

A THEMATIC STUDY OF THE EXPOSITION IN SELECTED NOVELS OF BAPSI SIDHWA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines exposition of the plot in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) and *Water* (2006) to introduce characters, settings, and central conflicts, serving as a precursor to the novels' major thematic concerns. Employing a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in Seymour Chatman's structuralist narratology, particularly his distinction between story and discourse, the analysis explores the effect of expository passages on readers' understanding of gender oppression, cultural memory, trauma, and ideological critique. In *Water*, the widow ashram functions as a symbol of patriarchal, religious, and economic subjugation, while Chuyia's forced marriage reflects systemic discrimination. In *Ice-Candy Man*, the child narrator Lenny presents pre-Partition Lahore, subtly anticipating communal violence and the commodification of Ayah's body. Exposition in both novels operates not as mere background but as a thematic device, establishing early ideological frameworks that reveal patriarchy, trauma, gender vulnerability, and cultural fragmentation.

Keywords: *Gender Oppression, Childhood Innocence, Partition, Historical Trauma, Patriarchy, Narrative Strategy*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Anglophone South Asian fiction has emerged as a significant literary tradition that highlights the historical, cultural, and political realities shaped by colonialism and its aftermath (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2002; Boehmer, 2005). Within this tradition, writers often introduce themes such as identity formation, power relations, cultural displacement, and the legacy of imperialism through carefully structured narratives (Boehmer, 2005). Pakistani English literature particularly reflects postcolonial experiences including Partition, religious conflict, gender inequality, and minority identity negotiations (Didur, 2006; Kaur, 2007). In this context, Bapsi Sidhwa's novels *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) and *Water* (2006) present these issues from the very beginning of the narrative. The exposition of these novels introduces themes of historical trauma, patriarchal control, and social inequality, shaping the reader's understanding of the conflicts and ideological concerns developed throughout the narrative (Niaz, 2012).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The outstanding contributions of Sidhwa to the English literature that include the unwritten expository structures are a new field of exploration in research. An important

aspect of plot, exposition, has not been fully examined in Sidhwa work e.g. *Water* and *Ice-Candy Man*. This research gap does not give an idea of how narrative form influences plot development. These novels portray gender, dislocation and socio-political turmoil, so the chance to explore them in terms of Chatman structuralist narrative theory would offer more insight into how the story-telling by Sidhwa is constructed to engage the reader more. The thesis points out that a textual analysis of her expository strategies is necessary, with particular attention to their importance to the interpretation of meaning and historical representation.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the exposition in *Water* and *Ice-Candy Man* by analyzing how Sidhwa introduces characters, settings, and central conflicts in the selected novels.
2. To compare the thematic elements employed in the exposition of the selected novels.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How does Sidhwa construct the exposition in *Water* and *Ice-Candy Man* through the presentation of characters, settings, and central conflicts?
2. What similarities and differences can be identified in the thematic elements employed in the exposition of *Water* and *Ice-Candy Man*?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study highlights exposition as a structural narrative element, showing how Sidhwa uses it to shape interpretation, critique gender and culture, and serve as a site of historical consciousness and cultural memory.

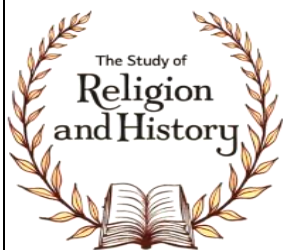
1.6 Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to the discussion of expository texts in the novels *Water* (2006) and *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) by Bapsi Sidhwa.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Narratological exposition provides contextual information about characters, settings, time, and preceding situations that support the main action. Modern theory views it not merely as background but as an ideological entry point revealing marginalized voices and suppressed histories (Genette, 1980; Bal, 1997). Scholars such as Genette (1980) and Chatman (1978) explain exposition as both a structural and communicative narrative device.

In postcolonial criticism, exposition is connected to broader questions of how history, culture, and identity are presented to readers (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002). Writers such as Anita Desai, Kamila Shamsie, and Bapsi Sidhwa use exposition not only to introduce settings and characters but also to challenge colonial representations and highlight marginalized communities. In novels like *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1983), *Ice-Candy Man* (1998), *An American Brat* (1993), and *Water* (2006), exposition subtly introduces themes of gender, identity, displacement, and cultural negotiation (Dodiya, 2006; Didur, 2006; Spivak, 1988).



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Feminist criticism interprets exposition as a narrative strategy that reveals the everyday realities of women and the social institutions sustaining gender inequality (Showalter, 1991). In South Asian literature, exposition also functions as a cultural and ideological device. According to Boehmer (2005), many postcolonial writers reshape traditional exposition to challenge colonial representations and emphasize cultural specificity. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, the child narrator Lenny introduces an atmosphere of communal harmony that later intensifies the impact of violence (Kaur, 2007). Similarly, *Water* opens with the widow ashram, recalling historical memories of religious orthodoxy and gender oppression (Hirsch, 1997). Such openings demonstrate that exposition operates not only as a narrative introduction but also as a site where history, identity, and gender relations are critically represented (Genette, 1980; Chatman, 1978; Ashcroft et al., 2002; Spivak, 1988).

