



## **BAPSI SIDHWA AND BHARATI MUKHERJEE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSES OF THEIR NOVELS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Present paper investigates Bapsi Sidhwa (1939) and Bharati Mukherjee (1940) is the novelists of Pakistani and Indian Diaspora. A comparative study traces, analyses and criticizes comparable elements between these Third world, expatriate, immigrant and diasporic writers. It also examines the contrastive features that these two writers have in order to illuminate their individual genius as comparative studies not only include comparable/ analogical elements but also contrastive elements too. Their creative odyssey kept them identical in exploring the complexities of their choicest theme of expatriate and immigrant experience with journey as a quest motif. Their protagonists are all women who are lonely as an island in an alien land to assimilate or negate the values of the alien culture with physical and psychological violence.*

Both Sidhwa and Mukherjee are convinced that they are as artists, destined to undertake the serious task of focusing the cultural crisis of their contemporary societies. Both writers belong to a social and transitional period in their countries. They are keenly sensitive to the changes in the mainstream of their cultures. So the primary aim of this paper is to establish a close affinity between these two novelists, one is a Pakistani and the other an Indo Canadian - American. A comparative study of these two writers belonging to two different cultures and nations could think of certain problems and depict a few situations, which could share some common features.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani English fiction writer. Sidhwa's first novel *The Crow Eaters* is a humorous novel which tells of the achievements of a tiny community which has survived cultural invasion. The novel describes the social mobility of a parse family. It is about Feredoon, nicknamed Freddy.

Her second novel, *The Pakistani Bride* deals with the repression of women in the patriarchal Pakistani society. The novel is based on a true story narrated to Sidhwa. Zaitoon is a protagonist of the novel. This novel provides a realistic picture of the treatment of women in

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Pakistani society. Sidhwa's important contribution is *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) which is remarkable because it is based on the autobiographical experiences of the author. The narrator Lenny is eight years old and suffers from polio. The child narrator records the incidents relating to the partition of 1947. In her next novel *An American Brat* (1994) takes up the issues like globalization, brain-drain from the third world, cultural shock and so on. Feroza Ginwalla is presented as caught between communities, unable to go back and unable to go forward.

Bharati Mukherjee has emerged as an important Indian English fiction writer in the last decade. Her works deals with the life of south Asian expatriates/immigrants in USA. She is also concerned with the problem of acculturation and assimilation. D'Souza observes:

*A thread that runs through all Mukherjee's eight works of fiction is difference cultural, religious, racial, sexual and economic class difference. In the contemporary world in which her fiction is set, various upheavals crippling legacies of colonialism, migration, instances of discrimination and violence, encounters with cultural otherness. (D'Souza, 2004: 180).*

She covers many moods of expatriation like nostalgia, frustration and hop. The shift to America wrought a sea change in her personality and gave a new strength to her culture and literary aspiration.

Mukherjee's first novel *Daughter* deals with the problems of expatriates. The novel is about Tara's return to her native Calcutta from the states after seven years, she finds it difficult to relate herself to her family, city and culture in general. At the end of the novel, she leaves for America in a hurry; she is confronted with the strangeness of her own culture. Mukherjee presents a very different sort of woman in *Life*. It is a novel about a Bengali girl called Dimple, she went to American after her marriage with Amit Basu, and she begins to adopt the American way of life. She undergoes cultural shock and psychic dislocation. The inner violence in her personality reaches a climax and she murders her husband.

Mukherjee's *Jasmine* depicts the problems of the people immigrating to America with the dream of new life. The novel describes the journey of the heroine, Jasmine, through hunger, ill treatment, violence, rape and murder, she goes through different social, cultural and moral obligations.

Sidhwa's and Mukherjee's works emphasize the need for immigrants to choose their home by constantly adapting themselves to the new homeland. They express their concerns related to contemporary themes such as quest for identity of their immigrants; their characters are the victims of double civilizations in their migrated souls. They struggle in distant bends in

search of identity. Both the authors probe deep in to the inner conflicts of well educated, sensitive, adults whose traditional codes of economy of passion and material desire collapse their ways of life. They show their protagonists living in between two cultures, constantly journeying in to new meanings and fashioning new identities.

In The *Pakistani Bride* and *Jasmine Zaitoon* and Jane are expected to be silent women in their alliance/marriage to Saki and Bud respectively. Both of them, like silent women in their beginning of marital life accepts the almost preplanned certain way of life with their men. Therefore, they would not assimilate in to the new culture and location. Both Sidhwa and Mukherjee talk about the changing social milieu and identity crisis in Parsee and Bengali community, their characters are conscious of their own group identity.

Sidhwa and Mukherjee by portraying Zaitoon, Feroza, Jasmine, Tara suggest by subjecting them to multiple codes of society that if one has to assimilate oneself to the mainstream culture of the adopted land. It has been observed by Gravely in *Dangerous Crossing in Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man and An American Brat* as follows:

*These borders are not only the physical borders between countries and neighborhood, but also the invisible borders placed between religious groups, between classes, between stages of development and between women and men these physical and psychic borders often represent limitations placed on the characters in their struggle for entry in to the dominant social structure (Gravely. 1994: 81-93)*

Both Sidhwa and Mukherjee uniformly show how the ethnic minorities try to retain their cultural moorings and identity even while assimilating modern ideas. Both of them seek to contribute through their novels to the process of change that has started all over the world. They depict the determined women for whom the traditional role is inadequate. They wish to build a world which is free of dominance and hierarchy. A world that rests on the principles of justice and equality.

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