



BAPSI SIDHWA'S AN AMERICAN BRAT: AN ANALYSIS OF CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

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Abstract:

Culture is a way of life, which incorporates within it the totality of life experience and social relations. Slowly culture is changed by the invasion of British people that is the reason, many literatures comes under Post-colonial literature. Cross-Culturalism is also a part of post-colonial theory. Its main view is to deconstruct the morphological structure leading to the formulation of the concept. Culturalism denotes the flexibility of the self to engage in the communication and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal signals and to correctly and appropriately respond in a manner. The morphological prefix of 'cross' in cross-culturalism denotes the crossing of extreme barriers from one construct to another. It also reflects the ongoing expansion of boundaries. The way of life they lead, adapting them to that culture, suffer due to an unknown language, and forgetting their own culture, etc. So with this discourse, this paper analyzes the famous Pakistan woman novelist, Bapsi Sidhwa's piece of work, *An American Brat*. Bapsi Sidhwa encounters the cross cultural experiences through the character Feroza Ginwalla in her novel *An American Brat*.

Key Words: Culture, Invasion, Commonwealth, Deconstruct, Culturalism & Boundaries

Everyone has their own culture and tradition. Culture may be defined in different ways; Culture is a state or a process of human perfection in terms of certain absolute or universal values. Culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work which records the detailed way of human thought and experience. And also it is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior. All three definitions have some value in understanding the totality of a cultural system. Here, the paper focuses on the third. Culture is a way of life, which incorporates within it the totality of life experience and social relations. Slowly culture gets changed by the invasion of British people that is the reason many literatures come under Post-colonial literature.

Colonialism is a catalyst in many fields, not the least in the social and the cultural. But, also in politics, in Indian economy and in the global market. These cultural changes have multiple source of inspiration instead of all it is mainly by the direct intervention of the colonial state.

Cross-Culturalism is also a part of post-colonial theory. It's main view is to deconstruct the morphological structure leading to the formulation of the concept. Culturalism denotes the flexibility of the self to engage in the communication and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal signals and to correctly and appropriately respond in a manner. The morphological prefix of 'cross' in cross-culturalism denotes the crossing of extreme barriers from one construct to another. It also reflects the ongoing expansion of boundaries.

The 'crossing' of ideology and thought indicates that culture is never fixed and the very means by which crossing occurs is through systems of discourse. In a different community, speakers from different cultures talk about issues in several ways. Topics, incidents and problems are regarded in various aspects and it follows different codes of behavior. In short, the speech acts were followed by culturally constructed by its necessity. Language is not isolated from culture. It follows linguistic and social patterns that arise from cultural norms. The language and the non-linguistic activities and settings that form the discursive context need to be considered. This enables the continuation of other discourse and shared experiences, allowing engagement in sequential dialogue that alternates between speaking and listening. Common knowledge can then become established for cross-cultural understanding to continue. Many writers show this kind of discourse through their works. But instead of language many aspects comes under the term 'cross culture'. An individual can happen to induce the other culture due to the situation where they are being. The way of life they lead, adapting them to that culture, suffer due to an unknown language, and forgetting their own culture, etc. So with this discourse this paper analyzes the famous Pakistan woman novelist's piece of work, *An American Brat*.

Bapsi Sidhwa is widely recognized as one of the most prominent Pakistani novelists. She is raised in the Parsee community, a religious and ethnic minority in Pakistan. Critics regard Sidhwa as a feminist, postcolonial Asian author whose novels include *The Crow Eaters*, *The Bride*, and *Ice-Candy-Man*, that provide a unique perspective on Indian and Pakistani history, politics, and culture. *An American Brat* is written when Sidhwa migrates from Pakistan to America. She skillfully links gender to the many aspects like community, nationality, religion, and class, by demonstrating the ways through cultural identity and social structure do not merely affect or reflect one another, but instead are inextricably conjoined.