A study examines Nietzschean master and slave morality in *The Bride* (1983), highlighting contrasting ethical frameworks and their societal implications (Ubaid et al., 2024). Bapsi Sidhwa is a prominent representative of Anglophone literature in Pakistan and South Asia, and her works have attracted significant attention from postcolonial, feminist, diasporic, and narratological critics. Her novels are recognized for their narrative richness and their engagement with themes such as historical trauma, gender relations, and cultural identity. As a Parsi woman writing in English, Sidhwa occupies a unique marginal position that reflects minority identity and cultural hybridity, allowing her fiction to portray both local realities and broader cultural complexities (Boehmer, 2005). Critics note that in her works exposition functions not merely as background narration but also as a thematic device that introduces cultural codes and social tensions shaping the narrative.

In *Ice-Candy Man* (1988; published in the United States as *Cracking India*), the violence of the 1947 Partition is presented through the perspective of the child narrator Lenny. The early descriptive passages about her ayah, neighbors, and everyday life establish a sense of communal harmony that later contrasts sharply with the destruction brought by Partition (Kaur, 2007; Didur, 2006). This narrative strategy highlights themes of innocence, vulnerability, and cultural pluralism. Similarly, *An American Brat* (1993) explores migration, cultural adaptation, and generational conflict through the story of Feroza, a young Parsi woman who moves from Pakistan to the United States. Scholars often interpret its exposition within diaspora studies, noting how it introduces contrasts between conservative Pakistani society and the liberal American environment, thereby foreshadowing themes of identity negotiation and transnational hybridity (Shamsie, 2005; Boehmer, 2005).

Critics emphasize that in Sidhwa's fiction exposition functions not merely as background narration but as a thematic device that reveals cultural codes shaping narrative conflicts. Her well-known novel *Ice-Candy Man* (1988; published in the United States as *Cracking India*) portrays the violence of the 1947 Partition through the child narrator Lenny. The early descriptions of her ayah, neighbors, and daily life establish a sense of communal harmony that is later shattered, highlighting themes of innocence, vulnerability, and cultural pluralism (Kaur, 2007; Didur, 2006). The novel has attracted significant scholarly attention for its portrayal of Partition trauma, the suffering of women, and its use of a child narrator. Similarly, *An American Brat* (1993) explores immigration, cultural adjustment, and generational conflict through the story of Feroza, a young Parsi girl who moves between

Pakistan and the United States. The contrast between conservative Pakistani society and the comparatively liberal American environment foregrounds issues of identity negotiation and hybridity (Shamsie, 2005).

Scholars often interpret this narrative strategy within diaspora studies, where exposition functions as a comparative mechanism that foreshadows migration tensions, value negotiation, and transnational identity (Boehmer, 2005). In *Water* (2006), based on the story by Deepa Mehta, Sidhwa addresses the oppressive institution of Hindu widowhood in colonial India. The detailed exposition of the widow ashram introduces themes related to tradition, religion, and women's rights, functioning as a critique of patriarchal structures (Niaz, 2012). These openings encourage readers to recognize the intersections of patriarchy, religion, colonial social systems, and history that marginalize widows. Scholars also note that Sidhwa's feminist concerns are central to her fiction, particularly in exposing systemic gender oppression in South Asian societies. In this context, exposition situates personal narratives within broader cultural and historical frameworks of patriarchy while also serving as a form of cultural memory that records the trauma of events such as Partition (Boehmer, 2005; Kaur, 2007).

In South Asian Anglophone fiction, exposition is often used to provide the social and cultural background that corrects gaps in colonial narratives that overlooked or misrepresented local realities. These descriptions highlight the coexistence of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Parsees, restoring a vision of communal harmony often absent from colonial and nationalist histories (Kaur, 2007). As the narrative progresses, the violence of Partition destroys this harmony, turning exposition into a form of cultural memory that records what has been lost. Similarly, in *The Bride* (1983), early descriptions of tribal traditions and honor codes establish the patriarchal system that shapes Zaitoon's tragic fate (Didur, 2006). In *The Crow Eaters* (1978), exposition humorously portrays the Parsee community while also reflecting anxieties about cultural survival and minority identity (Dodiya, 2006).

Likewise, the opening of *An American Brat* (1993) introduces the conservative Parsi family environment in Pakistan, which later contrasts with Feroza's experiences in the United States and highlights issues of diaspora and identity negotiation (Boehmer, 2005). In *Water* (2006), the exposition describing the widow ashram exposes the oppressive religious and social structures of colonial India (Niaz, 2012). These examples show that exposition in postcolonial fiction performs multiple roles: preserving cultural memory, critiquing ideological structures, and constructing identity. It documents social practices and communal life, critiques systems such as patriarchy and religious authority, and foregrounds marginalized experiences within historical narratives (Kaur, 2007; Didur, 2006; Niaz, 2012).

