that are participating in the process of decolonizing female body from native and colonial patriarchy and other modes of patriarchy. Her primary proposition, derived from the texts written by post-colonial women writers, is that:

[. . .] the female body is in a state of exile including self-exile and self-censorship, outsidership, and un-belonging to itself within indigenous patriarchy (historicized within different cultures and histories) strengthened by British racialized colonial practices in the regions of India, Africa, and the Caribbean that this study covers. (2)

The female protagonists depicted in the literary and non-literary texts, which Katrak studies, are the victim of body being exiled both internally and externally. According to her, internalized exile means the female body feels disconnected from itself and does not belong to it and has no agency. This exile is caused by the pervasive domination of colonialism, traps of traditional and cultural prejudices and the pressures of motherhood. On the other, the external exile of female body is caused by "migration" and "geographical relocation" which are "necessitated by political persecution, material conditions of poverty, and forms of intellectual silencing in Third World societies" (2). The female protagonists often resist against such oppression and domination and try to reconnect with their bodies and community through the means of speech, silence, starvation, or illness. But, the resistances fail and that cause either death or murder or suicide of the female.

Katrak, henceforth, discusses about the portrayal of female protagonists in both of the literary and non-literary texts from the Third World. Those protagonists are the representatives of Third World women. They resist against the oppression of local patriarchy and colonial domination but the resistance is covert (from within the system) rather than overt (from political resistance/imprisonment that are commonly

portrayed in post-colonial male writers' texts). Katrak writes, "Female covert resistances are undertaken with self-consciousness and remarkable creativity that decides to take risks and confront domination selectively and strategically in the interest of self-preservation" (3). This suggests women's self-conscious resistances that are strategically but inherently undertaken against the dominations.

In the same manner, Katrak comes forth to explore how Third World female bodies are colonized. For her, "A politics of female body includes the constructions and controls of female sexuality, its acceptable and censored expressions, its location socioculturally, even materially in post-colonial regions" (8). Politics of female body also involves the process of socialization. The process of socialization includes manifold layers and levels of ideological, religious and socio-cultural conditions that impose knowledge and ignorance of female bodies. This process also constructs women as gendered subjects or objects. The socio-cultural and religious norms formulate an ideological and political framework that constitutes networks to control female body. Katrak argues:

Sociocultural parameters of womanhood- wifhood, mothers of sons valued more than mothers of daughters, infertility, widowhood-are grounded within economic, political and cultural norms that consciously and unconsciously constitute an ideological framework that controls women's bodies. (9)

The aforementioned argument particularly shows how the economic, political, religious and cultural parameters constitute the hierarchical status of women having son and women having daughter. The society that is functioning under patriarchal norms ostracizes the women who gives birth to daughter and rewards her who gives birth to son. This is clearly a Third World feature especially of South Asian societies

that values son as a subject that can proceed and protect the heritage of the 'good clan' whereas daughter is objectified as others' property not of the family to which she belongs. The socialization of female even constitute the mechanism that can control the female body even after education, migration, relocation out of the original family and coded structures of morality and behaviors. The dowry system, polygamy, caste system, marriage codes are functioning pervasively in the Third World especially in Indian sub-continent. Hence, the duty of Third World feminist is to address such practices which are directed to control female body. The traditions and religious norms like Sati, veiling, dowry, multiple children bearing are the expected gender roles that females are supposed to follow. Women's are expected to be the guardians of tradition in the anti-colonial movement.

Katrak is of the view that there are apparent paradoxes between religious space or mythological presentation of female and their harsh lived realities. The religious/mythological roles given to females like priestess or goddess is mystified. She says, "Mythology and religion constitute powerful ideological bases that sustain patriarchal controls of women within the family and in daily life" (60). This is to say, the fundamentalist religious practices are formulated to provide spaces for patriarchal systems in oppressing women.

To wrap up, the over mentioned feminist propositions can analytically and justifiably study the proposed novel *An American Brat* by dealing the female issues depicted in the novel. Bapsi Sidwa's *An American Brat* is significant for Third World feminist studies. It sets female protagonist, Feroza, who becomes victim of the systematic functioning of her own Zoroastrian religious dogmas and fundamentalist Islamic codes, which are no other than patriarchal practices. Despite her physical distance [America], the religious codes function to dissuade her. But Feroza does not

give up the acquired freedom and individuality by declining her mother's propose for returning to Pakistan and settling down the family. She seriously resists against the oppressions and restrictions posed by religious practices thereby exploring the independent and assertive self.

This research has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter incorporates a brief introduction to Bapsi Sidhwa, her works and the issue of third world women that is going to be analyzed in this thesis project. For that propose, this chapter makes a detail discussion on the theoretical perspective – Third World feminism – that is drawn to provide the material grounding to the research and prove the proposed hypothesis. Likewise, the second chapter remains as the core of the thesis project as it incorporates the analysis of the text. In so doing, some lines are being extracted from the text and are analyzed from the perspective of the theoretical modality described in the previous chapter. As this project makes Third world feminist reading of Bapsi Sidwa's *An American Brat*, this section brings the ideas of different third world feminist's ideas to support my arguments regarding the excerpts. The fourth and the final chapter is the concluding portion of the entire study. On the basis of the analysis conducted in the preceding chapter, it will conclude the explanations, logic and arguments of the thesis work.

II. Intersection of Religion and Patriarchy in Sidhwa's *An American Brat*

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *An American Brat* (1993) dramatizes the unique and dynamic experiences faced by the protagonist, Feroza. Feroza, a sixteen years old Pakistani Parsee girl, comes across the boundaries and barriers posed by religions (Islam and Zoroastrian) and their fundamentalist practices while exploring her independent self and individuality. In the novel, Sidhwa does not depict Feroza overtly rebellious but she shows her discontent to the fundamentalist religious practices and raises the voice for freedom, especially of women. Initially, Feroza becomes the victim of Islamic orthodox practices that makes her to live expatriate life and later, of her of her own Zoroastrian religious orthodoxy, which deprive her from her relation with David Press. This religious practices are full of biases and prejudices, thus, they are no other than patriarchal practices that are functioning from within the veil of religion and legal ordinances.

