

ISSN : 2395-4132

THE EXPRESSION

An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

Bimonthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



Impact Factor 6.4

Vol. 9 Issue 1 February 2023

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Bijender Singh

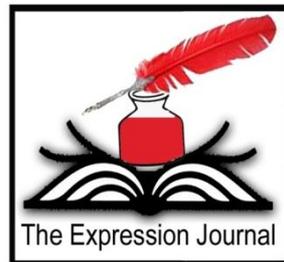
Email : editor@expressionjournal.com

www.expressionjournal.com

The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 6.4)

www.expressionjournal.com ISSN: 2395-4132



A STUDY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S *THE CROW EATERS*

DR. OM PRAKASH TRIPATHI

Assistant Professor, Department of English

R.R. P.C. College, Amethi

Uttar Pradesh, India

.....

Abstract

The Crow Eaters, first published in Pakistan in 1978, describes the social mobility of a Parsi family, the Junglewallas, during the British Raj in the early twentieth century. It also traces the attempts of Parsis, migrating from the west coast and settling in the more salubrious climate of North Indian cities, in the late nineteenth and the turn of this century. This work of Bapsi Sidhwa accurately depicts historical facts interwoven with satirical fiction and lampoon which aptly recreates the Parsi milieu and yet makes for delightful reading. Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi in 1936 and was brought up in Lahore and continues to live there. Bapsi Sidhwa belongs to the third generation of Parsi settlers in North Indian cities and was reared on tales both fictional and otherwise on the entrepreneurial skill of the elders of her community. Hence, her description of the exploits of Faredoon Junglewalla and his family is not just historical and political fiction, but has a strong autobiographical element also. Bapsi Sidhwa has a distinctive Pakistani yet Parsi ethos in her writings but above all a unique individual voice. It is this individualism and sense of humour which makes her one of the finest comic writers in the genre of sub continental English fiction. Her works have earned her international awards and huge repute.

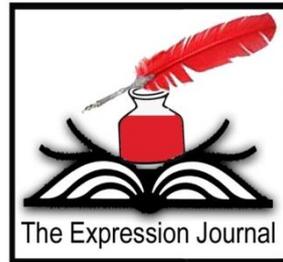
Keywords

Parsi, Ethos, Colonial, Adaptation, Community, Migration.

.....

Vol. 9 Issue 1 (February 2023)

Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Bijender Singh



**A STUDY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN
BAPSI SIDHWA'S *THE CROW EATERS*
DR. OM PRAKASH TRIPATHI
Assistant Professor, Department of English
R.R. P.C. College, Amethi
Uttar Pradesh, India**



Bapsi Sidhwa started writing at the age of twenty-eight after the birth of her three children -two girls and a boy. *The Crow Eaters* (1978) is the first novel of Bapsi Sidhwa. It is an interesting story of a Parsi young man, Fareedoon Junglewalla alias 'Freddy', who decides to leave his ancestral village finding no future there and proceed for Punjab along with his widowed mother-in-law, a pregnant wife and his infant daughter, Hutoxi, on a bullock-cart. The cart had a wooden platform on wheel and nearly two-third of the platform was covered by bamboo and canvas structure within which the family slept and lived. The rear portion of the cart was stacked with their belongings. This endearing family saga provides a vibrant window onto life in India under British colonial rule, and nation on the threshold of historic transformation.

Bapsi Sidhwa turns autobiography into art by her clever use of irony. The use of irony also prevents the novel from becoming either laudatory or disparaging, an inherent danger when an author writes about his or her own community, both the shortcomings and achievements. The novel commences on a note of praise for Fareedoon Junglewalla, Freddy for short, described as a strikingly handsome, dulcet-voiced adventurer. About his career it is said, "Freddy for short, was a strikingly handsome, dulcet-voiced adventurer with so few scruples that he not only succeeded in carving a comfortable niche in the world for himself, but also earned the respect and gratitude of his entire community. When he died at sixty-five, a majestic grey-haired patriarch, he attained the rare distinction of being locally listed in the Zarathusti Calendar of Great Men and Women" (*The Crow Eaters* 1).

