



DISMANTLING STEREOTYPES: A FEMINIST
READING OF BAPSI SIDHWA'S NOVELS

BY

PARAMJIIT KAUR A/P SARDARA SINGH

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International Islamic University
Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the novels of the award-winning Pakistani writer in English Bapsi Sidhwa (1938-). Works selected for this study are *The Pakistani Bride* (1990), *The Crow Eaters* (1990), *Cracking India* (1991), *An American Brat* (1994) and *Water: A Novel* (2006). This study seeks to investigate how Bapsi Sidhwa explores feminism in her fiction, depicting and demonstrating the vitality of her female characters in shaping their own identities. The study is conducted in a qualitative research. An in-depth reading of the novels with a feminist approach, particularly postcolonial feminism and Islamic feminism, shows that Sidhwa's female characters are not afraid to brave social codes that subjugate women. Postcolonial feminism challenges the homogeneity of women's experiences. The varied experiences of women incurred by their social, political, economic and historical circumstances must be acknowledged and accepted. In this thesis, I have highlighted how these different experiences empower the female characters with passion and vigour to create their own voices. The thesis will also elucidate the teachings of Islam regarding women's issues where relevant. In this regard, it will look at various issues in Sidhwa's work from the perspective of Islamic feminism that uses the framework of Islamic teachings. Islamic feminism upholds the belief that men and women complement each other and are justly equal in all spheres of their lives. Each of the novels is a cathartic release, a catalyst for change. Through her fiction, Bapsi Sidhwa persistently calls for the empowerment and emancipation of women from their otherwise marginalised existence dictated by social and cultural patriarchy.

خلاصة البحث

تدرس هذه الرسالة قصص الفائزة بالجوائز الكاتبة الباكستانية بالإنجليزية (بابسى سيدهوا - 1938). شملت الاعمال المختارة لهذه الدراسة؛ العروس الباكستانية (1990)، آكلى الغراب (1990)، تكسير الهند (1991)، شقى أمريكى (1994) و الماء: قصة (2006). تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى بحث كيفية إستطلاع بابسى سيدهوا الأنثوية فى خيالاتها، تصور و إستدلال حيوية خصائص الأنوثة فى رسم هوياتهم الخاصة. أجريت الدراسة من خلال بحث نوعى. القراءة المتعمقة للقصص بمدخل أنثوى خاصة انثوية ما بعد الإستعمار و الأنثوية الإسلامية سوف تظهر أن خصائص أنثى سيدهوا لا تخاف من مواجهة الرموز الإجتماعية التى تقهر النساء. أنثوية ما بعد الإستعمار تتحدى تجانس خبرات المرأة. لابد من تقبل و الإعتراف بالخبرات المتنوعة للمرأة التى تكتسب من خلال الظروف الإجتماعية، السياسية، الإقتصادية و التاريخية. قمت فى هذا البحث بإبراز الخبرات المختلفة و كيفية تمكينها لخصائص الأنثى مع العاطفة والقوة لخلق صوت خاص. وسوف يشرح هذا البحث أيضا التعليم الإسلامى فيما يخص الموضوعات المتعلقة بالمرأة و سوف تنظر فى هذا الصدد لموضوعات متنوعة من اعمال سيدهوا من منظور الأنثوية الإسلامية التى تستخدم إطار التعليم الإسلامى. تدعم الأنثوية الإسلامية معتقد أن الرجل و المرأة يكمل كل منهما الآخر و أنهم متساويين بالعدل فى كل مجالات الحياة. كل القصص هى بيان شافية ومحفز للتغيير. استمدت بابسى سيدهوا من خيالها فى تمكين و تحرير المرأة من الوجود المهمش المستمد من الأبوية الإجتماعية والثقافية.