In the novel, Sidhwa projects the unique female practices prevailing in the Third World; that is females' oppression over female themselves. Feroza's mother, Zareen, performs ambivalent stances. On the one hand, she appears as a women rights advocator and she is presented as an active agent to carry on the religious orders which are disadvantageous for the women themselves on the other. However Feroza readily confronts and denounces all the boundaries and succeeds to explore her independent self. Further, the novel depicts the unique experiences of Feroza, because of her third world origin, which are different than that of her American colleagues like Jo. In this context, this research project studies Third World woman's sufferings and mistreatments, through the means of religion and patriarchal practices that are also

supported by women themselves, thereby analyzing the exploration of Feroza's self and independent existence.

The novel starts with the depiction of the then politico-historical scenario of Pakistan. Though the novel was written in 1993, the time period depicted in the novel is about late 1970s Pakistan. At that time Pakistan was facing political turmoil of transformation from liberal democracy to military supported religious dictatorship. This was the time when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a socialist political leader and the then deposed Prime-minister, was in custody and Islamic fundamentalism was making its political space in Pakistan under the reign of General Zia-ul-Haq. When Bhutto started politicizing women's issues, women started to participate in political campaigns, casting votes in election and gradually became conscious of their rights. The constitution of 1973, had given women more rights than any other constitutions in Pakistan. In this context Khaawar Mumtaz and Farida Shahed, in their book *Women of Pakistan: Two steps Forward, One Step Back?*, argue, "The constitution, for the first time in Pakistan's history, gave equal rights to men and women and provided for equal opportunities for all" (13). It had secured women's rights as fundamental human rights. It had assured that there would be no discriminations on the basis of race, religion, caste and sex. It had also ensured the participation of women in every sphere of national life. Hence, in Zareen's words Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was "The champion of poor, of women, of the minorities and underprivileged people of democracy" (175). But on 5 July, 1977 Bhutto was arrested and Martial law imposed in a bloodless coup, which put General Zia-ul-Haq in power. Later, he Islamized the panel code and previously achieved women's freedom was sacrificed in the supposed altar of Islamization. The implied intention of politicizing the religion was to implement so called "Islamic morality". Zia, further, in 1979, promulgated

Hudood Ordinance which had covered adultery, fornication, rape and prostitution, bearing false testimony, theft and drinking alcoholic beverages. The legal provisions were different to men and women. The rape case turned out to be a cardinal sin committed by a girl herself and sentenced her to death by stoning whereas the real criminal (the male) remained untouched by the legal decisions or, rather say awarded. In this regard, Mumtaz and Shaheed further write, “Islam has been the medium used by those wanting to curb or deny women their rights, certainly since the turn of century, women have found themselves confronting the conservative religious elements in their struggle for the rights” (1). This shows how patriarchy is functioning in the veil of religion in Pakistan. In Pakistan, politics, with its special brew of martial law and religion, influenced every aspects of day to day living. In the novel Sidhwa writes:

In Pakistan, politics concerned everyone—from the street sweeper to business tycoon—because it personally affected everyone, particularly women, determining how they should dress, whether they could play hockey in the school or not, how they should conduct themselves even within the four walls of their homes. (171)

The political exercises were steamed with the intention to control women from each aspect of their lives. Usually, it is said that politics is the master rule. Politics decides the way of the country. If politics is regressive and all controlling than it comes to effect every people’s living. The then politics of Pakistan was regressive; so, its major concern was to implement the dress codes, education codes and codes on games which were truly sexist in nature.

According to Sidhwa’s narratives the political upheavals of the then Pakistan had affected every aspects of lives of Pakistani people. Among them women and non-

Muslim communities were affected much. The protagonist of the novel is a non-Muslim Parsee girl, the only child of Zareen Ginwalla and Cyrus Ginwalla. Though the Parsee community used to be considered modern and liberal in its outlooks, Feroza's behavior often contradicts her being a member of this community. It is the impact of the then contemporary socio-political environment, which makes her to behave in an un-Parsee like manner. Because of the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism, for Zareen, "She is becoming more and more backward everyday" (9). She has even started to reject to answer the phone calls at her home by saying "What if it's someone I don't know" (10). Likewise, the sight of her mother mortifies her when her mother appears with sleeveless arms at her school. Here Feroza says "Mummy please don't come to school like that" (10). Because of these non-Parsee activities of Feroza, her parents are worried of her future. Zareen feels that Feroza's growing sympathy towards Islamic fundamentalism has made her more timid and meek day by day. Zareen makes a comparison between Feroza's present condition and her situation when she was in Feroza's age. She is of the view that:

When I was her age, I wore frocks and cycled to Kinnaird College. And that was in '59 and '60-fifteen years after Partition! Can she wear frocks? No. women mustn't show their legs, women shouldn't dress like this, and women shouldn't act like that. Girls mustn't play hockey or sing or dance! If everything corrupts their pious little minds so easily, then the *mullahs* should wear *burqus* and stay within the four walls of their houses! (10)

This hints to Zareen's rebellious spirit against the prejudiced practice of Islam. She criticizes the growing power of Islamic rule, which is mainly directed to control women and their freedom. Those practices are no less influential than patriarchal

oppressive practices. There are codes of dressing and restrictions to participate in games for women. This gives negative and bad impression in child's mind.

Zareen, being a reformist, presents the changed status of women of Pakistan under Bhutto's rule. That made her optimistic. Bhutto's call for women's rights had made women to think about their subordinate existence. Even the minorities and illiterate women also used to ask "What are these women's rights?" (11). For her, Bhutto was really a open minded person, who did not force religion over human values. Instead of moving forward, Pakistan is moving backward because of the extremist politics. Zareen argues, "What I could do in '59 and '60, my daughter can't do in 1978" (11). This indicates the faded condition of women in Pakistan under Zia's reign.

