

**From Displacement to Defiance: Cultural Conflict and New Womanhood in the
Diasporic Fiction of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Bapsi Sidhwa**

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Abstract

This research article offers a comparative analysis of *Americanah* published in the year 2013 authored by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, along with another novel *An American Brat* published in the year 1993 authored by Bapsi Sidhwa. The authors, Sidhwa, along with Adichie, presented the protagonists as the 'New Women'. The protagonists were depicted as 'educated, self-aware, independent women'. The research work has analyzed the 'constant changing of womanhood, cultural tensions, and the life journey of the protagonists'. In addition, the research work investigates the impact of 'geographical displacement, which propels the women to resist the set patriarchal structures in society'. The research work has identified the connections between 'gender, race, and immigration in the postcolonial feminist period'. The research article, in this manner, highlights the diasporic women's identities, which are continuously reconceived by the decussate power structures of marginalization.

Keywords: Diaspora, New Woman, Cultural Conflict, Identity, Migration, Postcolonial Feminism

1. Introduction

The experience of Female Protagonists in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat*, though in diverse cultural settings, bears similar ideological themes of displacement, clash, and the 'Rise of the New Woman'. These women are depicted as independent, educated, assertive, and goal-driven in her life migration from the homeland to foreign lands.

The diasporic fiction is an energetic form of literary expression that fervently investigates the issues of migration, transformation, cultural displacement, identity, and transformation. The most crucial themes identified in the chosen literary work are the rise of the New Woman and the struggle in culture. The significant aspect that arises when people move from one social, political, and cultural setting to another is the struggle between the culture they inherit and the sociocultural surroundings they encounter.

The diasporic fiction, therefore, becomes an important platform in the exploration of themes pertaining to the notions of identity, displacement, as well as the gender roles associated with the protagonists. In this regard, it can be seen that the role of the women becomes importantly represented in the stories, which signifies the struggle, adaptation, as well as transformation. They are perceived as adapting as well as negotiating through the various boundaries existing between the homeland as well as the foreign land. The diasporic woman becomes recognized in terms of the notions concerning tradition, modernity, liberty, oppression, silence, as well as speaking, in particular. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Bapsi Sidhwa, as well as other authors, make use of the platform of fiction in exploring the aforementioned issues, as women in the foreign land.

Bapsi Sidhwa is an accomplished English novel writer from Pakistan, known for her study, scrutiny, as well as exploration of gender, culture, and diasporic issues in her writing. In her writing, she also highlighted the issues of the Parsi community in Pakistan, as well as the struggle between tradition and change. In addition, Bapsi Sidhwa, in her writing, has also represented the challenges faced by women living in patriarchal societies. The story of the heroine in the novel '*American Brat Feroza Ginwall*' by Sidhwa represents the struggle of a sixteen-year-old Parsi girl named Feroza Ginwall, signaled toward America from Pakistan. Bapsi Sidhwa represents the cultural issues, as well as migration, which result in change in the

personal as well as the professional life of the heroine in her writing. She has opposed the issue of gender opportunities, religious teachings, as well as the oppression of women in her writing, when Feroza traveled to America in the form of her heroine. Thus, her writing also can be called a feminist text as well as a diasporic text.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, as one of the most famous authors of the third generation of Nigerian literature, represents the brave and insightfully truthful representation of African women in particular in the process of migration, gender, as well as racial discrimination in her writing work. In Adichie's novel `Americanah`, the hero, a victim of gender norms, migration, as well as racial practices, signifies the power of independent decision, voice, as well as definition by the female gender itself. The presence of Adichie, together with her outstanding work `Americanah`, in the contemporary literary process aids in remaking the New Woman, the character product of feminist discourse in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the work of the diasporic text authors like Bapsi Sidhwa.

This research shows the cultural clash rethought transformation of womanhood in terms of the female character in the diasporic scenario. The text of Adichie and Sidhwa portrays the liberation of women, which has been rooted in discrimination, resilience, and change. This literature forces the reader to think in terms of the definition of liberty, identity, and citizenship in the developing interconnected world, which has suffered extensive divisions too. Therefore, this research proposes to negatively analyze the impact of cultural clash, as well as the diasporic displacement, to compel formative experience, which helps in the creation of the New Woman in the literary works of Bapsi Sidhwa along with Chimamanda Adichie. The heroine in the text shows herself as the active character, reshaping her life through self-realization, education, as well as disobedience.

2. Literature Review

Diasporic fiction has traditionally worked as a literary workroom where individual experiences are used to analyze themes of gender conflict, migration, identity and cultural hybridity. It has been notified that the New Woman negotiating for the political and personal difficulties of displacement in her personal and professional life. Moreover, The New Woman appeals for independence from established authorities. These women are represented in literature in a

variety of ways. They are influenced by postcolonial tensions, racism, patriarchy and religion. This is the fact particularly in African, American, Indian, and Pakistani diasporic fiction.

