

THE PURSUIT OF PARSI'S HERITAGE IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S *THE CROW EATERS*

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Abstract: *The Crow Eaters* deals with important cultural and historical themes, it is presented in a light-hearted, comedic way that mocks aspects of Parsi culture. It discusses the culture and community system of Parsi family in particular, but it also discusses many social issues in general, such as the struggle among Freddy and his mother-in-law and the devotion between mother and daughter. People personalities; for an example, Freddy's visit to the mystic, who instructs him to cut up his mother-in-law hair. The community issues; love marriage has long been a concern in Pakistan and India, and Yazdi is no exception.

Key words: Parsi, Cultural heritage, Rituals, Social issues, Immigration.

Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1938. Her parents, Peshotan and Tehmina Bharatha lived in Karachi before moving to Lahore with her family. She experienced polio at the age of two and was nine years old when partition occurred in 1947, events that would the character Lenny in her novels *Ice Candy Man* and provide back story for her. In 1957, she graduated from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore with a Bachelor's Degree. She was one of the first Pakistani novelists to write in the English language. She expresses her thoughts on writing. She holds the belief that a good start is half-done. She is Pakistan's premier diasporic writer, and her English-language novels represent her personal experiences of Partition in the Indian subcontinent, women's harassment, and immigrants to the United States; she is a natural storyteller. She is currently based in Houston, Texas, United States. She identifies as a 'Punjabi Parsi-Pakistan woman'.

The Crow Eaters, she discusses the historical background of Parsis in the chapter of the novel, where they came from Persia at the period of the entrance of Arabs thirteen hundred years ago to rescue their faith, Zoroaster's beliefs, from being Islamized by the Arabians. They are followers of Prophet Zarathustra, and Zoroastrianism, their religion was formed approximately 2000 B.C. Its essence can be found in Zarathustra's five Gathas, or divine hymns. The Parsi heritage and concentrate and to the story's significance, as little is known about this isolated type of group in the subcontinent in general, especially on a personal or creative level. As a result, recognising the novel's unique landscape is to recognise a period with which few outsiders are aware. During the seventh century BC, Persia (now Iran) was the birthplace of the religion. During the Sassanid Empire, it was Persia's official religion. The religion was founded by Zarathustra, also known as Zoroaster. Zarathustra stated that God Ahura Mazda, the originator of all wonderful things in the world, had transported him to paradise would be the only God to be honoured.

The Crow Eaters follows the experiences of Faredoon Junglewalla, or Freddy for short, which left his birthplace in the late 1800s for the rich plains of Punjab, eventually settling in Lahore. The novel also follows the Parsis attempts to migrate from the West Coast to the more temperate climates of North Indian cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *The Crow Eaters* is ostensibly a succinct and satirical account of Faredoon Junglewalla himself, whose rise to fame and social stardom is traced with local matters and much good natured humour and drollery. Faredoon Junglewalla, better known as Freddy narrates his life story in *The Crow Eaters*, a ribald comedy. The novel opens with an extended flashback and is a loosely built narrative.

Freddy is a notable individual who has been included in the Zarathustri Calendar of Great Men and Women. His entire neighbourhood holds him in great in high regard and gratitude. Freddy spent his middle years reminiscing and rhetorically speaking to the youth that sweetest thing in the world is your own need, he encouraged the young guests. A Parsi family, including his widowed mother-in-law, pregnant wife and baby daughter Hutoxi, journeys Punjab Central India to the city of Lahore in a bullock-cart in pre-partition India.

He was a guy of prominence in the area since he was a Parsi with a reputation for loyalty and prosperity. His sales increased very immediately, and he was able to live comfortably again. He even managed to save a little money. Faredoon made a point of offering little arms every Friday, and his wife and mother-in-law wore Mathabanas, which are white kerchiefs wrapped around the hair and worn like skull caps. Putli was happy, and she is the epitome of Indian wifely obedience, love, and responsibility. She found happiness in housework and caring for her children and spouse. She understands her children just as well. She would have seven children, Hutoxi, Yazdi, Billy, Yasmin, Katy, Soli and Ruby throughout the years, blissful in her knowing.

Sidhwa does an excellent job of highlighting the Parsi environment of Putli, which has a separate value system. He used three maxims to softly regulate and thoroughly dominate his wife Putli. He would take a firm and unwavering stance if she did or intended to do something he regarded as unpleasant and destructive. Putli quickly learns to understand and accept his own choices in these situations.