Moreover, there are other activities which prove Feroza's growing timidity. She avoids meeting her parents' friends and sitting for dinner, and rejects to listen the political arguments rather "She spent more and more time sulking and reading romances and detective stories in her room when she was home. She locked her door" (23). She begins to accept her limited existence. She is gradually becoming asocial. She declines the birthday invitations. As Feroza negates the heriditarically acquired identity of a Parsee girl, Zareen plans to send her to the USA where her maternal uncle, Manek , will supervise her. In the novel, America is presented to be the country with full-fledged democratic rights and a country without women oppressions. Feroza's parents think that her travel to USA will widen her perception. Zareen argues, "Travel will broaden her outlook, get this puritanical rubbish out of her head" (14). She is of the opinion that the changed milieu would, positively affect Feroza for the assertion of her 'self'. When Feroza comes to know about the decision, she reacts in a surprising way. She shouts in excitement while talking with her maternal uncle in

America on phone, she hugs and kisses her parents passionately. There is surprisingly a gentle change in Feroza's activities. When she goes to her room, she does not lock the door as she used to do in the past. Her over excitement and over joyous attitude is expressed in following narrative:

Feroza slipped under quilt fully dressed, her eyes wide open, her mind throbbing with elation. She was going to America! She found it difficult to believe. She repeated to herself, "I'm going to America, I'm going to America!" until her doubt slowly ebbed and her certainty, too, caught the rhythm of her happiness. (27)

Her reactions have carried more messages. We can compare her reactions with a bird's reaction, which is recently freed from the age-long cage. Her timid behavior seems merely imposed one in the light of her over joyousness. Her happiness clearly reveals that her un-Parsee like self-effacing personality is merely a self-imposed denial of her identity. At her heart, she wants to enjoy freedom and has a strong desire to lead her life in accordance of her will. In fact, she uses negation as a mechanism of self protection in an atmosphere of frustrations caused by the orthodox and traditional notions pervading the nation at that time.

The roles and status of women are not isolated social phenomena; rather they are determined by the social, political and economic development of people's history. When Feroza is in Pakistan, she is typically constructed by the socio-cultural and political circumstances of the then society. She appears precisely as a religious Parsee girl. Though her mother is known to be a reformist, she teaches Feroza all the religious rites and performances. Before Feroza's departure, she visits the fire temple called *Adyari*. She performs her deep gratitude and due reverence. She asks *Aura Mazda*, the Parsee God, to forgive her every ignoble thoughts, words and deeds that

she was guilty of. She prays for her good thoughts, the eloquent tongue and good deeds which advance His Divine Plan. We can clearly sense her religious schooling in the following words:

Feroza lay her forehead on the cool marble and requested the almighty to protect her long journey overseas and to make her visit to America happy and successful. Then she solicited His blessings for herself and for all members of her family. Taking pinch of ash from a ladle placed on the marble steps, Feroza daubed her forehead with it; she already felt as if she had shed all impure thoughts. (41)

The over mentioned statements clearly exemplify Feroza's religious schooling and her deep belief in unseen power. Throughout the novel she appears truly as a religious girl either willingly or unwillingly. However she does not support the superstitious religious thoughts. She has the belief that no one can take away her sacred belief on the Divine. That remains within her soul wherever she reaches physically. She has blind faith in the power of the verses of the sacred book, *Avasta*.

Ultimately, she departs to America, and the journey seems to be very happy in expectation of her arrival in the First World country. As Ginwallas bid farewell to her, they fail to realize that the journey will broaden her thinking and open up further avenues for her than they ever expected. She will become 'modern' in real sense of the word. By thinking for herself, she will challenge traditional views, static orthodoxy and grow beyond the confines of community and the norms of patriarchal society. While giving the accounts of the first hand experiences of the new immigrant from the Third World to the First World, Sidhwa touches upon almost all aspects. Feroza's first experience with the immigration officer in the Kennedy Airport in New York, who makes inquiry on different motives in her arrival at States, perturbs her.

This gives her first moment of realization that she is in the strange country amidst strangers. When she is taken to the second inspection, she draws into deep anxiety. There, the officer tries to make her admit that the purpose of her journey is to marry Manek. This makes her upset and tears begin to roll down from her eyes. The officer takes undue advantages of her lack of the power of assertion and treats her as an inferior member from the Third World. However, this and other adversities help her to become bold enough to face further ordeals, those may come on her way in future life.

In America, Manek, who is there since six years, becomes a role model for her to absorb the progressive and modern culture of the New World. In the novel, Manek is depicted with some paradoxes. He teaches Feroza American way of eating, dressing, talking and other sort of American moralities. He helps her to cope with American culture and also introduces her with unique functioning of American free market. He manages to extend her living in America. But, his guardianship and supervision is more than necessary. He appears as, “both lion and lion tamer, roared and growled” (85). He leaves her in the museum alone; instead, he says, he is teaching her a lesson. He behaves rudely without acknowledging the possible danger that might come across her in the strange city. However, Feroza frequently rejects his mastership. First she appears as a pet-follower of Manek but later she reveals his dark side also. She has both negative and positive impressions. Their play of order and rejection is analyzed in following narrative:

They both sensed that there was more than just the love of art involved.

Each gauged the undercurrent and direction of the other’s strength.

And though they enjoyed the battle of wits, snug in their customary mode of communication, it was really a test of their wills: of Feroza

asserting her independence by contradicting Manek and countermanding his suggestion, and of Manek patiently plugging away at tempering her rebellious spirit and bending her will to his own.

(125)

Feroza realizes that Manek had already been coped with American way of living. She comes to understand that America has tested him, challenged him, honed him, and extended his personality. But she rejects his all controlling supervision. She asks him to let her to live her life in her own way. Manek guides her but controls her much. He helps her in extending her living in America and to seek the college for her study. Nevertheless, he does not let her go far from his rein. He says, he will not allow her to drink or indulge in premarital sex, to wear shorts or bikinis, and others. This shows his immature mistrust and conservative thinking and, more to say, his patriarchal origin. He chooses the college, which is held in Lake City Idaho; the place guided by conservative rules and customs. This exposes Manek's intention to control and guide her in his way.