APPROVAL PAGE

The dissertation of Paramjiit Kaur A/P Sardara Singh has been approved by the following:

Mohammad Abdul Quayum Abdus Salam
Supervisor

Md. Mahmudul Hasan
Internal Examiner

Shakila Abdul Manan
External Examiner

Abdi Omar Shuriye
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Paramjiit Kaur A/P Sardara Singh

Signature

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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A FEMINIST READING OF BAPSI SIDHWA'S NOVELS**

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Dedicated to
My beloved children

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on Bapsi Sidhwa's five novels and explores how she endows her female characters with immense courage in order to represent their unique individualities, as they grapple with conditions that relegate them to stereotypical roles. This study will also highlight the versatility of a feminist writer from Pakistan who brings forth issues that plague women in certain cultures and at the same time reveals their inherent ability in wrestling with these issues in their pursuit to be accepted and recognised as human beings.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a renowned writer with international recognition. Her achievements stand to represent the distinctiveness of postcolonial literature. In fact, the growth of Pakistani literature in English is parallel to the historical development of its country. After the Partition and declaration of Independence in 1947, Pakistan became a self-governing nation. Due to the influence of colonisation, English was declared the official language. However, in the literary scene in Pakistan, Urdu novels were more favourable mainly because of Urdu's eminence as the national language. Nevertheless, with the publication of Ahmed Ali's (1910-1994) novel in English titled *Twilight in Delhi* (1940), the prominence of English novels in Pakistan began to increase. Likewise, Zulfikar Ghose's (1935-) contribution of Pakistani narratives in English further assisted the development of novels in English.

Nonetheless, the novel that granted recognition to Pakistan's literary scene was Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters* (1990). Sidhwa's accomplishment of such a

feat proved how a woman writer belonging to a small minority community could initiate a remarkable move in getting her voice heard in the English language. With the international success and acceptance of *The Crow Eaters* and *Cracking India* (1991) which is also known as *Ice-Candy Man*, Sidhwa's writing attested that English novels from Pakistan are capable of attracting a global audience.

As a postcolonial writer, Bapsi Sidhwa chronicles all that is familiar to her foremost as a woman and equally as a Parsi. In her novels, Sidhwa reveals the unkind power of reality such as suppression. This sincere insight facilitates in exuding ingenuity in her fiction. In an interview with Gaurav Sood on a blog site (<<http://pakistanpaindabad.blogspot.com/>>), Sidhwa asserts, "there is no other medium which can bring out the emotional nuances and complexities of modern life as well as the novel can in the hand of a good writer." Thus, as a writer, she is compelled to use this medium as a tool to express her views in disclosing the intricacies of the lives of her female characters. By doing so, she illustrates the premise of female strength to male subjugation and the inevitable conditions fashioned by society that dictates and decides the role, status and position of a woman.

Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi in 1938 to Peshotan and Tehmina Bhandara. In an interview with Jugnu Mohsin, Sidhwa reveals that because of polio, she was educated at home until the age of 15. Nevertheless, she was able to further her studies and graduated from Lahore's Kinnaird College for Women. Born and brought up in Pakistan, Sidhwa witnessed how the India-Pakistan Partition broke one nation into two different countries, splitting its citizens. This harrowing event and its shocking effects are the main plot of her third novel, *Cracking India*. In the novel, Sidhwa circumspectly depicts and describes the brunt women had to tolerate as innocent victims caught in a political conflict across a border that was vicious in its

implementation. The outcome of the partition, as reflected in the novel changed the lives of Parsis, Hindus, Muslims, as well as Sikhs in India and Pakistan. Sidhwa's contribution in writing a Partition novel is highly regarded because the turmoil was also a part of Pakistani history. As a result of the novel's success, it was adapted into a film in 1999. It was titled *Earth – 1947* and was directed by Deepa Mehta, an Indian-Canadian director. Writer and literary critic Tariq Rahman (1991: 134) acclaims Sidhwa's ability in writing such a compelling novel thus:

Bapsi Sidhwa has written one of the most powerful indictments of the riots during the Partition. Before this, there was nothing in English Bapsi Sidhwa has written a truly authentic, multi-dimensional novel about the Partition. This is one of the best works of Pakistani fiction and one of the good novels of this century.