The achievement is stupendous, yet doubts are raised about it. Freddy's fame and wealth are shown to have dubious roots. The maintenance of identity, in spite of being a microscopic minority, of which Freddy is so proud, is shown as mere public relations, bordering on sycophancy, "They are our sovereigns! Where do you think we'd be if we did not curry favour? Next to the nawabs, rajas and princelings we are the greatest toadies of the British Empire! These are not ugly words, mind you. They are the sweet dictates of our delicious need to exist, to live and prosper in peace. Otherwise, where would we Parsis be? Cleaning out gutters with the untouchable - a dispersed pinch of snuff sneezed from the heterogeneous nostrils of India!

The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 6.4)

www.expressionjournal.com ISSN: 2395-4132

(*The Crow Eaters* 4). The tone of the author is ironic. There is a protective irony in the novel, balancing personal inadequacies against the contradictions of life itself. Hence irony is also a mode of acceptance—a type of philosophy.

Freddy's ostensibly humorous comments, his obsequious behaviour towards Mr. Charles P. Allen, the Deputy Commissioner and his frequent visits to the Government House to pay homage to the British Empire, underline a basic attitude to the ruling colonial power which Bapsi Sidhwa carefully explores. Since the Parsis settled in India, they realized they could only survive as a minority by being strictly loyal to every ruling authority and avoiding tensions and conflicts between various groups and powers in the state. At no time in the subcontinent was the community itself a power factor that would have been able to enforce its own interests against the will of the rulers. Hence, Parsis learned to realize that only loyalty to the ruler generates that political climate in which they could remain undisturbed as a minority. The only condition for their loyalty was that they were not hindered in the practice of their religion. Hence, the exaggerated servility of Freddy, his son Billy and other Parsis towards the British is revealed as an act to ensure legal security, peace and economic prosperity. With her ironic perspective, the flattery of the Parsis is humorously revealed in the novel, but it also expresses an underlying identity crisis and quest for security amongst the community as a whole.

The novel has a lot of reflection of Parsi culture and traditions. Sidhwa candidly highlights the reality about population and glorious culture of Parsi community. She proudly describes in the novel, "There are hardly a hundred and twenty thousand Parsis in the world and still we maintain our identity why? Booted out of Persia at the time of Arab invasion 1,300 years ago, a handful of our ancestors fled to India with their sacred fires. Here they were granted sanctuary by the prince Adam Rana on condition that they did not eat beef, wear rawhides sandal or convert the susceptible masses. Our ancestors were too proud to bow to his will. To this day, we do not allow conversion to our faith or mixed marriages." (*The Crow Eaters* 11) On their way to Punjab, the family met a minor accident. A buffalo attacked Jerbanoo on the outskirts of a village and Freddy somehow manages to protect her. Terrified and distraught Jerbanoo fell sobbing in the arms of Freddy who for the first time felt a wave of tenderness and concern for his mother-in-law. Putli, the wife of Freddy, felt grateful and pleased with Freddy's brave effort in rushing forward to help her mother. They thanked God for saving them from the great calamity.

On a pitch-black night, the wooden wheel of the cart collapsed on the outskirts of the Rajasthan desert. Jerbanoo is badly frightened when a jackal suddenly howled into the stiffness. She rebukes Freddy for venturing on such a dangerous journey. She suggests him to go back to his native place. Finding no positive reply, she sat solidly before Freddy and said angrily that he wanted her to be abandoned and eaten by wild animals and she wanted to be brought back to her home, "Jerbanoo planted herself solidly before Freddy. Her winged eyebrows almost disappeared in her hairline. So now, we are to be devoured by wolves! Why? Because your majesty wishes it" (*The Crow Eaters* 18).