In America, Feroza has accumulated both positive and negative impressions. Nevertheless, these experiences help her to build her confidence stronger and to seek her individual self. Her meeting with Father Fibs helps her to develop her assertion. He preaches her/them to give-up fear. According to him, one might fall time to time from the fly but one must not be hurt from the fall. This fall makes the wings stronger than before. Taste it as Adam tasted, which had both bitter and sweeter results. When one makes a fine attempt by relinquishing the fear then one need not to fall. This gives Feroza an easy way to come out from her inferiority complex. Her decision to stay some more time in America is motivated by the fact that there she finds better opportunities to explore her identity and practice her freedom in comparison to the

conservative environment of Lahore. In Lahore she must live with self-effacing her own identity. Her deliberate indifferences to the boundaries hint at her desire to create a new space, where she can easily establish her new identity. In Twin Falls she discovers the joys and tribulations of American college life. Manek's guardianship shifts to Jo, her roommate, but with many reformations. With Jo she can exchange her feminine experiences. Feroza begins to assimilate the independence of mind and spirit, and sturdy self confidence offered by the New World, which is alien to her Third World experience and sheltered upbringing.

The New World reinvents her with some gradual changes, which are apparently seen in her way of walking, talking, clothing, eating, drinking etc. These changes definitely hint at her wish to assimilate with new culture and leave back the regressive codes of Pakistani culture. She picks up Jo's manner of speaking like 'Gimme', 'lemme', and even starts to articulate American slangs like 'shit', 'asshole'. She begins to drink more glass of wine. She actually starts to enjoy the excursions. She feels that she has taken a "phenomenal leap in perceiving the world from a wider, bolder, and happier angle" (64) when she is among her American friends. Feroza's new way of clothing is elucidated in these words:

Feroza's Pakistani outfits and outrageously dangling earrings were banished to her suitcase and her wardrobe replenished by another pair of jeans to supplement the pair she had purchased at Bloomingdale's and some T-shirts, sweaters, and blouses. But no matter what Jo said, Feroza could not bring herself to wear skirts. Instead she bought a pleated woolen slacks for more formal occasions. (151)

Feroza's this act does have some symbolic significances. This indicates that she is free to choice her way of living. Her clothing represents all other cultural codes too.

So her rejection to the Pakistani clothing indicates her willingness to denounce other cultural codes of Pakistan, which are constructed to control women in the veil of religion and law. She starts to wear what comes to fit her. Giving up of her Pakistani way of dressing means her desire to get free from codes. But still she is not ready to wear skirts. This is because she was accustomed to conceal the legs in Pakistan. In Pakistan, to show uncovered legs by women is the religious blame. Until now she cannot overcome from her Pakistani hangover. However, later in Denver she starts to wear shorts. Here, her intent willingness to resist against the religious-cultural codes on dressing is exposed.

One evening, Feroza happens to take smoking despite knowing that Parsees worship 'Fire' as *Aura Mazda* and tasting it is a kind of religious sin. She often thinks, what her family would say about her conduct if they knew. Though she enjoys life like Americans, she is never capable of getting rid from the feelings of guilt. When she takes smoking, that very night she performs some religious rites and asks forgiveness to *Aura Mazda* for her 'cardinal sin'. This hints that her life is in the phase of transition. Her 'self' has been divided into two: either to accept her present state of freedom or to continue her past life, which was full of controls. The ghost of restrictions of the past does not leave her even in the alien country. Nevertheless, we can define her act of smoking as somehow a challenge to religious binds. When the time passes, she gradually accepts new way of living in free milieu. Such a quick acceptance of the foreign culture, breaking the barriers of her commitment to her community, nation and also to her sex definitely suggest her hastiness to achieve freedom. Her self-imposed restrictions, which were remained unexpressed in her own world, get a vivid and rapturous expression in the city of the alien world. In other

words, the self-imposed negation of her identity at her native land instigated her for a speedy assertion at the alien land.

We can make an easy comparison between the experiences of Feroza as a Third World origin and Jo as a Western girl. Jo is free to live her life in her own way. She can decide what she should do in her life, what to wear or eat or where to go. Laws have provided the full-fledged democratic freedom and rights equal to male. Whereas Feroza, a representative Pakistani girl, is restricted in all ways of living; has to live under the control of family. Like Feroza, most of the Pakistani girls should live under the control of their fathers, sons and brothers or of their husbands. Their marriage is arranged by the family. They are taken to be a child bearing machine as not having independent human self. Feroza frequently compares the life of her Pakistani friends and her American colleagues. In this context, she feels herself being the lucky one among many Pakistani women to get access the abroad education and acquire freedom. So, it is an unimaginable lottery provided for her by her parents.

When Feroza was in Pakistan, she did not dare to face a boy or male easily. She had no experience of socializing with boys. There is no such a thing as dating in Pakistan. It is not decent to make an easy relationship between men and women in Pakistan. Therefore, it is painful for her to remain among so many people and not know how to response or behave with them here in America too. However, she is accustomed with Jo's bringing boys at their room. Now she is also habituated to flirt with boys in group but yet she feels uneasy when she finds herself alone with the boy. She is beautiful with her ripened body. Sometimes she imagines of some smart male body that can fulfill her inner desires but she suppresses those desires. This is 'time', which teaches her to adopt with new environment. As the time passes she develops "more accommodating view of the relationship between men and women" (226).

Later she develops relationship with Shashi, an Indian boy, with whom she one-sidedly falls in love and other men without hesitation. This indicates her changed attitude towards the relationship between men and women.