Interestingly, Sidhwa's first novel *The Pakistani Bride* (1990) was not her first published novel because many publishers felt that it was not commercially practicable and readable. Nonetheless, Jonathan Cape published it in 1983 and subsequently Penguin India did in 1990. This novel recounts the journey of a young girl, Zaitoon who is orphaned by the chaos and disorder caused by Partition. A Kohistani tribesman, Qasim, adopts her as she reminds him of his late daughter who died of smallpox. Communal honour makes Qasim marry Zaitoon to Sakhi, a youth from his Kohistani tribe. Sidhwa wrote this narrative based on a tragic story that she heard. According to Rahman (1991: 129), Sidhwa possesses "the intelligence which makes her transcend propaganda and romantic myths to get to the core of events and phenomena." Rahman's claim is pertinent because in the novel, Bapsi Sidhwa reveals how Zaitoon dares to struggle against patriarchal norms, tribal rules and man-made laws as she formulates her escape from her oppressive husband. As a novice writer, Sidhwa experimented with her creativity by juxtaposing Zaitoon's predicament of being married to a tribal man to that of Carol's (an American woman married to a

modern Pakistani man, Farukh). Using this contrast artistically and purposefully, Sidhwa provides an interesting analysis of the position of women in Pakistan.

Her first international novel was *The Crow Eaters*. However, the novel was not well received by the local Parsi community in Pakistan. They were infuriated by Sidhwa's detailed disclosure of their well-protected and distinctive culture in the novel. Despite the early rebuttal, the novel gained international prominence because of Sidhwa's sincere portrayal of the Parsi community. In this novel, Sidhwa creates an original plot as she depicts a delightful narrative rich with Parsi culture, traditions and beliefs. The novel provides a rare insight of a Parsi family, the Junglewallas. Rahman (1991: 128) affirms Sidhwa's credibility and sincerity in writing about her culture in *The Crow Eaters*:

Although Mrs. Sidhwa has had the rare courage and honesty to have written about the Parsi community in this unflattering way, the community stands symbolically for any group of people of any belief. It is really about human nature as it is expressed in certain social contexts. And this gives it human significance.

In her next novel, *An American Brat* (1994), Sidhwa expands her creativity by writing a novel that explicates the primary idea of searching and forming a distinct identity. The story is simple, illustrating the conflict and dilemma of a young Parsi girl, Feroza Ginwalla who migrates from Lahore, Pakistan to Denver, the United States of America. The story revolves around Feroza's dilemma as she tries to construct an identity that would reflect her individuality as a migrant. Feroza's journey of discovering the uniqueness of her identity is common in the Parsi community, as Vijayshree (1996: 391-392) explains:

The Parsi novel in English shows all the distinctive features of "minority discourse": (1) a persistent preoccupation with the problems of identity, (2) articulation of collective consciousness, (3) political involvement, and (4) an active assertion and even celebration of marginality. At the heart of the Parsi novel is the issue of identity. The

responses here range from conflicting and even shattering feelings of unbelonging and alienation to a reconciliation of differences into a multicultural ideal.

Therefore, in this novel, Sidhwa appropriately describes how Feroza ascertains equilibrium in her search of establishing an identity that would define her existence as a Parsi living in America. In contrast, her most recent novel, *Water: A Novel* (2006) is based on Deepa Mehta's movie of the same title produced in 2005. Sidhwa wrote the novel based on the screenplay of the movie as requested by Deepa Mehta. In *Water: A Novel*, Sidhwa examines a controversial and sensitive issue, a subject many still consider culturally off-limit, and this certainly reflects her ability as a courageous writer. The novel provides intriguing background information about the lives of widows and the codes that they have to abide, living a life of simplicity and solitude in an *ashram*. It is indeed a heart-rending tale of Chuiya, a child bride who has to endure the stigma of being a child widow when her middle-aged husband dies.

In all her five novels, Bapsi Sidhwa has certainly endowed her female characters with the strength and the opportunity to relate their stories in their own voices. In an article titled "New Neighbours" in *Time Magazine* (August 11, 1997), Sidhwa rationalizes why she unveils the might of the female characters in her novels. She asserts her belief of empowering women with avenues that will offer them the liberty to articulate. Women, according to Sidhwa, must create their own stance and live beyond the boundaries created for them as she echoes the vitality of the silenced Partition rape victims in the article thus: "What legacy have these women left us? I believe their spirit animates all those women that have bloomed into judges, journalists, NGO officials, film makers, doctors, writers – women who today are shaping opinions and challenging stereotypes."