Authors such as Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Jhumpa Lahiri in Indian-American diasporic literature, offer additional viewpoints on the New Woman's identity within global contexts. Mukherjee in her novel *Jasmine* (1989) depicts a young Indian widow who moves to the U.S. and experiences various cultural changes in her life and continually redefining her identity in reaction to evolving surroundings. *Jasmine* adapts the situation and accepts to adjust and transforms and showcases the core of diasporic resilience and resistance. Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* (1995), a series of short narratives. It illustrates the clash between conventional Indian values and the personal aspirations of immigrant women. Her characters recurrently struggle and the yearning for independence. It has observed ultimately resulting in many of them reshaping their identities as women in the diaspora.

Additionally, in African-American literature, as well as in the Black British tradition, the work of Zadie Smith, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker inspired the exploration of cultural hybridity, gender, identity, and race. Walker's *The Color Purple* and Morrison's *Beloved* fix the gendered violence in the life of black women, as the unity of women and individual empowerment are revealed as the antidotes. These works, based upon a specific historical reality, it being noted that the diasporic experience of African women and South Asian women in the modern period, reflect the same conflicted interior in the protagonists of Adichie's and Sidhwa's fiction, in that this experience engenders the feminist impulse.

In the feminist perspective, the concept of the "New Woman" represents the woman as someone who embodies her rights and defies the conservative norms. The New Woman in Adichie's piece overcomes the patriarchal norms through education and solidarity. On the same line, the transformation of Feroza in the story of Sidhwa occurs while she is in America, rebuking the cultural constraints inherent in her Parsi upbringing.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study intends to analyze the experience of the female character in the book *Americanah* published in 2013 by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, as well as in the book *An American Brat* published in 1993 by Bapsi Sidhwa, in the light of the experience of the diaspora. The objective of the study is to analyze the cultural clash, which acts as a trigger in the transformation of the

character's identity. The study also aims to analyze the concept of the 'New Woman' in the work of Adichie, as well as Sidhwa.

4. Research Methodology

This research article employs a qualitative, comparative literary analysis method. Primary sources include the novels *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *An American Brat* by Bapsi Sidhwa. Secondary sources comprise books, scholarly articles, web pages, and thesis chapters discussing feminist theory, postcolonial studies, and diasporic texts. Close textual analysis is used to interpret character development, thematic content, and narrative structure. This study analyzes resistance strategies used by Adichie's protagonist Ifemelu and Sidhwa's Feroza.

5. Feroza's diasporic Journey: New Womanhood in *An American Brat*

Bapsi Sidhwa was known as Pakistan's finest English language novelist. Her fourth novel *An American Brat* (1994). Sidhwa won international acclaim for her work, as a women novelist and tried to explore and expose the subtle and soulful sides of life. As a South Asian woman novelist. She had been very popular because of her remarkable sense of humour, caustic wit, a sense of fair play and multiplicity of themes in her novels.

The fascinating story of Feroza Ginwalla, a young Parsi girl whose diasporic journey from Pakistan to America goes from a conservative adolescent into an empowered incarnation of the "New Woman." Feroza's has her roots in the strict customs of the Parsi community and the increasingly conservative Pakistan of the 1970s. Sidhwa depicts the conflict between personal freedom and cultural conformity. She paints a picture of a woman who finds her voice, and refused to be constrained by patriarchal or religious declarations through displacement and cultural conflict.

An American Brat talks about the processes and causes that bring about transformation in life of the Feroza. The writer has attempted to portray the dilemma, the rebellion, the ambitions of women when they reach the cross – roads, through her migration, in her fictive world, she encourages the woman to quest for higher intellectual and emotional awareness, their journey is internal and not external.

Firstly, Feroza is intimidated by the Western way of life, struggling to deal with clothing, speech, and customs. But as Feroza immerses herself in the company of her college-mates, like her college-mate Carla, followed by her Jewish beau David Press, she slowly becomes drawn to the ideals of liberty and individualism. This transformation brings her a series of conflicts, like when her decision to adopt Judaism in order to marry David upsets her family. In the novel, Sidhwa portrays Feroza's developing awareness from protected girl to rebellious young woman who illustrates how diaspora serves as a site of struggle and ultimate freedom. Feroza's refusal of arranged marriage, her acceptance of intercultural love, and her declaration of independence in determining her own path, all connect her with the concept of the New Woman. She does not simply blend into American life but thoughtfully adopts what strengthens her. She adopts the American way of living and speaking. She finds happiness in being a woman and dresses, speaks, and behaves like an American girl. She is no longer the shy and conservative girl from Pakistan who would be offended by her mother's attire; now, she believes there is nothing inappropriate or wrong about wearing skirts. She also learns to drink wine:

“Something within Feroza must have changed imperceptibly because suddenly one spring evening Feroza discovered that the boy's were talking to her, making a concerted effort to kid, cajole, and encourage her out of her painful shell”.²

Feroza meets David, and falls in love with him. He is a Jewish American and owns his own customs and traditions. Jews appear to share ancient traditions akin to those of Indians, Pakistanis, or Parsis. In a review, edit Villareal indicates that the theme of coming of age is deeply connected to the theme of immigration in Sidhwa's novel:

“Coming of age is never easy, coming of age as a woman is ever harder, but coming of age as a female immigrant in a foreign country may be the most difficult of all. For any woman born in societies with restrictive social and political codes. However, immigration may be the only real way to come of age”.³

When Feroza's parents come to know her affection for David, they decide to bring her home and wish that she should marry a Parsi boy. Zareen to travels to Denver to persuade Feroza of her mistake. This is how the author portrays a woman journeying alone to the new world to retrieve her daughter. In the Parsi family, the woman holds more strength and power. Zareen is drawn to the new liberal way of life and to David, but her main concern is that Feroza will be viewed as an outcast and unacceptable to the community.