Freddy finally arrived Punjab facing bravely all these difficulties. Due to his soft-spoken manners, he quickly won Punjabi hearts in Lahore by the fact that he was a Parsi, who is known for honesty and propriety, and this fact was advantageous for him. Sidhwa here explains as to how the Parsi people have a certain physical appearance. She explains the special characteristic features of Parsis, "His complexion was light and glowing. All this combines with the fact that he was a Parsi-whose reputation for honesty and propriety is a byword - made

him a man of consequence in the locality. His sales picked up almost at once and began to live in reasonable comfort" (*The Crow Eaters* 23).

Jerbanoo was much worried, not only for being uprooted from her native land, but also for the reason that there was no "Tower of Silence" in the city of Lahore. She was never ready to be buried like a Muslim or a Christian. She was also reluctant to be shoved beneath mounds of maggot-ridden earth. She also did not like to be buried in the earth. The novelist presents her predicament and writes, "Parsis who choose to settle in far-flung areas have to be content with mere burial.... Surely, they wouldn't allow her to be buried like a Muslim or a Christian. She told them once and for all, she absolutely refused to be shoved beneath mounds of maggot-ridden earth! By bringing her to Lahore, Putli and Freddy had damned her soul to an eternal barbecue in hell." (*The Crow Eaters* 46)

Jerbanoo reacts sharply when she caught his servant red handed while smoking in the kitchen. She found that entire room was acrid with tobacco smoke. Jerbanoo slapped the boy and placed him before Putli hauling him up by his ears to make her witness of the crime. Freddy was called from the store to deal with the culprit. Freddy was shocked by the incident as in a house fragrant with sandalwood and incense the smell of tobacco is an abomination. The novelist comments upon the situation, "The shameful crime hurt everyone deeply and each thrashed the boy in turn. Later, to soothe his family's ruffled sentiment, Faredoon suggested a drive in the colourfully varnished Tonga that had replaced his bullock cart. Clip-clopping sedately over the Rave Bridges, the horse pulled the two-wheeled carriage and its occupants into the country side." (*The Crow Eaters* 47)

Like other Parsis, the fast-talking insurance agent, Mr. Adenwalla, was also welcomed with open arms and lavishly entertained. On Sunday, a day before his departure, Mr. Adenwalla was very busy in collecting insurance proposals. Man after man signed on the dotted line. Women signed with intent faces and laboured pens. Lebanon preferred to give her thumb impression. Freddy had also insured everything insurable-his children, his wife and his mother-in-law.

Freddy started his plan with a subtle change in his attitude towards Jerbanoo. He evinced more interest in her illnesses and her well-beings. His polite glances now included her when he addressed his family. He rebuked children and asked them to respect her. Putli was taken by surprise to see the changes in his conduct. The novelist shows the situation in the novel, "The next morning he told Putli, Try and keep the kids quiet in the afternoon. They bother the old woman with their noise. 'Why this sudden concern?' She asked sceptically. Ah, well, she is an old woman after all. I feel sorry for her. I imagine she misses her relatives, don't you think? He spoke with such obvious sincerity that Putli lowered her probing eyes." (*The Crow Eaters* 63)The novelist shows a peculiar feature of a Paris's household. Every Parsi household has its "other room", specially reserved for women. At this room, the Parsi women are banished for the duration of their unholy period. According to an old superstition, even the sun, moon and stars are defiled by her impure gaze.

The fire breaks out all of sudden in the residential house of Freddy. The burning house was cordoned off by policemen and the crowd was kept back with a fence of lathe sticks. Jerbanoo is trapped inside the burning house. Firefighters tried to persuade her to climb down the ladders but she refused, as she did not want people see her in petticoat. The fire chief orders to bring her down on shoulders. Screaming women and children who had been evacuated from their homes, sat in the grass in voluble little bunch. Mr. Adenwalla talking with Mr. Bankwalla expresses his doubt that the fire was not accidental but deliberate. Mr.