Bapsi Sidhwa, as a writer, has unquestionably a distinctive voice. Her novels are absorbing and captivating because they are rich in content. She uses her creative skill to disclose how social, political, religious, historical and cultural elements influence human nature. Even though she moved to America in 1983, she still considers herself a Pakistani writer. She has received many honours (<http://www.bapsisidhwa.com/awards.html>) as listed below, which proves her capability as a renowned novelist.

Awards

- 1986-1987-** Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe / Harvard-Mary Ingraham Institute.
- 1991-** Sitara-i-Imtiaz, the highest national honour in the Arts in Pakistan.
- 1991-** National Award for English Literature by the Pakistan Academy of Letters.
- 1991 -** LiBeraturepreis for *Ice-Candy-Man (Cracking India)*.
- 1992 -** Patras Bokhari Award for Literature.
- 1993 -** Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writers' Award.
- 1999 -** David Higham award for *The Crow Eaters*.
- 2002 -** Excellence in Literature Award at the Zoroastrian Congress in Chicago.
- 2007 -** Premio Mondello 2007 for *Water: A Novel*.
- 2008 -** South Asian Excellence Award for Literature.
- 2008 -** HCC Asian-American Legacy Award.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Bapsi Sidhwa is a much-admired writer and a lot of research and studies have been done on her life and work. These studies cover issues such as religion, community, nationalism and feminism that are pertinent in her novels. This current study stands to

differ in the sense that the premise of the analysis is a combination of feminist discourses primarily postcolonial feminism and Islamic feminism. This integration of feminisms will provide a new perspective to the investigation revealing how these discourses place Sidhwa as a writer from the subcontinent who acknowledges the distinctiveness of her female characters in her novels. This study departs from other studies because it is a comprehensive study of all the five novels that she has written, thus it will necessitate and enhance in understanding Sidhwa's purpose of displaying characters of vigour and her stance as a feminist. The analysis will provide a detailed in-depth study of thematic issues that will illustrate that the female characters are able to empower themselves. The explication of the novels will further enhance her feminine sensibility with the purpose of displaying unique experiences, dilemmas, strengths and joys of women belonging to a particular society as they live in conflict with definitions endowed on them.

Furthermore, this research seeks to explore how Sidhwa exhibits feminism in her fiction, illustrating the strength of her female characters. Her characters are as authentic as they can be. They are flawed and have imperfections. Nonetheless, in their limitations, they are able to unveil their spirit, revealing it without being overwhelming. Her female characters, while subjugating to conformity, are rather dominant and capable of forming their own unique identities in a man's world.

In the novel *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa deals with the repression of a young teenage girl Zaitoon in the hands of her tribal husband. Zaitoon's escape from an abusive marriage reflects her ability to challenge the androcentric structure practiced by a mountain tribe.

In *The Crow Eaters*, Sidhwa provides a fascinating insight into the lives of Parsi women amid their varied customs and traits. Kapadia (1996: 125) notes, “[*The*

Crow Eaters] is the only novel of its kind, as it is the first account of the workings of the Parsi mind, social behaviour, value systems and customs.”

While in *Cracking India*, Sidhwa offers an astounding perspective regarding the effects of Partition in Pakistan. She reflects how the atrocities generated by Partition created a multitude of innocent victims. Through the protagonist, Lenny, a young polio-stricken Parsi girl, Sidhwa brings forth the dilemma and sufferings of women who had to bear the impact of indescribable brutality across the border. According to Dhawan and Kapadia (1996: 14), Sidhwa feels that the success of *Cracking India* provided her readers in Pakistan with “a voice, which they did not have before.”

In *An American Brat*, Sidhwa explores the effects of relocation due to migration. In this novel, Sidhwa charts Feroza’s her journey of self-discovery as she learns the importance of embracing readjustment as a migrant.

In her fifth novel *Water: A Novel*, Sidhwa tackles a relatively susceptible subject matter as she relates how Chuiya, a child widow is forced to adhere to a custom that dictates the life of a widow. In *Water: A Novel*, Sidhwa reflects how the fetters of intimidating imprisonment confine a particular group of women.