First Manek was a person to decide which place would suit to Feroza for her study [and for this he had chosen the college located in the traditional place Twin Falls] but this time Feroza herself decides which college may suit for her study. For this, she chooses Denver University located in Denver city filled with modern values. There, she begins to live with the two American girls. With their companionship she further sheds many of her imposed social inhibitions. Her shift from Twin Falls to Denver is also a shift in her perception that is taken place in her mind. Her impulse to acquire knowledge and to figure out the things are stimulated by her studies and challenged by discussions among her new friends. There she reads immensely the books from different fields like psychology, philosophy and literature. She reads Naipaul, Russel, Styron, Desai, Achebe and others. These help to broaden up her perception and to build up her confidence. Her inner changes are expressed in following narrative:

Feroza found her days filled with excitement, joyous activity, and ascending wonder. It was as if her combat with Manek and his efforts to instruct her, her years in Twin Falls, and her exposure to Jo, were a preparation for the way her new life was expounding. Otherwise she would have been too shy to embrace the new encounters, too timid to delve into unexplored ideas or grasp the opportunities suddenly falling about her like gifts from the sky. (215)

Present Feroza is the by-product of past troubles, instructions and experiences she came across. The difficulties and adversities she had faced in her past life have

scraped, peeled and engraved her present beautiful life, which is full of opportunities and joys. Now she begins to work in the bar for her extravagant expenses. It is possible only because she is in America. If she were in Pakistan this job would not be in her access. In Pakistan there are no bars and bartenders. If she or any other woman indulges in such profession that would attract immense attentions and comments, that is not for other reason except she is a young woman, who is veiled under the roof of the house.

We can sense out the Third World patriarchal practice, especially of Indian Subcontinent, even in the alien country, America. In this region, mother of the son is valued more than the mother of the daughter. Sidhwa has clearly depicted this feature in the novel. Deepak and Mala are Shashi's brother and sister-in-law, who give birth to a daughter as their first child in American hospital. They have to pay large amount of money as a hospital charge but they do not have that much money. Instead Deepak decides to give up the baby to the hospital. Apparently, there seems some sort of compulsion, but the concealed intention is because the child is a girl not a boy. This is also clear in Mala's expression: "He gave her away because she is a girl! I bet he'd have gotten the money if she was a boy" (253). Later, Feroza solves the problem by making huge discounts in due and bring the child at home. Deepak's thought is steamed from his Indian origin. In Indian Subcontinent, son/boy is considered to be the harbinger of father's clan, property and prestige whereas daughter/girl is considered to be the property of others, so she is avoided since her birth to her death.

In her trip to Pakistan to meet her parents and other relatives, her family members, especially Zareen, get surprised by seeing Feroza's developed confidence. They are surprised with the changes that Feroza has acquired from the New World. Zareen's astonishment is expressed in following narration: "Zareen was astonished at

the change in Feroza. Was this flaming confident creature, who talked so engagingly and candidly and had acquired a throaty, knowing, delectable laugh, the same thing who had refused to answer the phone” (236)? This is the same girl who was timid and meek. By seeing this Zareen speculates to herself that she has not made any mistake by sending her daughter to America. Her parents look contented because she reveals herself as an assertive girl more than they have ever expected. Her demureness has been collapsed and she is capable to release herself from self-imposed restrictions. At the same time, the family members engage in the discussion about the results brought by the promulgation of Hudood Ordinance in 1979 by Zia reign and the establishment of The Federal Sarait Court to interpret the legal provisions. These legal provisions are typically sexist. They talk about the faded condition of women and the biased functioning of the Islamic laws backed by religious institutions. They bring some representative legal cases addressed by the court. The couples, who had eloped to marry, were accused of committing adultery or *Zina*, and they were sentenced to death by stoning. Later this case was dismissed by the High Court. Similarly, another case of a blind girl is evidential. The blind girl became pregnant because of rape. But this case also interpreted as committing adultery crime. She was sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment, fifteen lashes and a fine of a thousand rupees. To prove the case as rape, girl’s side had to present four honorable male eye witnesses or eight female eye witnesses. This hints that the equality provided by the previous law, now has been cut off by half. The legal verdict of court is full of prejudices. The victim of rape is often punished as committing adultery whereas the rapist is left free. This is to say, the victim of crime is announced forcefully a criminal whereas the real criminal is awarded by the legal verdict. This legal practice can be defined as patriarchal practice enforced by law and religion. When Feroza listen these heart-rending plight

of women in Pakistan, she realizes that she is misfit in the same country once she had fitted. At present she has grown in different ways and environment. Her 'self' does not permit to live around such condition. Now she has become capable enough to decide where to stay.

In Indian Sub-continent the issue of marriage matters more. There is a unique belief about marriage, especially about girls' lives after marriage. Such as, "You'll reign like a queen in your husband's house. You can do as you wish once you're married" (219). The institution of marriage is idealized. After marriage, girls' lives are taken to be in an ideal existence. Their marriages would unshackle them, open their lives to adventure and knowledge of the world, and give them the freedom. But it is quite opposite. The women should live more deteriorative lives after marriages. Later in the novel, Zareen also posits same idea about Feroza. However, Feroza is conscious of this. Khutlibai has a fear that she would marry a non-Parsee and pollute their racial chastity. So she always rejects the decision to send Feroza to America. Later her fear turns out to be real when Feroza decides to marry with a Jew boy David Press. Cyrus also has such belief. His conservative belief is exposed in the starting section of the novel. When a non-Parsee boy has come to request Feroza to act in the play in her room; by seeing this Cyrus throws his unwanted looks. After this, Feroza directly rejects the propose saying that her father does not like her acting in the play. But his inner intention is that he is more conscious of the possible non-Parsee effects on his daughter. So he wants to control her. In her trip to Pakistan, her parents propose her for marriage and safe family settlement. For them, she need not study more than this because she is others' property. But, Feroza declines their request for marriage, and asserts that first she should complete her graduation. She is conscious

of her career. She prioritizes career over her safe settlement. Then she returns to America to complete her mission; where her freedom lies.

In the novel, there are two different stories proceed dealing with the same theme of marriage, precisely with Zoroastrian marriage ethics: one that of Manek and another of Feroza. Manek arranges to come to Pakistan for the purpose of getting marriage with Parsee girl. In so doing, his major aim is to protect Zoroastrian purity. In Parsee community, boys are taken as geniuses, who can fulfill the roles as men and make handsome money. But there is no such expectation from girls, so they are not required to go for abroad study. Even though they are sent for aboard study, which is not for the genuine purpose rather to prepare them for or divert them from marriage. In this context Manek is measured as a Parsee genius. When he asks other not to talk in English with him, Khutibai says, “Now I know why you haven’t picked up an American wife! Say what you like, ours is ours! Didn’t I tell you - in the end one is comfortable only with one’s own kind” (196). This expression refers to the Parsee’s belief in racial purity and their indifference to inter-community marriages. It can be a right argument that Parsee can feel comfortable with Parsee only. But this belief contradicts with Feroza’s context. She feels more comfortable with non-Parsee. Manek makes boastful explanations about America and says America is paradise. He explains about his struggle in America.