In Sidhwa's novels, exposition functions as a feminist tool, revealing gendered identities and cultural constraints within South Asian contexts. In *The Crow Eaters* (1978), humor highlights women's marginalization in patriarchal and minority structures (Dodiya, 2006). *An American Brat* (1993) and *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) depict women's obedience, rebellion, and intersectional identity shaped by family, community, and history (Boehmer, 2005; Gilbert & Gubar, 1979; Showalter, 1991). Exposition centers women's voices,

countering homogenization (Mohanty, 1988) and colonial erasure (Spivak, 1988), making it both a thematic and pedagogical device.

This way, Sidhwa adheres to the concept of nearby speaking as indicated by Minh-ha (1989). She puts emphasis on the experiences of women as they are central yet does not present herself as being in full representation of women. She sheds light on gender and identity also as a way of addressing both the communal and national concerns. The women of South Asia have been regarded as beacons of national purity and pride (Chatterjee, 1993) amongst them Sidhwa questions these ideas in her narratives. The fact that *Ice Candy Man* Places Ayah as a symbol and that she is abducted is also connected to national abuse. Likewise, the story of Zaitoon in *The Bride* depicts the bodies of women turned into the landscapes of cultural tradition and male regulations. These themes help Sidhwa condemn nationalistic narratives exploiting the identities of women.

A key gap in the literature is the limited analysis of how Sidhwa's exposition positions women within domestic and cultural frameworks, establishing patriarchal constraints and social hierarchies before narrative conflicts unfold.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive design to analyze Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* and *Ice-Candy Man*, exploring how literary style, symbolism, and characterization reveal patriarchy, gender oppression, and historical trauma.

3.2 Data Collection

This study used primary sources, Sidhwa's *Water* (2006) and *Ice-Candy Man* (1988), analyzed through close reading of expositions, and secondary sources including journals and books, applying feminist, postcolonial, trauma, and memory studies to interpret gender, patriarchy, and historical trauma.

3.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis serves as the method for the analysis of data in this research. This approach was chosen for its capacity to facilitate the identification, systematization, organization, and interpretation of patterns and themes of the expositions of the novels. The study follows the research of Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis, where the study involves close reading, coding, and categorizing motifs, images, and narrative strategies that recur. I focus on a number of themes in detail that include; gender oppression, childhood innocence, and religion, as well as desire, communal harmony, and historical trauma. Each of these is introduced in the exposition and is analyzed for its ability to foreshadow the novels' broader unresolved conflicts.

The interpretive and comparative thematic analysis takes a distinct approach. It juxtaposes the themes to elaborate on the intertextual relationships, for example, convergence and divergence between *Water* and *Ice-Candy Man*. Both novels place an emphasis on childhood innocence as a fictional technique but to different aims: in *Water*, bewildered resistance of Chuyia is a technique of emphasizing cultural oppression, whereas in *Ice-Candy Man* bewildered resistance of Lenny is a technique of eliminating irony of Partition. This

thematic analysis compares enables the work to get beyond the single readings to a larger argument about the narrative strategies of Sidhwa, and whether he demonstrates this argument as a critique on patriarchal and communal structures.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Structuralist Narrative Theory by Seymour Chatman (1980) to examine how Bapsi Sidhwa utilizes the feature of exposition in her books *Water* and *Ice-Candy-Man* to explore and explicate the thematic points behind the story. The analysis of how Sidhwa opens his novels structurally and thematically was presented using the concepts of story, described as the succession of events, actions, and characters, and discourse, which is the style, manner, and perspective in which these events take place, which was provided by Chatman. Therefore, the study viewed the expository passages written by Sidhwa as producing intricate narrative spaces that structure the events, present major ideas, and precondition the central themes of the novels. The theoretical context particularly became useful in discovering how the themes of gendered power relations, patriarchal oppression, loss of childhood innocence, religious control and spatial symbolism become incorporated in the expository context.

The discourse focus as suggested by Chatman helped in the analysis of the application of narrative voice, focalization and pacing as psychological and sociological instruments that construct the fictional worlds of Sidhwa. Moreover, his theory of the implied author led to the understanding of the moral and ideological stands that were implicitly seen through the stories, and that led to an exposure of criticisms of the patriarchal authority and of religious hypocrisy in the work of Sidhwa, who did this indirectly, of the time. The framework provided by Chatman allowed the researcher to perceive exposition as a highly structured and thematically important constituent of the narrative instead of a mere patinaic locution. The interplay of story and discourse helped to understand that the descriptive strategies, sequencing, and focal perspectives adopted by Sidhwa are used to generate meaning, reflect cultural hierarchies, and shape the perception of the reader at the first pages of the texts. The images of childhood innocence and its loss, destructive influence of religion and symbolic illustrations of closed spaces were interpreted as deliberate narrative decisions as opposed to the background details.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Exposition in *Ice-Candy Man*

4.1.1 Innocence and Childhood as Expository Frames

In *Ice-Candy Man*, childhood innocence functions as a key expository frame through which the social and political world of pre-Partition India is introduced. The first-person narration of Lenny, a young Parsee girl, operates as a deliberate narrative technique that shapes the reader's early perception of events. Drawing on Seymour Chatman's theory of narrative discourse, exposition orients the reader to characters, setting, and value systems. Lenny's limited understanding allows complex social relations to appear as ordinary interactions in multicultural Lahore, initially creating an image of harmony among Hindus,

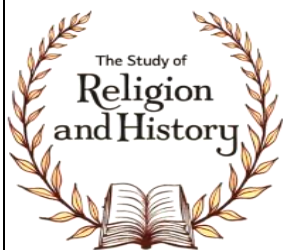
Muslims, Sikhs, and Parsees. This apparent normalcy later intensifies the shock of Partition violence. Lenny's physical vulnerability and observational position further situate the narrative within a marginalized perspective. Through this strategy, Sidhwa uses childhood innocence not merely as a viewpoint but as a structural device that anticipates conflict and frames Partition as a profound human tragedy.