This study will examine how issues such as identity, culture and religious obligations shape the various journeys her female characters undertake. Their experiences to a large extent do indeed reflect women’s present state of living, mainly of those who are still searching for freedom even if their search challenges the boundaries lined by men and cultural values. Sidhwa acknowledges the existence of this suppression in an interview with Kanaganayakam (1995: 91), whereby she states:

Colonialism humiliated the men and they in turn humiliated the women. So whenever the condition of society is weak or humbled, the women suffer the most. And that pattern continues with expectations of subservience from the women.

It is obvious that Sidhwa writes with the intent to break the pattern of subservience as she champions her female characters' resistance to total submission. Therefore, it is not surprising that the female characters' vigour in the novels stands to represent Sidhwa's insistence that women must be heard and seen.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on postcolonial feminism and Islamic feminism. It is limited to five of Bapsi Sidhwa's novels: *The Pakistani Bride*, *The Crow Eaters*, *Cracking India*, *The American Brat* and *Water: A Novel*. The study will concern the thematic issues that involve the female protagonists of these five novels. As evident in the novels, Sidhwa's central female characters come from diverse customs, surroundings and social conditions. Sidhwa uses these differences to highlight the dilemmas they face in their respective cultures. The novels contain a similar exposition in terms of how these women try to rise from the manacles of a particular society or culture that seems to favour one sex to the other. These women attest that they are not necessarily the weaker, silent half. These expositions will bring a fresh, new understanding of the position of women in the Parsi community, Pakistani society as well as women who are widows in India.

Furthermore, the research will also examine how these characters confront the diverse bonds and relationships that they form as a mother, wife, mother-in-law, sister, daughter and, above all, an individual. Sidhwa definitely allows and enriches her readers to re-evaluate and value a woman's experience. In her own distinct

manner, Sidhwa espouses that women can and do express their vitality as individuals. Thus, her novels speak powerfully of her stand concerning women, culture and society.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The first objective of this research is to explore the elements of feminism in Bapsi Sidhwa's fiction by examining the role of women in a man's world. The study also intends to identify the problems women face in their struggle to form unique identities. Another aim is to investigate the undercurrent drive that led the writer to write and depict various portrayals of women in Pakistan and India. In her novels, she depicts how these women try to break free from traditions that are oppressive. Therefore, the examination of Sidhwa's female characters will undeniably help in understanding Sidhwa's purpose in highlighting certain issues in her novels. By giving prominence to these concerns, Sidhwa circumspectly challenges the conventional representation of subcontinent women.

The study will further draw attention to the emotional, spiritual and intellectual experiences of the female characters. Thus, this study will focus on their dilemmas and their response or action in overcoming these hurdles. Moreover, there will be an attempt to see how these female characters perceive their relationships with the men in the novels, particularly how they are treated and if they are in any way still 'colonised' by male assumption. In addition, some of the issues in the novels are close to Sidhwa's heart and their explication in this study will certainly provide a new perspective base on her own disclosure pertaining to matters such as Partition and Parsi culture. Thus, in order to understand Sidhwa's intention of writing such intriguing novels, postcolonial feminism and Islamic feminism stand as the core

frameworks in the discussion of the novels. The application of these frameworks will be imperative in highlighting the trials and tribulations of Sidhwa's female characters.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In any research, it is essential to have research questions that will guide and direct the study to achieve the objectives and effectively shape the research towards the intended focus. Therefore, the research questions of this study are:

1. How does Sidhwa perceive women in the context of male-oriented culture in the Indian subcontinent?
2. Is Sidhwa writing against marginalisation/victimisation of women of a specific culture/minority group?
3. How has Sidhwa matured as a writer in terms of her treatment of women from her first novel to the most recent one?
4. How have cultures, religions, belief systems and values contributed in shaping the various identities of women? Are women themselves to be blamed for gender discrimination?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Bapsi Sidhwa is an acclaimed writer whose work and contribution in the literary scene is widely acknowledged. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are numerous articles, interviews and essays written about her and her work. The base of her creativity comes from her experiences and observations. These familiarities inspire her to chronicle moving narratives. Incidents of different hues and colours known to her have definitely played a critical role in the creative production of her beautifully crafted novels. According to Morris (1993: 7):

Literary texts ... provide a more powerful understanding of the ways in which society works to the disadvantage of women. In addition, the strong emotional impact of imaginative writing may be brought into play to increase imagination at gender discrimination and help to end it. Positive images of female experience and qualities can be used to raise women's self-esteem and lend authority to their political demands.