Bankwalla rebukes him for his remarks and says, "I am not saying of denying anything-but as a representative of my company, I am responsible. I have to answer to them. Mind your tongue, warned Mr. Toddywalla." (*The Crow Eaters* 96). A letter issued by the office of the Inspector-General of police, supported the fact that the fire was broke out by an accident and Mr. Faredoon Junglewalla received a sizeable cheque. Thus, he succeeds in his game plan and his business once again comes back on its proper track. When entire family was gathered around the afternoon before dinner on a particular day, he narrates as to how his marriage was delayed for his sister's marriages and thereafter were finalized. He confides that he was so worried about his marriage that he was feeling to be in love with every woman in the village-married, unmarried, old and young. Out of a superstition, he used to pour a little salt in the drinking water of her sisters to facilitate his marriage.

Freddy was expert not only in business affairs but also in tactical devices. He has good contacts with police officers also. One day, a thickest Sikh police officer came to seek help of Freddy for admission of his son in St. Anthony's School. He pays him much respect and hospitality, and agrees to help him at once. However, he in the meantime took advantage of the situation and asked him to help a young boy who was caught in a brothel raid. The novelist shows us as to how he once again attempted to kill two birds with one stone. Freddy reacts sharply when his son, Yazdi, proposes to marry outside his community with an Anglo-Indian girl. The moment Yazdi disclosed her name, Freddy became fire and he could not control his anger and slapped him on his face with full force. When he heard the name of the girl - Rosy Watson he says - "I don't think I know any Parsi by the name of Watson.' 'She is a not Parsi. She is an Anglo-Indian. Father and son were both as pale as whitewashed walls. 'Come here', said Freddy in a strange harsh voice. His face twisted uncontrollably. Yazdi came round the table and stood before his father. Yazdi felt his long stringy frame cringe involuntarily but he held his ground. Suddenly, Freddy raised his arm and slapped the back of his hard hand across Yazdi's face. The boy staggered back" (*The Crow Eaters* 123).

After the day Yazdi disclosed his affair with an Anglo-Indian girl namely Rosy Watson, and his intention to marry her, he was kept under the tactful surveillance of his family. Finding no contact with him, Rosy was much annoyed with him. Yazdi could not get sufficient time to explain his absence from school and to get an account of his father's unfortunate reaction. Yazdi on meeting with her endeavours to console her, "Please do not be so angry. Yazdi gripped her frail arms and kissed her flushed, wet mouth, 'Look, don't feel like that. Does he matter? I will marry you. I will find a way out. I promise. Just have a little faith in me...please...please? The school bell clamoured urgently. Rosy moved back. When can you see me again? She asked. Next Friday I will skip class again" (*The Crow Eaters* 141-42).

Misfortune continues to bestow upon Freddy. His son falls into illness and his situation continued from bad to worse despite doctor's treatment. Desperate Freddy consults Gopal Krishna who said in a melancholic tone. He picked up a pencil and scribbled some calculations on a scrap of paper, "Your son will pass from this life in three days, he said because of calculations. The writing advises you to be brave. Your loss is not permanent. He will be reborn in your family in a few years" (*The Crow Eaters* 175).

Bapsi Sidhwa, like Shobha De and Khushwant Singh, never hesitates to depict sex in her novels as and when needed. Billy and Tanya after marriage go to Shimla for honeymooning. Billy, like other male persons, has adequate knowledge of sex. Billy was aware about the beauty of his wife. He was setting more and more put off by this unforeseen concomitant of his wife's beauty. He often wished he were a Mohammedan and could cover up her in burqa. Muslims, he

thought are sensible people. Billy becomes annoyed when the clerk at a Shimla hotel pays a lingering glance at his wife's pretty face: "Button up your cardigan, said Billy in a fierce whisper. Tanya obediently buttoned herself" (*The Crow Eaters* 239-40).