It is one night that brings affluent happiness in Junglewalla Family. That night Manek expresses his inner intention of his trip to Pakistan. When the Junglewallas listen about Manek’s plan to marry a Parsee girl, they applaud in happiness. Their joyous reaction is expressed in these words: “[W]hen Manek solemnly announced that he had come to Pakistan to marry a Parsee girl and take her with him to America, the familiar faces brightened and their smiles and nods conveyed the measure of their

gratification and approval” (203). These words clearly hint to the value of marriage institution in Parsee community. Parsees’ due belief in marriage is steamed from their understanding that only pure marriage can protect the racial and religious purity. Another reason is because of their few numbers of populations throughout the world. Manek is a man so he should fulfill the responsibility to proceed and preserve the racial clan. His announcement to marry a Parsee girl is defined as an influential one to other Parsee youngsters. He is “proving himself a champion of their community” (204). He is taken as a best example to be followed by the coming generation. But the Junglewallas are not conscious of his way of living. They prioritize their clan’s purity but do not care about the cultural heritage. They do not think about his westernized thinking and way of living. Junglewallas burst into tears when they listen about his struggle to sell Bible in American villages. Later he changes his name Manek into Mike. This shows his hypocrisy and paradoxical personality. His un-Parsee acts are excusable because he is a man. Later he gets married with Aban, typically a Parsee girl.

On the other hand Feroza’s story takes different moves in the novel. The conflict in the novel grows to its pick when Feroza meets David Press and decides to marry with him. There are seen interventions of religious cum patriarchal institutions to break their relationship. David Press is an American Jew, who owns garage to arrange his study payments. Feroza visits his garage to buy a car for her but their business meeting changes into love affair later. Despite knowing the strict rules of her Parsee community which excommunicates the girl who marriage outside the community, she falls in love with David Press, a non-Parsee. Her assertion reflects her independent decision to marry David breaking the cause of her land. It is evident that she has become truly liberated and self assertive woman. She feels free to be herself

in the context of her own capacity and personality. She becomes more liberal and modern than Manek, who is there since six years. Though she knows there is religious difference between her and David's, her broadened outlook does not permit her to perceive such religious gap. She sees only a sacred human relation and pure love between them. Her changed perception can be seen in the following assertion:

She was amazed at how comfortable she felt with this incandescent being. His sentiments, his aspiration, were so like hers, and those of her family. And yet it was as if she had taken a leap cross some cultural barrier and found herself on the other side of it to discover that everything was comfortingly the same, and yet the grass greener. She never thought she could have felt this complete trust in a stranger to take her across the uncharted terrain of her emotion. (251)

When she is with him, she feels more comfortable as she is with her family. She has known that she is breaking some cultural and religious boundaries, instead she keeps them aside. Her changed perception and grown emotion lead her to build relationship with David but she fails to foresee the inevitable catastrophe of their relation. She does not expect or even think that the differences matter more. When she visits David's parents, for the first time she realizes David's religion is different from hers. But she rejects to think about it. After few days she shifts to David's nearby room so that she can meet him every time.

The news about Feroza's selecting the non-Parsee groom is quite shocking and agitating to her parents and relatives in Lahore. Moreover, the greater effect can be seen on Zoroastrian religious community. This message creates a larger scale of earthquake in Parsee community as a whole. The effect is explained in these words: "For the subject was much larger than just Feroza's marriage to an American. Mixed

marriages considered the entire Parsee community and affected its very survival. God knew they were few enough. Only a hundred and twenty thousand in the whole world” (268). It is the fact that there are few numbers of populations of Parsees. But, equally another fact is that there are easy exchanges between and among the communities because of world globalization. To discuss about the possible solution of Feroza’s decision of marriage, her parents and relatives in Lahore gather in one place. The news of marriage has shocked the elders much than the youngsters. This indicates generation gap. The new generation is more liberal than the former one. One of the young frequently argues “For god’s sake! You’re carrying on as if Feroza’s dead! She is only getting marriage, for God’s sake” (268)! The youngsters ask their elders to enlarge their narrow minds and urge them to give pressure to the Zoroastrian *Anjumans* to move with the flow of time. For the youngsters, mix-marriages are inevitable when they move to New World for their study. But the elders are frightened to the possible result that Feroza’s marriage with non-Parsee may bring. They talk about a Parsee girl, Perin Powri, who was the victim of inter-community marriage [Parsee and Muslim]. When she died, her dead body did not get any funeral rites because she had with Muslim. They even define her death was caused by the Divine’s Displeasure. In Parsee community funeral rites has much value. Without the *uthamna* (last rites), “the soul cannot ascend to the crucial Chindwad Bridge, which, depending on the person’s deeds, either expands to ease the soul’s passage to Heaven, or contracts to plunge it into hell” (270). After considering all these possible negative results, they ask Zareen to embark to Denver to dissuade Feroza from her relation with David Press. For them, mother has such authority to distract Feroza from David. They suggest her not to become harsh so that Feroza might rebel, rather manipulate

emotionally. For this, they advice her to apply the principle: “If you can’t knock him out with sugar, slug him with honey” (272), which she applies consciously later.