The above rationalisation establishes that Sidhwa's novels, *The Pakistani Bride*, *The Crow Eaters*, *Cracking India*, *The American Brat* and *Water: A Novel*, can be read on many different levels because they have much to offer politically, socially and culturally in the quest of endorsing the pivotal role of women in society. In her novels, she projects them in authentic settings in order to bring their sufferings and gallantry to prominence. This aspect is significant to this research in endorsing her claim of writing with a feminine sensibility. Sidhwa asserts this fact during an interview with Kanaganayakam (1995: 90) thus: "I hate to preach about feminism, but I let the characters speak for themselves and what the characters go through illustrates what a woman goes through in our part of the world."

Hence, in this study I will analyse her female characters, their status, relationships and the social conditions that influence and mould their existence. In her novels, Sidhwa examines matters that still plague many subcontinent women perhaps to a relatively lesser degree presently. However, social pressure confines these women to remain traditional and modest to a certain extent. Over time, as this study will prove, this submission turns into normalisation. This condition allows society to turn it into an obligatory custom which women must abide to without questioning. However, through her characters, Sidhwa illustrates that women can learn to ignore and resist these obligations and proceed to locate and create a level of comfort that would justify their existence. By doing so, Sidhwa reassesses women's experiences and indirectly encourages her readers to do the same.

Moreover, the application of postcolonial feminism and Islamic feminism perspectives in this study is vital in considering the motivation that led Sidhwa to write such captivating novels. Undeniably, her work has much to offer us, displaying a myriad of female characters, looking at the core of a woman's life in a particular society. My research differs from the others primarily because it will attempt to bind these female characters to other aspects such as social, spiritual as well as emotional and will not merely focus on patriarchy, gender inequality and victimisation, as Rowbotham (1992: 6) expresses:

Feminism is sometimes confined to women's struggles against oppressive gender relationships. In practice, however, women's actions, both now and in the past, often have been against interconnecting relations of inequality and ... resistance around daily life and culture that are not simply about gender.

Furthermore, restraints compounded by society allow men to extend this domination by defining and articulating women's existence. This supremacy indirectly makes women invisible in society. Nevertheless, this research will argue that women can and possess the ability to break free from deprecating stereotypes. This is necessary, as Delmar (1986: 8) asserts, "women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change in the social, economic and political order."

In addition, Sidhwa also critically evaluates the strength of the female characters in her novels. She sees them having the potential, facility and aptitude to rise according to their own potency. She provides them the capacity to break out from the cocoon built for them by men as well as society, highlighting their subsistence as any feminist would. The in-depth analysis of the characters in this study is significant in establishing that women in reality are not always the passive victims.

Moreover, this study will also be evaluating Sidhwa's feminist viewpoint as a Parsi in Muslim-dominated Pakistan. This stance will certainly enhance the significance of Sidhwa's minority point of view regarding the valour of women who dare to resist victimisation and exploitation however trivial or insignificant they may be. Therefore, it is not surprising that in all her novels Sidhwa gives an exceptional projection of women who dare to defy and be different. Thus, the study of the female characters in the novels will unquestionably offer a clearer understanding of Sidhwa's perspective as a feminist.

I intend to justify that besides giving a 'voice' to the female characters to emphasise issues that still grip women, Sidhwa, also in her own inimitable way, shows them to be distinct. Accordingly, Sidhwa brings forth their potential in possessing the force to transform the course of their lives as well as those around them. She rightly creates awareness of the various complexities women have to endure primarily because of their gender. With her honesty and creativity, like many other postcolonial feminist writers, she provokes her readers to see and change their mindset regarding women.

Therefore, Sidhwa's concerns will not only allow an interesting investigation but also facilitate to form a better understanding of matters such as breaking the code of honour by a young bride, the effects of the India-Pakistan Partition on women, the quest of discovering one's true self, the seriousness and dilemma of mix marriages in the Parsi community and the inhumane laws of widowhood in India. Hence, the insight of each of the novels will permit a critical reflection in rationalising Bapsi Sidhwa's motive in giving strength to her female characters to stand up and fight for recognition amidst their various conditions and predicaments.