Tanya gives birth to a daughter and thereafter a boy. Faredoon realized that Soli was reborn. He trembled for joy and happy tears crept into his eyes. He now relished that he is in the last phase of his life and left entire management of his business to Billy. Billy earned so much money that he became the richest man of the land. In the later part of the novel it is shown that 'Quit India Movement' begins and partition of India takes place. Faredoon decided to continue to stay at Lahore and says, "We will stay where we are...let Hindus, Muslim, Sikhs, or whatever, rule." (*The Crow Eaters* 283) Concisely, we may say that the novel is Bapsi Sidhwa is a nice study of archetypal characters, of her community the Parsis and it deserves more than praise both as a sociological study and as literary document. Ruthlessly truthful and deeply perceptive, she tells her story with rare courage, frankness and good humour.

Such a prevailing attitude also leads to adopting customs and manners of the British. Knowledge of English education in a Christian missionary school was considered essential, not because of superior instruction or knowledge but as it offered a chance for rapid social mobility. The interaction of two cultures naturally produces tensions when for instance Putli, the wife of Freddy, resists change, "Putli's behaviour was more or less predictable. What revolted Putli most was the demand that she, a dutiful and God-fearing wife, must walk a step ahead of her husband. She considered this hypocritical and pretentious, and most barbarous." (*The Crow Eaters* 188) The Parsi milieu of Putli had a different value system, which the author highlights, "deep-rooted in the tradition of a wife walking three paces behind her husband; their deportment was as painful to Putli as being marched naked in public. Her legs beneath the graceful fold of her sari were as stiff as stilts" (*The Crow Eaters* 188).

As regards adapting customs of the British the novel shows the gradual assimilation of British value systems in the Parsi milieu. Putli tried to preserve certain Parsi customs, like walking behind her husband. However her daughter Yasmin after marriage ignores such notions as old-fashioned and vehemently protests at the servile attitude of women: "But he wants it that way, mother protested Yasmin loudly. Anyway, it's stupid to walk behind your husband like an animal on a leash- Oh Mother! Hasn't Papa been able to modernize you yet?" (*The Crow Eaters* 191)

Putli, the earlier generation Parsi, is scandalized by Yasmin preceding her husband down the steps and into the carriage and her seeming relationship of equality with her husband. Initially adapting the manners and customs of the ruling colonial power was gradual and Putli's inability to understand change is seen as the 'generation gap.' However, the scope of the novel is large, it shows the reality of a whole family and its network of relationship, spreading out to encompass a wide variety of human beings of different ages. Bapsi Sidhwa portrays the changing generations in the Junglewalla family. The new generation, with their increasing economic contacts with the British, like Billy's scrap iron deal, become increasingly westernized. This is best exemplified by the life-style of the youngest son Billy and his fashionable wife Tanya, "they were not of the masses, this young crowd. If their wealth did not set them apart, their ability to converse in English certainly did. They were utterly ashamed of traditional habits and considered British customs, however superficially observed, however trivial, exemplary" (*The Crow Eaters* 245).

This changing social milieu and identity crisis which Bapsi Sidhwa accurately depicts was distinctively visible amongst Parsis in British India and is a social problem for many in the

The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 6.4)

www.expressionjournal.com ISSN: 2395-4132

community, even in contemporary India and Pakistan. In the newspaper, *The Parsi*, published since 1905 in Bombay an article appeared stressing that the ambitions of most Parsis were aimed at as close a connection with the English as possible: "The closer union of the Europeans and Parsis is the finest thing that can happen to our race. It will mean the lifting up of a people who are lying low, though possessing all of the qualities of a European race." (*The Parsis in India: A Minority as Agent of Social Change* 138) Such a feeling is conveyed in the novel but Behram Junglewalla and his family do not consider Westernization as a conscious abandonment of their own group identity. They observe the trappings of ostensibly 'liberal' western culture:

