

Trade and Tradition in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters*.

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Abstract:

Humans differ from animals in many ways. They follow a religion, make their own money, follow rules of their geographical limit..Our Universe is filled with many communities and religion. In that, Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest communities in our world. Its origin is Persia, the people who follow are called 'Parsi' or 'Parsee'. Bapsi Sidhwa is a Parsi and also a spokeswoman for her community. The title *The Crow Eaters* represents ' talkative persons'. Naturally Parsis are talkative and it is shown in the title. This novel is based on the life history of a Parsi trader Faredoon Junglewalla.

KEY WORDS:

Business, Travel, Adaptation, Superstition, Rituals, Tradition

Introduction:

Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani-American novelist and women's right's activist. She belongs to Gujarati Parsi Zoroastrian descent. She wrote some novels. *The Crow Eaters* is her first published novel. She always feels happy for being a Parsi. She loves her tradition. FaredoonJunglewalla is the protagonist of the novel. He moves his family from his native place which is in central India to Lahore. His wife Putli is seven years younger to him. His mother-in-law Jerbanoo is a talkative and notorious woman. He has seven children and Hutoxi is the eldest one. Naturally Faredoon is a nice and sweet voice person but he gets irritated by his mother-in-law. He likes Lahore very much, so he places his shop there. He also gets many Parsi friends there. He is also a responsible father for his children. Soon he becomes a successful merchant. He follows some trickery steps to earn money. But being a Parsi he follows the rituals carefully and loves everyone with kind heart. In this novel one can see many Parsi rituals and their business tricks in many scenes. *The Crow Eaters* indirectly tells the history of Parsi in pre-partition time.

Tradition and Rituals in Bapsi Sidwa's *The Crow Eaters* :

Parsis are very unique people. They belong to one of the oldest religion "Zoroastrianism". Their ceremonies are also unique as it is a mixture of Hindu and Muslim rituals. Sidhwa beautifully portrays that in this novel. We can see Jerbanoo as a finest example for Parsi tradition. Through her character Parsis faith and tradition appears. She always wears 'Mathabana'. She blackens her eyes to protect from evil eyes. In Hinduism there is a faith called 'dhrishty'. To avoid them she makes some rituals like this to protect her. She also dips a meat membrane in turmeric and commands to it,

"Here protect me from evil spells",

Putli circles it around her head and flings it off the window to the crows. It shows how Parsis do and believe superstitious things. This title *The Crow Eaters* aptly suits to Jerbanoo as she is a talkative person and also eats like a horse whenever Freddy is away from his shop, basically Parsis are foodies. She prays five times a day. She always worries that there is no dokhma in Lahore. It represents "The Tower of Silence". Parsees believe that air, fire, water and earth are all holy things and after their death their dead bodies by connecting with these holy things may spoil them. To avoid that after their death they leave their bodies as a food for birds, because of that their death will become a useful one. They believe that contribution of their bodies to birds will vanquish their sins and their souls will reach God easily. Jerbanoo gets relax only when Freddy promises that after her death he will take her body to Karachi himself and deposit it in the Tower. Freddy consults a mystic to kill Jerbanoo. For that the mystic asks her hair, but Freddy fails in that. It shows how they believe in black magic. One day Jerbanoo catches a servant who smokes beedi. She scolds him for that and expels him from job. To Parsis smoking is a great sin.

Christians follow "The Bible", Muslims follow "Quran", likewise Parsis follow "Avesta". They do all rituals following the book. They believe in one god that is "Ahura Mazda". Parsis also believe in astrology. Their religion is based on Hinduism and also most of the Parsis believe that their customs are linked with Hindus and Muslims. So Freddy consults with a fortune teller. He predicts that Soli, the most affectionate of Freddy's son will die at the age of nineteen. This breaks Freddy's heart.

Like many other religious Zoroastrianism is also a male chauvinistic one. Women are dominated by men. Likewise in this novel also when Freddy goes out with his wife, she must be walking behind her husband. Some modern Parsis like Yazdi hate this type of culture. In fact Yazdi, the second son of Freddy loves an Anglo-Indian girl. Marriages outside their religion are prohibited in Zoroastrianism laws. But Yazdi breaks the law.

In Chapter 27 there is a gloomy atmosphere. It shows the death of Soli and his burial ceremony. Soli's body is carried to fire temple. All men and women wear white dress except Jerbanoo. She wears black dress according to her tradition, as white dress is prohibited to widow women during death ceremonies. In this way women are marginalized as inferior.

At the end of the fourth day ceremony, Freddy constructs a School at Karachi for the memory and welfare of the departed soul. Charity is considered as a holy thing in Zoroastrianism belief. So by doing this Freddy becomes holy and kind man. He also helps many poor and gets good name among his community.

Bride price is another different custom in Parsi culture. According to it groom gives cash or other valuables to bride. Billy, the last son of Freddy gives costly dress and other things to Tanya, his fiancée. 'HiraMandi' is a place for prostitution. Billy calls three girls from that place and learns sex education from them. Parsi girls don't learn about sex education, Billy wants to know it clearly and wants to dominate Tanya in sex life. So he learns that from such nasty doing.

Mada-Sara is another noble ceremony in Parsi culture. According to it the marriage couple plant a Mango sapling four days before their marriage. Parsis consider this as a symbol of fertility. Parsis also believe in rebirth. Freddy expects a male child from Billy. But Tanya gives birth to a female child. After some years she gives birth to a male child. Freddy believes that Soli is born again in the form of Billy's son. Parsis tradition is a cultural hybrid of Hindu and Muslim tradition.

BUSINESS AND TRADE IN *THE CROW EATERS*:

Parsis are calm in nature. They love a peaceful life. This character helps them to become great business personalities. When Freddy moves from his native place, he mingles with much kind of people. He gets acquaintance with toddywalas, chaiwalas, etc.,. He attracts

many people in Lahore, as he portrays himself as a helpful person. When Mr.Sodawala's son is desperately needed in help, he helps him not from his heart but to maintain his reputation in the Parsi community.

British rule also helps them to develop Parsis business in India. Because Britishers believe that Parsi community is very small and they are very calm people, so they won't do anything against British rule. Freddy also like them.He wears splendid clothes when he visits the government office and he never forget to sign in the visitor's book to show his loyalty towards British Raj.

Freddy constructs many orphanages and hospitals. He installs a water pump with a stone plaque dedicating it to his friend Mr. Charles P. Allen. But there is a purpose in that. We know that Freddy don't do any good matters without a purpose. His friend Allen is a British officer of higher post, so he did this for his future help. Freddy is a tricky man in business also. He never does good things to develop his business in a direct manner. When he faced loss in his business he planned a trick. He fires his own shop to get insurance money but without things in it. When investigation officers came to investigate ,nearby shop owners and neighbours help him without knowing his trick. His reputation helps to save him. Freddy hates Jerbanoo because she always talks rudely and eats sweets and snacks from his shop. He thinks his business spoils because of this. So he always behaves "In business family is next". His attitude is seen here.

CONCLUSION:

The Crow Eaters is a kind of historical document as it shows the Parsis unique culture. Trade and Tradition are their two eyes. Parsis are very low in population but they are rich in society. In India many Parsis contribute for the development of the government. For example we can take Ratan Tata. In *The Crow Eaters* Sidhwa attempts to establish Parsi community as

a unique community like other communities .They have their own tradition and rituals. Sometimes it seems ironic but no doubt *The Crow Eaters* is the masterpiece of Parsi writing.

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ISSN:0976-8165.2017.Print.