"Women's experiences during violence are conveyed through memory and observation rather than direct articulation, allowing silence to shape meaning within the narrative"(Sidhwa ,1988, p. 92). These lines are examples of the difference between story and discourse formulated by Seymour Chatman. The historical acts of violence in partition are narrated within a narrative but the narrative discourse subjects the events to the memory, observation and silence. No deliberate articulation takes place, thus, absence is one of the elements of the story of great power. Chatman emphasizes that the events are not important in meaning of narrative, but rather how the narrator tells the story. Sidhwa makes the reader in the privileged position as the active reader of trauma through the privilege of silence and memory and so fills in the gaps of the explicit narrative, making up the holes where the explicit narrative is not told. This is reflective of a bigger strategy that the entire novel is pursuing in that what is unspoken can be more emotional than description. The silence turns out to be a reflection space in the narrative as the reader gets an opportunity to feel the unresolved and long term effects of the Partition on women.

4.1.2 Gendered Spaces and Early Positioning of Women

In *Ice-Candy Man*, exposition is decisive in the building of gendered spaces that dictate before the narrative reaches a point of visible conflict the social position of women. Based on the difference between story (what happens) and discourse (how it is told), as proposed by Seymour Chatman it is possible to interpret the expository sections of the novel as the narrative discourse which simply structures meaning instead of presenting background information. By delicately portraying domestic, communal and public spaces in the first segments, Sidhwa creates a hierarchy of space that controls the mobility, agency, and visibility of the women. Such gendered spaces play the ideological roles of placing women into patriarchal structures preceding the outbreak of violence in Partition. Feminist narratology highlights that space in narrative can never be neutral; it is culturally coded and ideologically charged. During the expository part of *Ice-Candy Man*, women are largely presented inside domestic spaces, homes, kitchens, courtyards, and closed social spaces whereas the men are in the streets, markets, and political arenas. This physical separation mirrors that which the feminist critics refer to as the binary of the public and the private, which forms the patriarchal social order. Instead of explicating this binary, Sidhwa anticipates it with the placement of the narrative itself by enabling one to realize how the life of women is organized by spatial limitation early on in the book.

In *Ice-Candy Man*, the spatial positioning of female characters functions as an important element of exposition. Women are largely confined to domestic or restricted spaces, which implies their vulnerability during later social and political turmoil. According to Seymour Chatman's theory of narrative progression, exposition establishes the "normal



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world” against which later disruptions are measured. In the novel, this normal world is already gendered and unequal, where women’s confinement appears socially acceptable, revealing the deep roots of patriarchal ideology. Through the observational perspective of Lenny, the child narrator, these gender divisions appear natural rather than oppressive. This narrative strategy aligns with Gérard Genette’s concept of focalization, where the filtering consciousness shapes perception. Characters like Ayah occupy semi-public spaces, suggesting limited mobility rather than freedom. Her visibility in male-dominated settings signals vulnerability and control, reinforcing the idea that domestic spaces function simultaneously as protection and containment.

The initial depiction of women at homes would give the illusion of security which is broken later by the violence of the community. The illusion, however is itself a narrative creation made through exposition. Sidhwa emphasizes the instability of the female security in the patriarchal systems by first introducing the domestic spaces as a stable and well-organized world. Later violence in these space in the story shows that the lines between the social mayhem and privacy were never rigid. Exposition therefore works as one that reveals the illusionary fixity of spatial arrangements that are gendered. Expository space serves an ideological purpose that can be better understood in the light of the feminist spatial theory which highlights how female bodies are dominated by space as a key way of controlling them. During the expository stage of *Ice-Candy Man*, the bodies of women are placed in the space that does not allow movement or visibility. These territorial limits are not imposed in the form of overt coercion but by the expectation of culture as well as social norms. The narrative discourse provided by Sidhwa renders these restrictions explicit since they are placed in the middle of the common accounts of everyday life.

The absence of direct opposition at the stage of exposition accentuates the extent of internalized patriarchy. Besides, the expository arrangement of gendered spaces is a source of the development of the theme of vulnerability and loss of innocence. The geographical isolation of females is similar to the narrative infantilization of childhood, implying similar status of low agency. Women and children have a marginalized status in the social hierarchy that is introduced in exposition. This juxtaposition supports the theme of power in the novel which suppresses other voices but favors adult masculinity. Through the convergence of gendered space and narrative innocence, Sidhwa brings out the systemic aspect of marginalization. exposition is an ideological encoding place instead of being a neutral description place. This is especially true of the claim by Genette that narrative beginnings orient the readers towards interpretive structures. The initial spatial placement of women makes readers perceive the events that occur later not as a break down but as the logical conclusion of a set of social values. Expository spatial structures that deprive women of their autonomy and safety come as a premonition to the abduction and violation of women in Partition.