They entertained continuously at small, intimate "mixed" parties where married couples laughed and danced decorously with other married couples. "Mixed" parties were as revolutionary a departure from Freddy's all-male get-together at the Hira Mandi, and Putli's rigid female sessions, as is a discotheque from a Victorian family dinner. The parties were fashionably cosmopolitan, including the various religious sects of India: Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians, the Europeans, and the Anglo-Indians. (*The Crow Eaters* 245)

Parsis maintained group identity by their dress. However, even in the matter of dress, generational change is evident. Faredoon and his family took pride in their traditional mode of dress. Whenever Faredoon went to Government House for formal parties or to pay homage to the British Empire he would consciously be, "rigged out in a starched white coatwrap that fastened with bows at the neck and waist, and crisp white pyjamas and turban." (*The Crow Eaters* 15) His wife Putli and his mother-in-law Jerbanoo never appeared in public. Besides their limited status as a minority community, another reason for the supreme respect and regard the Parsis had for the British was because of the social code of their religion. The basic attitude of the followers of Zarathustra towards a ruler was that of loyalty akin to the Iranic, pre-Islamic Sassanian traditions. This concept of loyalty to the ruler, gave Zoroastrianism the rank of a state religion, which meant a close relationship between state and community, based on mutual support. All the Parsis wanted from the ruling British authorities were religious autonomy and protection. They got both. The ideal state in Zoroastrian philosophy is free of a deification of the ruler. The conception of a good ruler is more a just and religiously tolerant exercise of authority. In the African Prayer, there is a special request for a good ruler defined thus, "a good Government is that which keeps and directs the country to be prosperous, it's poor to be without distress, its laws and customs to be just, which cancels unjust laws and customs." (*Moral Extracts from Zoroastrian Books* 44) As the Parsis primarily traced their secured status as a minority, their economic and social prosperity to British rule, identical with "good government" as identified in the African payer, loyalty was a self-evident precept for them. Another sound sociological factor which explains the consistent loyalty of the Parsis to the British, is aptly enumerated by eminent historian D.F.Karaka, in his scholarly work, *History Of the Parsis*, "When they [Parsis] compare their condition in India with that of their co-religionists in Persia [Iran] who were reduced until recently to a miserable state of persecution, they fully and rightly appreciate blessings, which they enjoy under the British Government" (*History of the Parsis* 134).

Such feelings were prevalent in the Parsi milieu and Bapsi Sidhwa aptly conveys it in the *The Crow Eaters*. Freddy took every opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to the British. After settling down in Lahore, he wore his finest and most resplendent clothes to visit Government House and sign his name in the Visitor's Book. This was his way of establishing his credentials and stressing his loyalty to "Queen and Crown." If such an act seems absurd, social historians

will recall that on occasions like royal birthdays, coronation ceremonies, arrival of a new viceroy or death in the royal family, the Parsis demonstrated their collective loyalty by public meetings and Jashans (group prayers). In cases of British military entanglements outside India, Parsis adopted the terminology of British imperialism. They termed Britain's wars as just and essential for world peace, for the progress of civilization and freedom.

It is the paranoid feelings of being a minuscule minority, which is the motivating factor for the behavioural pattern of the Parsis, ranging from quest for excellence to eccentricity. Bapsi Sidhwa constantly lampoons the zeal with which leading Parsi business magnates, Faredoon Junglewalla, Mr. Toddywalla and others championed the British cause. However hilarious their outbursts of loyalty may seem, the Parsis in British India were a schizophrenic community. A perusal of social history reveals the causes for this insecurity and alienation of many members of the community. For purposes of trade and business, the British granted the Parsis a special status as a broker and reliable trading partner. However, rapid social mobility amongst the Parsi community led to a conscious group desire to identify themselves all too closely with English themselves. The willingness to grant the Parsis a special status had its limits, "The English refused to consider Parsis as their own kind even if they were equally educated and extensively anglicized. Similarly, the Parsis inspired by the behaviour and statements of community leaders like Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy" (*The Parsis in India* 139) and the prevailing social milieu, developed an aversion to identifying themselves with other Indian communities. This led to a mental estrangement from India, for many Parsis, without, however, finding an identity of their own, free of both the English and other Indians. Being a shrewd observer of human fallibility Bapsi Sidhwa reflects this identity search in several situations and aspects in *The Crow Eaters*.