Bapsi Sidhwa encounters the cross cultural experiences through the character Feroza Ginwalla in her novel *An American Brat*. Sidhwa begins her novel in Lahore, Pakistan. Feroza is a 16 year old young girl who is

good at her culture. She also worries about the traditional dressings of her mother who belongs to a middle-class Parsee community. Women wear their dressing conservatively according to the Muslim theology. But Feroza's mother follows her own community way of dressing. She tells her mother to wear dress some more conservatively and she prefers the company of her old-fashioned grandmother. Feroza tells her mother to come to school dressed properly. She objects her mother's sleeveless sari-blouse, but her mother objects her point and says that they are Parsee and everybody knows that they dress differently. Here the reader or an individual can understand that every religion and caste has its own culture and tradition.

This is the ideology of Feroza as a typical Parsee woman. But instances happened in such a way that it brings contradictories in her life. Her uncle Manek was settled in America, and so Zareen wants her daughter to go to America for vacation. Before she leaves Pakistan, her grandmother advises her how to handle cheaters. As a woman, she feels to go to America alone, and she manages and reaches America with safe and good. In America, she experiences not only the glitz and glamour but also the poor and the ugly side of it. Next day she starts her tour to New York. Her uncle informs and also wants her to be aware of the male prostitutes. Manek's initial struggles to cope with the US culture help him to guide his niece; he wants Feroza to face the problems with an easy manner, which he already experienced. He considers his experiences as lessons to teach Feroza about the US. Gradually Feroza yields to America's charm and decides to stay on as a student. Manek wants Feroza to join in junior college at Twin Falls, Idaho, a small town, which he thought would ease her assimilation into the American way of life.

The college is ready to offer stipend for her and her parents also accepted her to continue the studies. Soon she has a friend named Jo, who helps her requirements and needs. She accepts her as a philosopher, guide and friend so on. Feroza adapts Jo's behavior and her way of speaking. Both, Jo and Feroza join the University of Denver for the hotel management course. Now, Feroza feels independent and slowly changes her behavior. Here she discovers the joys and adversity of American campus life. She faces several challenges continuously which makes her understand the changes within herself. Her treatment of friendship with Jo helps her to learn the American way of life. Feroza completely adapts and changes her lifestyle to American lifestyle. She acts, talks and dresses like an American girl. She learns driving, drinking, dancing and uses the American slang. The shy natured Feroza turns into a confident and self-assertive girl. During the winter vacation, Feroza decides to go back to Lahore. She gets a very warm and hearty welcome by the family. But, unfortunately, she finds herself a misfit in the family as well as in the country where she, actually, belongs. However, her family is overwhelmed to see a shy and timid girl grown into a confident bold Feroza. Zareen proposes her marriage and Feroza brings in her studies and denies.

Once she wants to buy a second hand car, so she is advised to inspect two-year old car of David Press. She arranged an appointment with David, a tall blue eyed handsome guy of around twenty two. She buys the car, but loses herself. Soon Feroza falls on the side of David in the name of love. Actually, she decides to get permission from her family to marry David. She writes a letter and also sends a photograph of David. It's like a bomb blast on her family and soon Zareen wants her to get back from US. Meanwhile, Zareen accepts her love and she wants to do her daughter's marriage like arranged. David starts to call Feroza as 'ZAP' which means Zoroastrians and she calls him as 'JAP' which means Jewish. Often David understands that he cannot adjust to her because of their cultural difference. So David leaves Feroza and fortunately, he gets another job in California and leaves Denver. Feroza is shocked and she feels insecure for some time. However, she was diverted from the direction of her life in the past. She does not want to go back. Instead, she lives in America. She could bear with the sense of displacing and not belonging though she is sensitive in America. She finds and she shares her personal experiences with thousands of new comers like her in America.

Thus, Feroza and her story depict the mental state of a multicultural society, especially of ethnic groups and migrants. She represents all expatriate experiences who find it very difficult to balance between tradition and modernity, present and past, dependence and freedom, native and non – native be it tradition, custom, ritual or culture. In *An American Brat*, Bapsi Sidhwa has aptly taken up the issue of cultural difference and divergence and resultant problems.

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