“The narrative of Partition unfolds through disrupted chronology, allowing emotional memory to override linear historical sequencing” (Sidhwa ,1988, p. 134). These lines described as a mirror of the concept of narrative temporality by Chatman. The break with the chronological order becomes a forerunner to

emotional memory, which makes the experience of the trauma subjective. The structure of telling the story in a nonlinear way recreates the disjointed memory of the trauma victims, who cannot forget their past, as the recollections disrupt the continuity of linear history. This narrative technique enables Partition to be felt as a continuous cycle of psychological and emotional reality and not a closed historical event. The arrangement and sequence of events in the discourse, according to Chatman have a direct influence on interpretation. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, scenes like the recollections of Lenny about the riots of the communities mixed with his personal experience demonstrate how memory affects the perception supporting the clash of the personal experience and the history.

In this way, exposition is structurally a basis of thematic continuity. Tenderization of spaces in *Ice-Candy Man* also increases their ideological value due to the cultural specificity. Sidhwa places women in settings that people can identify with culturally in the South Asian social setups. These are not abstract spaces but inhabited environments that are influenced by tradition, religion and social hierarchy. Feminist critics say that gender inequality is normalized through cultural traditions and disguised as heritage or custom. Through the exposition of these spaces without expressly criticizing them, Sidhwa enables the readers to see the way in which patriarchy becomes effected through cultural legitimacy. Notably, the expository placement of women also overlaps with the minority identity. Being a part of a religious and cultural minority, female characters suffer a complex marginalization. Their physical incarceration is gendered and group susceptibility. This intersecting stance makes the story more difficult and it indicates that the experience of space by women cannot be interpreted by gender but needs to be interpreted with respect to religious and ethnic identity. These overlapping identities are presented in an indirect way through exposition and this prepares a reader to later forms of violence that are compound. Unlike the male characters that take up spaces that are attributed to authority and movement, the spatial location of women in exposition is indicative of what is termed by feminist theoreticians as contained subjectivity. They are people whose identities are geographical as opposed to action oriented. This distinction is further supported in the narrative discourse of Sidhwa where narrative attention is distributed in spaces in different ways. Male spaces are correlated with the dialogue, decision-making, and political consciousness, whereas female spaces are focused on routine, care, and silence. Such narrative distribution is a part of the thematic critique of gendered power.

The descriptive demonstration of the gendered spaces ends up demonstrating how patriarchy is primary and facilitates historical violence. Partition does not add gender oppression to the story, it exacerbates the already existing situation. By introducing the gendered inequality into the narrative structure in the beginning, Sidhwa makes sure that the readers would be aware of the continuum of ordinary patriarchy and extraordinary violence. Exposition is therefore an ideological preparation and not a dispassionate introduction. Conclusively, *Ice-Candy Man* uses exposition as a tactical means of narration to place women in gendered spaces restricting agency and subjugating patriarchal values. These expository sections may be viewed through the prism of the narrative theory and feminist

critique as active elements of meaning-making. They define spatial hierarchies, naturalize gender inequality and predetermine further acts of violence. Quite on the contrary, exposition is a critical framework that functions as a background, that thematized the narrative in a systematic manner and stresses the systemic quality of women marginalization in the story.

“Female characters appear within the Partition narrative primarily as witnesses, with their roles shaped by observation rather than narrative authority” (Sidhwa ,1988, p. 117). These lines are aligned to the narrative roles and agency of characters’ theory presented by Chatman. The plot of the *Ice-Candy-Man* revolves around women, although the discourse of most of the situations does not permit women to be part of the process directly, making them observers rather than partakers. It is easier to stress in this way that the systemic marginalization of females is inherent in society and the narrative structure because female characters are introduced as witnesses. Chatman believes that divergences between the actions of a character and what the character’s report on contribute to making the readers build the impression of hierarchies in social and power relations. The narrative of marginalization of women takes place in the following manner: it is structurally marginalized, not a narrative of women themselves, but rather as it is portrayed through their recollections and testimonies. This restriction can be observed in those instances that are witnessing or condoning violence tacitly by women, who become witnesses but do not act, and that is a way of social commentary by the author, via plot rather than didacticism.

4.2 Exposition and Patriarchy in *Water*

In *Water*, exposition establishes patriarchy as an institutionalized system shaping the narrative world. Drawing on Seymour Chatman’s distinction between story and discourse, the early depiction of the widow ashram frames widowhood as a socially imposed identity, revealing patriarchy as a normalized ideological structure governing women’s lives.