Another aspect of identity crisis, on the verge of paranoia, amongst the Parsis, is exemplified by the escapist behaviour of Yazdi, the second son of Faredoon Junglewalla. A sensitive boy, Yazdi is aggrieved at the conspicuous commercialism and sycophancy of the Parsis. A human dimension to his revolt is also introduced, as his father refuses him permission to marry a childhood sweetheart, the Anglo-Indian Rosy Watson. Yazdi takes charity to the extreme. He initially returned from school barefoot having given his shoes to an orphan in his class, "Putli quietly replaced them. A few days later he returned without his shirt, and the day after that, he climbed up to the flat in only his homemade underpants. He had distributed his apparel among four beggars near the Regal Cinema square." (*The Crow Eaters* 158) He is transferred to a boarding school in Karachi. There he becomes a drop-out, a modern-day "hippy," drifting about the city, squandering his allowance and fees on beggars often seen hovering and sleeping on park benches and pavements. He sought solace by assisting the lepers outside Karachi.

Finally, Yazdi makes a total break from his family. His share of the family money is put in a Trust and he gets monthly interest. Yazdi uses the money to feed dying children and buy medicine for the sick left to decay like exposed excrement in choked bazaar lines, "He realized centuries ago that all material goods including women had to be shared." (*The Crow Eaters* 215) His family does not meet him or hear from him. Billy strolling along Chowpatti Beach, Bombay with his fiancée Tanya is the last person to see Yazdi, an emaciated vagrant lying on a bench. The characterization of Yazdi adds to the richness and variety of the novel, as it shows all Parsis are not type, nor do they have stereotype reactions. However, there is a structural flaw in the presentation of Yazdi. *The Crow Eaters* is a very compact novel and though it shows a network of human relationship and reality of a whole family, there are no loose ends in the

The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 6.4)

www.expressionjournal.com ISSN: 2395-4132

plot. The exception is Yazdi. He is never shown practising his professed charity like Dr. Kenny in *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya. The characterization of Yazdi is deliberately or accidentally left vague, which is slightly jarring.

However, Sidhwa's novels provide an alternative perspective to the predominant narrative of Pakistani literature, for it subverts the role assigned to female figures. This alternative voice is successful in re-creating women's sense of history and belonging. The concept of a "feminist historiography" is best explained by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, "a feminist historiography as a whole and discards the idea of women as something to be framed by a context in order to be able to think of gender difference as both structuring and structured by the wide set of social relations." (*Essays in Colonial History* 3)

In fact, the protagonists of Bapsi Sidhwa are mainly women, who have refused to accept the narrow and constricting roles assigned to them under vague terms such as 'honour', 'shame', and 'modesty' among others. These labels assume different interpretations under different circumstances, all these explications are most often than not, in the hands of the patriarchal figures who ruthlessly exploit their advantage over the women. Sidhwa's narratives articulate the pain and injustices endured by these victims who are otherwise made to suffer in silence and whose protestations are denied a voice.

Works Cited and Consulted

Karaka, D.F. *History of the Parsis*, Macmillan, 1884.

Kulke, Eckehard. *The Parsis in India: A Minority as Agent of Social Change*. Vikas, 1974.

Modi, Jivanji Jamsedji. *Moral Extracts from Zoroastrian Books*. Forgotten Books, 1914.

Murzban, M.M. *The Parsis in India*, enlarged, annotated and illustrated English tr. of Dolphin Menant, *Les Parsis*, 2 vols., Bombay, 1917.

Sangari, Kumkum and Sudesh Vaid. *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*. Kali for Women, 1989.

Sidhwa, Bapsi. *The Crow Eaters*, 1978. Lahore: Ilmi Press; Delhi Penguin, 1990.