Zareen’s arrival at the United States to dissuade the decision of her daughter proves futile but she is successful in creating a sense of aversion in the mind of David towards the Parsee religious rites at the time of their marriage. His dislikes to the rites is the sole reason of their breaking. However, she cannot convince her daughter to return to Pakistan for a safe settlement. First Zareen asks Feroza to select one of the three marriageable Parsee boys from the good family background. But Feroza declines her mother’s proposal. Then, Zareen shows the cause of religious difference between them. If she marries the non-Parsee, the Zoroastrian *Anjumas* will become ten times more religious. They will not allow her to worship neither in *Agyari* nor in *Atash Behram*. She will not be permitted to attend the funeral rites of her grand-mothers or of her parents. She will miss the communication with her community till her death. Instead Feroza replies, “We’re having a civil marriage in any case; a judge will marry us [. . .] that way I can keep my religion, if it matters so much to you. Of course you know David and I are Unitarians” (278). Zareen argues their Unitarian belief will not make any difference to the priests.

When Zareen meets David, she is impressed by his intelligent and dashing personality. The intimate and close relationship between them affects her much. She forgets about her mission instead she indulges in shopping. She finishes the money in shopping which had brought to give David, so that he would leave Feroza. When she is in tour to many places with David and Feroza, her mother-heart is loosely convinced about their relationship. In this context her feminist spirit gets awaken. She indulges into self arguments on the issue of sexist double standards maintained by the

Zoroastrian religious institutions regarding the subject of interfaith marriages.

Zareen's speculation is expressed in following narrative:

Zareen found herself seriously questioning the ban on interfaith marriages for the first time. She had often opined how unfair it was that while a Parsee man who married a "non" could keep his faith and bring up his children as Zoroastrians, a Parsee women couldn't. And it didn't make sense that the "non" non was not permitted to become Zoroastrian; one could hardly expect their children to practice a faith denied to their mother. (287)

These statements quietly refer to the gender-biased and patriarchal belief systems that are functioning under the religious practices. But, Zareen realizes these are clearly feminist and academic arguments. She thinks that she cannot boycott these conventional opinions of the community because she has grown up with internalizing these beliefs though they are full of prejudices. Until now she did not think about this issue but Feroza's decision makes her to consider about this. Zoroastrian community call itself of being modern, educated and progressive, but in its roots there are age long blind faiths and traditions. Zareen feels the youngsters of Lahore were right in their perspectives that the *Anjumans* should introduce some reformations in the religious practices for the better survival of the endangered Parsee community. She stands herself as a reformist.

Zareen's reformist instinct gets struck when she receives two pamphlets entitled 'Warning' and 'Notice' that are from the Athornan Mandal, a Parsee priest's association in Bombay headed by Dastur Katwal and the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee respectively. These letters recall Zareen to her Mission. Both the letters have similar contain. Then a terrible fear for her daughter grips her heart. Those

letters clearly state that the girl who marries non-Parsee would be branded as adulteress and her children pronounced illegitimate. Later another Notice also reaches to her which also includes same contents. The notice reads:

NOTICE

PLEASE NOTE THAT ACCORDING TO THE PARSEE, ZOROASTRAIN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, PERCEPTS, TENETS, DOCTRINES, HOLY SCRIPTURES, CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS, ONCE A PARSEE-ZOROASTRAIN MARRIES A NON-ZOROASTRAIN, HE OR SHE IS DEEMED TO HAVE RENOUNCED THE FAITH AND CEASES TO BE A PARSEE-ZOROASTRAIN. THE LAWS OF PURITY OF THE ZOROASTRAIN FAITH FORBID INTERMARRIAGES, AS MIXING PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL GENES IS CONSIDERED A CARDINAL CRIME AGAINST NATURE. HENCE, HE OR SHE DOES NOT HAVE ANY COMMUNAL OR RELIGIOUS RIGHTS OR PRIVILEGES. (305)

Zoroastrian religious committees clearly state their action they will undertake if Feroza married the non-Parsee. Now Zareen decides to dissuade her daughter from David at any cost. In her first meeting with David, she had felt he is admirable and appealing. However, she is certain that he will deprive her daughter from her faith, her heritage, her family and her community. Then Zoroastrian religious community will declare her daughter an adulteress and her children will be pronounced illegitimate. She realizes these religious doctrines are no less rigid and ignorant than the *fundos* in Pakistan. Similarly, these practices resemble with the rigid practices of patriarchy. These have patriarchal orientations. Being afraid of the result, she vows to

defend her daughter from the accusation of polluting the genetic structure of the Parsee race and dirtying the spiritual genes even if her daughter confesses of being religious. She must willingly or unwillingly obey the order of the religious committees.

Zareen is not ready to lose her only daughter. Her dread for Feroza alters her opinions of David. So she plans to distract David from her love. For this purpose she starts to play with David's emotion and reserved personality. She applies the principle that was suggested by her relatives in Lahore. She shows her apparent consent for their marriage. Further, she explains about the ethnic rites and rituals that are performed at marriage ceremonies if he wishes to marry Feroza. After hearing all those things, his Jewish reserved personality gets struck. She successfully creates a sense of aversion in the mind of David for the rites and rituals. She easily slugs him away with honey. Thereafter he breaks his love relation with Feroza. After thwarting the relation successfully, Zareen returns to Pakistan. But she is unable to bring Feroza with her to Pakistan. She says Feroza has become really an American brat.

In the novel, Zareen performs double roles. Her 'self' is divided into two: reformist and conservative. She advocates for women rights under fundamentalist rule of Islam. She took participation in reformist political campaigns organized by Bhutto. She also contemplates on the need of some reformations in Zoroastrian religious practices. In contrast, she cannot challenge the orthodox practices of her own religion. She sincerely obeys the orders of such organizations. She prioritizes religious order over Daughter's happiness. She proves herself an active agent of orthodox mission of religion. First she lifts Feroza from the well of Islamic fundamentalism but later again drags Feroza into the marsh. She cannot dare to permit her daughter to marry non-Parsee and face the possible dangers those might come across. Daughter's

unhappiness has been brought about by Zareen herself. She has forgotten that she is mother herself. In this regard we can argue that she has given platform to patriarchy, which is functioning with prejudices under the veil of religion. By showing Zareen's double standards, Sidhwa tries to establish new brand of feminist practice that deals with females' oppression upon females themselves, not only male.