4.2.1 Widowhood as Institutional Space

The way the expository presentation of the widow's ashram in *Water* is organized shows the patriarchal arrangement of space and the social change of the society. Since the ashram is introduced the moment, it is not represented as a living environment but as an institutionalized institution, which is meant to control female bodies, desires and identities. The ashram is what Michel Foucault calls a disciplinary space- a space that involves surveillance, restriction and normalization. Though Foucault's theory is not directly referred in the story, the expository illustration of the ashram has the reflection of similar mechanisms of control. These physical and social limitations of the widow ashram which made it isolated in the mainstream society has been well expounded by Sidhwa. Such spatial division supports the ideological assumption of widows being out of the social order. This exposition is facilitated by the introduction of the ashram early in the story so that the audience can know that widowhood is not a transition period but a permanent state. The women are placed as dead in the society, locked in a room where they are crippled to their lost marriage. This is in line with feminist criticisms of the patriarchal societies where women and their marital status are equated. Narratively, the expository focus on space comes before characterization, which

implies that the personal identity of people is less significant when compared to the institutional duty. The widows are introduced in groups and not singly which further confirms their elimination as subjects of their own.

This method demonstrates the fact that the meaning of the narrative is often coded into structural decisions, not through literal commentary, as considered by Chatman. The exposition is not a direct argument against the patriarchy, but it gives an opportunity to see the oppressive character of the institution come out of description by the narration. Moreover, the ashram is a gendered place, which enhances ideological control by routine and repetition. The narrative is expository and shows such daily practices as fasting, prayer, and silence, as means of internalized discipline. According to feminist theorists, patriarchy frequently depends on internalizing of restrictive norms by the women and this exposition by Sidhwa illustrates this kind of process as the widows are taught to internalize deprivation as an act of moral goodness. It is also important to note that the expository parts lack any obvious opposition, which highlights the extent of ideological conditioning. The exposition within the *Water* makes the change in the centre of analysis to be based on structural oppression as opposed to individual suffering by introducing widowhood as an institutional space and not as a personal one. This plot device sets the reader up to perceive subsequent conflicts as results of structural patriarchy, and not singular instances of barbarity. Therefore, exposition is a critical paradigm by which the feminist issues raised by the novel are expressed.

“Women’s lives are structured around repetitive rituals, where routine replaces progression and tradition governs identity” (Sidhwa, 2006, p. 41). These lines explain the meaning that comes about due to repetition in a story. The numerous occasions of repetition of the routine rituals emphasize the existence of widows as being circular and in stasis and routine becomes a sort of oppression. Once again restating that ritualized behavior is extremely tiresome, the narrative discourse also places the ashram not only as a geographical setting, but also the ashram as a social control system. Repetition is a signifier of assurance or in this instance, forced constraint according to Chatman, which constitutes a rhythmic effect of narrative that enhances structural oppression of women. Each time one feeds, bathes, cleans, it is a narrative device, and it transfers the naturalization of restriction without being told.

4.2.2 Religious Ideology in Expository Narration

In *Water*, religion functions as a key ideological force that legitimizes patriarchy through expository narration. Rather than presenting religion as background belief, the narrative frames it as a social authority shaping attitudes toward widows. This strategy aligns with Louis Althusser’s concept of ideological state apparatuses, where institutions such as religion normalize power relations. Religious doctrines on widowhood are presented as unquestioned social truths, illustrating how patriarchy operates through cultural acceptance rather than direct coercion. Through communal voices and everyday practices, the exposition reveals how widows internalize oppression as religious duty. This narrative framing

anticipates later exploitation and abuse, presenting them not as isolated events but as consequences of an ideological system embedded in religious discourse.

“Emotional expression is restrained through minimal dialogue and prolonged silence, allowing visual stillness to communicate meaning” (Sidhwa, 2006, p. 58). The text denotes the distinction between telling and showing as Chatman interprets them. Rather than describing the emotion through dialogue Mehta brings about an impression through visual narration i.e. gestures, facial expression, and immobility to represent the affective experience. The viewers engage in meaning making, which enhances emphatics in the story. Silence and visual stress has been considered as a form of discourse that builds perception and the viewer can internalize the long-term effect of oppression which is implicit. Absence of verbal exposition or in the terms of Chatman, amplifies the hermeneutical power of the audience and according to Chatman the capacity to curb oneself is a narrative device of meaning-making.

4.2.3 Exposition as Feminist Narrative Strategy in *Water*

Combined with the expository tools in *Water*, the narrative beginnings, coded with feminist critique, do not use polemic explicitness. The exposition used by Sidhwa is relevant to feminist narratology, which focuses on the ways in which narrative patterns are constitutive of social power relations. The exposition makes women oppression to be both normalized and structural by foregrounding patriarchy, using institutional spaces and religious ideology. This analytical importance of this strategy is that it allows the interpretation of the reader prior to the development of narrative conflict. *Water* makes it clear that the readers are brought to the plot with a realization of ideological forces that control the life of women. Such framing of the story counters the conventional approaches of reading where the focus on dramatic action supersedes the structural analysis. Rather, Sidhwa encourages the readers to acknowledge that violence and exploitation are embedded in daily social activities presented at the beginning of the narration. In that regard, the exposition serves the purpose of a feminist intervention in forcing readers to respond to the normalized practice of patriarchy. The widow ashram and religion discourse is not just the narrative setting but ideological construction that makes women's subjectivities. In projecting these constructs in exposition, Sidhwa illustrates how narrative itself can be even a critical instrument.