The Parsis are a small society who bury their dead in open roofed cages on the title Tower of Silence, the British idealised this strange graveyard. A word as to the Tower; the marble floor slopes towards the centre, where a deep depression can be found. This is where the bones and blood are collected. The void has underground pipes that lead to four wells drilled from outside the Tower. These wells are rich in time, charcoal, and Sulphur, making them great filters. This approach was both practical and hygienic at a time when arable land was too valuable to be utilised as a graveyard. Persia's rocky landscape gave rise to tradition.

Freddy stood up one day. The hour had come for morning prayers. He stepped across the stairs and walked back into kitchen quietly. Summer made him as thirsty that was the kind of thirst that only subsided when the temperature became cooler. The porous nature of the delicate clay functioned as a cooling agent. Freddy's palm felt deliriously cool as he held the glass into the jar, taking a cautious drink, because the water was cold and the salt taste was cold and the salt taste was scarcely discernible.

Freddy drank the water on the fourth morning. It tasted pure, cool, and delightful. He smacks his lips repeatedly. Freddy tells Putli that he replaced the water every morning alone, and when his wife asks why, he adds that it had salt in it for three mornings, and it was brackish today. Both suspect that their children are Soli or Yasmin, but Kitty and Billy are too little to help. He claims he has seen Soli look at the Toddywalla girl a few times, so he has ready to ask him, and his wife has asked her daughter. Putli claims that Yasmin did not do it because she discusses the salty taste in the water with her directly, and she was startled. So she definitely told her daughter not to do it. Both Freddy and Putli, the only suspect Soli, speak with him. He claims that while Soli appears bold, he is timid. The twist is that neither of them will do so. Freddy tells his wife that Yasmin and Soli did not add salt to the water so he suspects his mother-in-law, who is still searching for the Irishman who saved her from the fire. After learns that his wife had dissatisfied with her spouse. In the course of the book, the focus turns from Freddy to his children. Two of the daughters marry young, and the third marries later. The sons are given greater attention. Yazdi falls for Rosy Watson, an Anglo-Indian with a tumultuous family history. Freddy discourages his son from becoming involved, reminds him of the promise Parsis took when they arrived in India many decades ago to marry only from their own community.

Meanwhile, Rosy is compelled to become prostitution and Freddy surprise sees her at her place. Something in Freddy's alcohol-clouded mind clicked alert and enraged when she revealed her name is Rosy. Freddy was consumed by a wicked, inhuman rage. He recognised her as the woman his son planned to marry. Yazdi is devastated when Freddy informs her of this. Yazdi's disappointment with love serves as a catalyst for his final rejection of materialistic life. Mazalak, the first communist in Zoroastrian scriptures, finds a model in Yazdi, who advocated generations earlier that all material possessions, including women, must be shared. As a result, Yazdi takes advantage of the expanding social space to practise the authentic Zoroastrian ideal of generosity. This drastically changes Yazdi. He gives up the world and donates his monthly stipend to the destitute and homeless. Freddy's oldest child, Soli, becomes ill and died, as predicted by the strange Gopal Krishnan's horoscope forecasts. Yazdi's story of terrible love disappointment and consequent

alienation of the world, as well as Soli's death, lend a sombre tone to this portion. These incidents permanently alter Freddy. He develops into a much more complicated character, recognising life's mystery, complexity, and sorrow.

Billy's attempts to locate a wife, his courting and wedding to Tanya, the daughter of one of Bombay's wealthiest Easymoneys, their honeymoon, marital difficulties, and lastly Billy's total win over his wife are all covered in detail. When Billy and Tanya return to Lahore, they welcomed into a new home given to them by Freddy. A team had already been assembled. Billy's eyes well up with tears of appreciation. The residence is provided with the necessities. Tanya has been entrusted by Putli with the task of selecting those items that a woman enjoys selecting those items for herself. Tanya's belongings have been unpacked and sorted, and decorative items have been displayed in the entrance hall. Tanya has troubles with Putli and Jerbanoo who finally complains to Freddy about them. As a result, Freddy reveals that he would be taking Putli and Jerbanoo to London for a six months visit.

Also there is Jerbanoo quarrel between Freddy's friend and his wife. So his friend told them to leave his residence so that they could both stay in a hotel. She also causes an issue by taking both on the balcony, causing her neighbour roommate to file a complaint against her. Finally, both of us were able to leave the hotel. Tanya is overjoyed when they both return. She gave birth to a boy baby. Freddy believes that through this child, his son has been reborn. He is delighted and takes excellent care of his grandchild. The powerful sense of duty and obligation that this minuscule commercial community has towards fellow Parsis is its charming quality. They help one another, sharing success and uniting to support one another in times of adversity, as if they were one big close-knit family. The realisation of Freddy's own limitations is an important step toward self-awareness. His life revolves around contentment, a Zoroastrian ideal. He believes that each person's needs must be respected. A contented mind is receptive to spiritual understanding, he realises late in life. Freddy's slang terms distinguish him as the type of guy who is unconcerned about the rules of conventional moral behaviour. He is a realist who does much more wonderful than a philanthropist. Sidhwa skilfully conveys his lack of conformity through his unconventional use of English, which is pragmatic and polite. Sidhwa wonderfully captures the Parsi milieu in the pangs of transition by shedding light on their evolving dress styles. The costumes of the Parsis served as a form of group identification. Even in terms of clothing, however, there is a clear generation gap. Freddy and his family were proud of how they dressed in the past. His wife and mother-in-law never left the house without wearing their traditional garb.