The termination of love affair disturbs Feroza much, especially the circumstances happened around the break. Despite their resolutions not to let their religious disparity come between them, Zareen convinced them that differences matter more. David breaks the relationship. For him breaking relation is an easy game because he is the western white male. On the other, Feroza is deeply disgusted by the break but yet she does not lose her courage and confidence. She comes to realize her Parsee community's sexist traditions. As a good friend Shashi advises her that, "It's not the end of the world, you know. I promise, you'll get over it" (311). Her past life, which was full of blossom and happiness, has now tormented and fallen apart. Her female body is in the state of exile both internally and externally as Katrak argues in her theoretical perspectives. Feroza's female body is in the state of external exile because of her expatriate living (migration) and geographical relocation. She feels disconnected with her own community. Similarly, we can sense out her female body in internal exile because of the traps of tradition and religious impositions. Despite that she resists against the oppressions and tries to reconnect with her body and community. She realizes that she must put it together and heal her lacerated sensibility. It is only possible in the same place where she is living. She is not desirous to return back to Lahore for an arrange marriage with one of the Parsee boys selected for her by the family and settle down a family full of restrictions. Rather she is ready to stay in America and face the sense of dislocation, which is the shared

plight of all Non-Americans. Her acquired freedom and exploration of identity has become the centre of her happiness. The fundamentalist Islamic practices and orthodox Zoroastrian system will crush her freedom if she returns to Pakistan. Her decision may be defined as her selfishness but the very selfishness is the surest means of her freedom. Her thirst for knowledge and her accustomed life living around the books will not permit her to return to Pakistan. “Her deeply ingrained and early awareness of political and state evils and her passion for justice would always make her fight injustice wherever she was” (313). This further reflects her ripened confidence and grown-up self-assertion. Towards the end of the novel, she performs her religious pray. She is sure that there will be a man with whom she will marry. But;

It wouldn't matter if he was a Parsee or of another faith. She would be more sure of herself, and she wouldn't let anyone interfere. It really wouldn't matter; weren't they all children of the same Adam and Eve? As for her religion, no one could take it away from her; she carried its fire in her heart. If the priest in Lahore and Karachi did not let her enter the fire temple, she would go to one in Bombay where there were so many Parsees that no one would know if she was married to Parsee or a non. (317)

This assertion reflects the roadmap of her forthcoming life. Her present day's defeat in securing space for happiness does not lead her to the well of pessimism. Rather, those experiences assist to reveal her stronger and more assertive self. There are many ways to indulge. The options are endless. Probably one day she will soar to that self-contained place from where there is no falling.

In nutshell, Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat* depicts victimization of Feroza caused by religion that is backed by patriarchy and females themselves. Though

Feroza does not denounce overtly the religion as a whole, she denies the fundamentalist and superstitious religious practices. Though she cannot preserve her immediate happiness, she succeeds to explore her identity and individual freedom. She is a conscious feminist daughter; conscious of her rights and values her happiness more than a fine family settlement with husband and children. Then her rejection to return to Pakistan for marriage takes a big shape of resistance. In each walk of life her value of freedom and self is fully expressed and she becomes successful to preserve her life-long happiness. The story, in its concrete narration, assimilates with the then politico-historical scenario and its effects on women. Such delineation shows women are victimized but some women, who are given opportunities for better education and expositions, are capable enough to resist the forces of religious orthodoxy, community barriers and cultural compulsions and can redefine their existence beyond the traditional codes.

III. Sidhwa's Proposition of Female Resistance against Religious cum Patriarchal Sub-ordination

This research analyzes Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *An American Brat* on the light of Third World feminism thereby exploring the self and individuality of the protagonist, Feroza, while resisting the obstacles posed by religion and patriarchy in collaboration. In the novel, the narrative is fleshed with the story of manifold experiences [both negative and positive] of the protagonist, and other side-stories are depicted to assist the central theme of the main narrative. Sidhwa does not portray the protagonist, Feroza, as conducting all powerful resistances against the oppressions and restrictions rather she puts various hurdles across the way towards which Feroza is moving on. Eventually, Feroza becomes able to reach to her destination, where she is provided with all happiness, freedom and manifold of opportunities.

With the representative story of Feroza, Sidhwa tries to delve out the intrinsic and systematic functioning of religion and patriarchy especially in Pakistan. Sidhwa posed her serious discontent with the then political, legal and religious practices, which were functioning to subordinate the status of Pakistani women. Feroza's initial timidity and meekness that is caused by the fundamentalist religious practices vanish away to the end of the novel. She succeeds to jump over the hurdles that are put across her way of her search for individuality and freedom. Initially, she comes to face the barriers and restrictions posed by the fundamentalist and orthodox practices of Islam. Those religious practices performed through the means of legal ordinances are full of biases. She becomes more timid and reserved. She conceals herself. Because of her such conditions her parents decide to send her to America. This gives her way to explore herself and practice freedom. Though she faces some hardships caused by migration and geographical relocation, she successfully crosses those

obstacles and learns the lessons to cope with the new environment. The new milieu provides her a sense of individuality and value of freedom. As a Third World woman her experiences are different. Her study gives her a broadened perceptions and understanding about her existence. She realizes herself as a lucky one to achieve such opportunity of education in comparison to her other Pakistani friends. She is free to decide the way of her living, clothing and speaking. But, yet her decision to marry with non-Parsee is taken as blame to her Zoroastrian community. The religious committees posit restrictions and threats of becoming out casted from her faith. However, she readily faces the restrictions and decides to continue her living in America rather than returning to Pakistan. Though she becomes the victim of religious boundaries backed up by patriarchal biased practices, she is not ready to give up her freedom which is the sole cause of her happiness. In search of her individuality and self, she becomes ready to live the dislocated life.

Feroza's exploration of individuality and search of freedom hint that women are capable enough to resist against the oppressions and restrictions of orthodox religious practices and patriarchal systems if they are provided with appropriate opportunities for education. Conscious women can readily face the suppressions and preserve their freedom for happiness even in the deteriorating social and political conditions as Feroza conducts. Hence, women are not biologically inferior rather they are made submissive and bound to live subordinate living under the patriarchal norms and constructions.

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