“The slow pacing of the narrative emphasizes endurance rather than resolution, allowing oppression to appear normalized over time” (Sidhwa, 2006, p. 76). The progressive pace of the novel gives the argument that Chatman puts across, the interpretation being manipulated in the utilisation of time. The narrative time is extended, and the discourse revolves around the sustained agony, but not about the definite events, it creates the oppression as the order of things, as natural. Waiting, chores, silence of observation all waste more time of the audience to get used to the pain that women undergo and build the sense of sympathy and critical thinking. Chatman adds that pacing is a structural tool that affects the audience response and in *Water*, the sluggish narrative rhythm is the echo of the irresistible rhythm of being imprisoned and excluded.

4.2.4 Innocence and Irony

One of the most striking exposition features in *Ice-Candy Man* is the irony-innocence clash of the structure and one of the points that can be examined concerning the narration is the structuralist difference that exists between the story (what is told) and discourse (how it is told) by Seymour Chatman (Chatman, 1978). It can be seen that even though the events of Partition and communal tension are included in the level of story, the choice of an innocent child narrator is included in the level of discourse. It is out of this manipulation of discourse that dramatic irony is produced. It is full of naivety, immediacy and naked honesty in the narration of Lenny. She perceives the world as a game which is amusing and a miracle.

However, Chatman (1978) believes that the meaning of a narration is not dictated by the narrator but by the implied author who organizes the discourse in a way so that the readers can read other than what the narrator wanted to pass across to the readers. In this case, the implied author Sidhwa allows Lenny to explain the events of the story innocently but it is upon the adult reader to notice the drives of sexuality, desire and instability of community. This is clearly observed in the introductory chapters as Lenny explains the congregation of Ayah adherents with some form of happiness. She also enjoys their jokes, fights and laughs and even explains how she is able to laugh harder than any other person despite being out of breath (*Ice-Candy Man*, p. 6). This is reflected on the level of tale, a social game. However, on the discourse level, the supposed author depicts the following scenes like that, she demonstrates rivalry and jealous male desire on Ayah, her body.

It provides amusement to the child narrator as well as sexual tension and patriarchal competitions to the reader. Chatman (1978) explains the application of narrative communication in different levels, which include: real author-implied author-narrator-narrate-implied reader-real reader. The writer who wrote *Ice-Candy man* had made an implied limitation on the knowledge of the narrator and that is what Wayne Booth (1961) considers as dramatic irony. The reader develops a deeper interpretation since Lenny is having half knowledge. Knowledge gap between the narrator and the reader forms a two-dimensional form of the discourse of the obvious innocence and the concealed threat. This ironic distance itself is structurally a replica of the historical condition of Partition itself. The world that Lengyel lives in, like the one that Lenny lives in is as naive as possible yet a danger lurks, pre-Partition Lahore is as peaceful as it can be and communal violence is imminent. It is through discourse control that Sidhwa gets into this irony of the exposition. The parentheses of the multicultural environment are first presented in an idyllic manner, but the shape the story takes lets the reader know that the environment is weak.

In *Ice-Candy Man*, innocence functions as a structural device that anticipates its own loss. Drawing on Seymour Chatman, Sidhwa's child focalization produces dramatic irony, where Lenny's naïve observations conceal aggression and desire, foreshadowing the collapse of innocence, patriarchal violence, and the catastrophic upheaval of Partition.

"Each day folded into the next, a seamless chain of rituals that left no space for hope or individuality" (Sidhwa, 2006, p. 78). These lines show the contribution of the visual and

temporal strategies in discourse in the formation of meaning. It is produced by the silence, repetition, and pacing, which makes the oppression look like something ordinary and continuous. By making the story in that way, Mehta uses narrative mediation as the means of enriching the knowledge of the audience and this practice is comparable to the theory of Chatman, who claims that the meaning is formed in the discourse and not solely in the events.

In theory the irony in the straightforward narration of Lenny is connected with a postcolonial and feminist view of suppressed voices or muted voices. Gayatri Spivak (1988) claims that not all voices of colonial and patriarchal systems can be fully represented, as some of them are subaltern. Lenny does not sit back, but age and absence of understanding makes her a restricted narrator. She is able to describe and unable to interpret, to witness and unable to explain. This limitation empowers the reader who is required to provide missing meaning and be part of the reading process. This irony also increases the criticism of patriarchy and communalism. As Lenny fails to realize that there is something wrong with the men being so obsessed with Ayah, the reader experiences the danger at an even greater level. This comparison heightens tension. The child narrates what is going on in a playful tone since it is not a normal case; the desire and competition add the undertones a scare of more frightening. By doing so, innocence does not act as a shield. On the contrary, it reveals the disconnect between the outward appearance and what goes into reality.