Billy and Tanya, the very next generations of Parsis, gradually abandon traditional garb. Tanya, for example, kept her sari but made it more exposing. She grew more adventurous with her outfit, tying her sari in a way that highlighted her body's perfections. She started using cosmetics to draw attention to her stunning lips. Billy, on the other hand, is still a traditionalist when it comes to his attire. He advises and persuades Tanya not to expose her midriff so prominently, nor to look frankly and freely with other guys, lest her intentions be misunderstood. Even in male-female relationships, Freddy and afterwards his son Billy desire Tanya to appear westernised and speak English. Aside from their minority position, the Parsis high respect and admiration for the British was due to their religion's social code. The basic attitude of Zoroastrian adherents toward a ruler was one of royalty, which elevated Zoroastrianism to the status of a state religion, allowing for a strong relationship amongst the state and the exposition based on mutual support. Parsis only desired religious liberty and productivity from the ruling British government, and they obtained both.

It is a common observation of Indian and Pakistani people that they pray to God the most at times of difficulty or sadness. Similarly, Freddy becomes interested in religion only once he learns that his elder son is about to die. In this novel, Sidhwa aims to answer such questions by reproducing a fictional but typical narrative of a Parsi family and its social milieu. It is the earliest account of the Parsi intellect, social behaviour, value systems, and customs and it is the only novel of its sort. Bapsi Sidhwa, to her credit, rarely allows the novel to devolve into a sociological thesis. Cultural values have an important influence in forming and sculpting people's lives and ideas in each and every community. Cultural history refers to the sites, objects, and behaviours that society considers to be old, significant, and deserving of preservation. It is currently attracting more scholarly and popular worldwide attention, and its conceptual range is growing. Most social scientists highlight its role in promoting ethnic, national, and favoured interests, while others make clear it is innovative and counter-hegemonic aspects.

Cultural heritage is the legacy people inherit from the past, live within the present, and pass on to future generations. The phrases legacy and patrimony, which are used in Romance languages, are etymologically related to patrimony. They emphasise inheritance from the fathers or ancestors and relate to monuments passed down through the generations. The holiest among them all is fire. A lamp is usually kept glowing in Freddy's residence. The Parsis have a temple and the

fire in this mosque is imported from Iran and is treasured as a gesture of respect. It would be permitted if a Parsi guy marries other community female; but, if a Parsi girl marries other community boy, it will not be approved, and that girl will not be allowed to enter the temple. As they believe in astronomy and the stars; the fragrance of the sandalwood is smelt inside the home.

Initially if a boy or girl wants to get married, they should mix salt with water and it is offered to the elders of the family unknowingly. Yazdi actively used this strategy to try and convince his parents to allow him to marry Rosy, an Anglo-Indian girl. Marriage outside of the Parsi community is prohibited. This occurred in Yazdi's life well, previous to his father suspecting his elder brother and sister, as well as his grandmother. After learning that he simply does it to learn about his lover, he refused to consider his marriage because she is not from the Parsi community. The Parsis have festivals which always takes place after the sun has risen.

Burka is not worn by Parsi women. The Parsis have a tradition of burying their dead one at the tops of hills, where they are held to vulture. They saw offering their final remains to the vulture as a form of devotion. While *The Crow Eaters* addresses important cultural and historical themes, it is written in a light hearted, comical tone that parody aspects of Parsi culture and family life, yet it also addresses a wide range of issues in society. It is a black comedy, too. It is a comedy and satire genre in which issues and situations are typically addressed seriously or Logic is discussed in a humorous manner. The title, *The Crow Eaters* is based on an Indian proverb that describes persons who speak much more as having eaten crows. It clearly shows that Parsi speech is greatly louder, similar to screaming in other cultures. In the story, Jerbanoo is mentioned as she is usually interacting with the persons in her neighbourhood and has a different way of talking, particularly with her son-in-law. This novel portrays the Parsis's thinking, moral framework, social behaviour, and customs, as well as the Parsi society's daily life.

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