5.0 KEY FINDINGS CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Key Findings

The current research aims to analyze exposition as a narrative device in *Ice-Candy Man* and *Water* by Bapsi Sidhwa using structuralist narratology, specifically the differentiation between discourse and story by Seymour Chatman. The major discovery of this study is that exposition in both novels is an active ideological and thematic structure and not a dispassionate introduction of the narrative. Expositions in the fiction of Sidhwa systematically locate characters, space and social relationships in such a manner that foreshadows future conflicts and frames the subsequent interpretation on the part of the readers. Among the important conclusions is that the exposition in *Ice-Candy Man* creates childhood innocence as a narrative tool that filters historical trauma. The initial introduction of Lahore as an ethnically diverse and unified territory told through the lens of a child creates an emotional and ideological contrast and makes the violence of Partition stronger. This is in accordance with the fact that discourse organization determines the perception of story events as represented by Chatman. The exposition is not weakened by the limited knowledge of the child narrator but on the contrary enhances its ideological power through ex-post facto innocence that is precluded by a sense of bursting innocence. Therefore, exposition is one of the locations where loss is expected instead of retrospectively described.

The other important observation is the place of spatial exposition in locating women in the patriarchal societies. In *Ice-Candy Man*, domestic and communal areas presented at the beginning of the story are gendered areas that govern the mobility and presence of females. Women are enclosed by family and social organizations in expository narration even before

explicit violence has been meted on them. This reinforces the argument of the study that exposition is a process of ideological conditioning, which equips the reader to perceive the vulnerability of women as being produced structurally and not accidentally. The role of exposition is even more thoroughly institutional in *Water*. The initial representation of the widow ashram, sets widowhood as a controlled social status that is controlled by religious ideology. The analysis concludes that this expository framing takes away personal agency of widowed women at the dawn of the story.

Exposition in *Water* builds patriarchy as an institutional structure and not a group of discrete oppressive actions through the controlled spatial description, ritual practices, and shared living spaces. This proves that exposition is at the centre of feminist criticism in the novel because it inserts women into the ideological discourse, prior to the development of narrative conflict. Another discovery is connected with the correlation of exposition and religious discoursing. Religious ideology is not presented in *Water* in a form of debate and confrontation but in a form of normalized expository narration. Religious activities are introduced as unquestionable social practices, which naturalizes the power of patriarchy. This shows that exposition is some form of subtle ideological transmission. However, *Ice-Candy Man* uses cultural and communal exposition in order to show how religious identities get rigidized in the course of time with the prefiguration of sectarian violence. In comparison, the thesis establishes that both novels encode ideology with the help of exposition, but *Ice-Candy Man* encodes it through nostalgia and innocence to frame loss, and that *Water* encodes it through institutional rigidity to frame confinement. In spite of these divergences, the two novels affirm that exposition is part of theme development, feminist stance, and portrayal of trauma. All these findings lead to the conclusion that exposition is a narrative strategy that involves the active construction of meaning, and not the introduction of narrative elements.

5.2 Conclusion

The opening passages of *Ice-Candy Man* and *Water* establish the thematic and ideological foundations of both narratives. In *Water*, the widow ashram functions as a symbolic space of confinement where patriarchy, religion, and tradition intersect to regulate women's lives. Chuyia's forced widowhood exposes the vulnerability of childhood innocence and the internalization of patriarchal norms. The ashram becomes both a literal and metaphorical prison, situating widowhood within a broader context of historical trauma and systemic gender oppression rather than a personal misfortune.

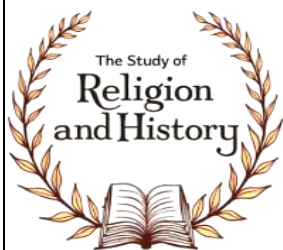
Similarly, the exposition of *Ice-Candy Man* foregrounds female vulnerability within patriarchal and communal structures. Ayah's body becomes the focus of the male gaze as her admirers treat her as an object of desire, which Lenny narrates with innocent amusement. Beneath this playful surface lies an undercurrent of rivalry, possessiveness, and latent violence. Through dramatic irony, Sidhwa contrasts Lenny's naïve perception with the reader's awareness of impending danger, suggesting that the apparent harmony of pre-Partition Lahore is fragile and destined to collapse into communal hostility and gendered violence.

5.2 Recommendations

This study presents a number of research opportunities in the future. This method can be applied to other postcolonial South Asian texts by scholars to understand the different ways in which exposition is applied to various cultural narratives. Cognitive narratology can also be incorporated in future research in order to examine the response of the reader to expository framing. Also, comparative analyses of literary texts and novel adaptations may examine the way expository strategies are changed by media. This study makes a contribution to narratology, feminist literary criticism, and postcolonial studies by foregrounding of exposition as a place of ideological and thematic constructions. It also changes the source of narratives as a tactical place where meaning is not only made but also produced, negotiated and fought over. These are the points where the authors can manipulate the words and help the reader, and even to develop the concept of what occurs in the story. In addition, they act as the arenas through which cultural memories, ideological inconveniences, and issues are revisited and preempted in the narrative.

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THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND HISTORY

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