Feroza, a reserved and conventional individual, boards on a path toward independence through plentiful choices. Her confidence is filled with uncertainty and reflects the bafflement of her generation. In the end of the novel Feroza's choice to remain away from Pakistan and her broken bond with her mother indicate a significant change. While she forfeitures family support, she acquires a fresh identity based on independence, and decision-making.

Thus, *An American Brat* becomes more than just a bildungsroman. This becomes a diasporic feminist text where the journey of womanhood becomes traced in different geographies and ideologies. In the figure of Feroza, the text offers a fascinating study of the idea of the “New Woman” in a world that has turned global but continues to remain embedded in tradition as well. In the voice of Feroza, there can be no return, as she has known the taste of liberty and prefers not to remain tethered to the traditional norms of her community. She longs to live the life of a bird, the life of liberty.

6. From Exile to Empowerment: Diasporic Identity in Adichie's *Americanah*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* received the U.S. National Book Critics Circle Award in the year 2013, in the fiction category. *Americanah* described the life story of Ifemelu, a young Nigeria woman, as she moves to the United States to continue her college education. Ifemelu discovers her story in another culture as she falls in love with Obinze, another schoolmate from her secondary school days in Nigeria. Ifemelu moves to the United States to continue her college studies. She sets out to uncover her individuality in another culture, fights to achieve her financial independence, and strives to understand her newly found racial identity in the form of a blog.

Although the book shifts between the characters Ifemelu and Obinze, Ifemelu remains the main character in the novel *Americanah* as her transformation takes center stage in the book. Ifemelu, at the age of twenty-something, obtains a student visa and moves to the United States. She embarks upon her first trip abroad. Her family, although not poor, lacks the level of wealth that her contemporaries enjoy. Ifemelu's move to America sets off the intensive level of the conflict, as well as her separation from Obinze. Ifemelu, the free-spirited young lady, does not set off her move to America but rather agrees to Obinze's vision in the United States in her own way, as he holds the idea that the United States represents the future. Ifemelu, throughout her childhood, has demonstrated a level of assertiveness. She values the significance of her

sense of freedom. For example, she starts to adjust to her position as the ‘other lady’ in Obinze’s world, as well as the appearance of her rebellious streak. She finds it awkward to assume the supportive position as well as the distance from her own life.

Adichie uses Ifemelu’s perspective to show the way in which racial interactions permeate the daily life of an immigrant in the U.S. In contrast to Nigeria, where race isn’t the central factor in defining her, Ifemelu finds herself seen mainly as black in the U.S. This process of racial awakening metamorphoses her perception in such a way that she forces herself to live in her surroundings in a measured manner. The blog she maintains, entitled “Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black,” acts as her platform to contest and resist. Ifemelu’s experience represents the life of a diasporian in the way in which she uses her talents to move among diverse cultural spaces while refusing to fully align herself with the U.S. She refuses to idealistically promote Nigeria or the U.S. in favor of establishing a third space—a life based upon her own terms, defying the Christian Music Association definition of her life as one determined by her response to the U.S. This occurs when she decides to return to Lagos, not in defeat, but in the way in which she has changed, finding herself again. Ifemelu’s return to Lagos, as well as the restarting of her blog, represents an end as well as a beginning.

Ifemelu exudes confidence, truth, resoluteness, diligence, and courage as a woman radiating brightness and enthralling beauty. She dreams of continuing her education in the United States. She writes, "Completing my degree first and then going to America for graduate studies is the best option for me." "Graduate school funding and financial aid are available for international students" (99). Ifemelu is an exceptionally intelligent student in both school and college, despite her middle-class background, and is recognized for her candid personality. "Ifemelu is a lovely girl, but she is facing too many problems." She is able to argue, she is able to speak. "She never concurs" (60). The love story of Ifemelu and Obinze is the key narrative that unites Americanah. Their teenage love story is quite romantic. Even in personal moments, Ifemelu is quite assertive and daring. She says:

“Aren’t we going to kiss? She asked. He seemed startled, where did that come from?” I am just asking. We have been sitting here for so long...hey kissed, pressed their foreheads together, held hands. His kiss was enjoyable, almost heady; It was

nothing like her ex-boyfriend Mofe, whose kisses she had thought most salivary”.⁴

Additionally, Ifemelu is vocal and fervent concerning her career and education. At first, she resided at Auntie Uju’s home in the United States. She took care of her son, Dick, and assisted with various household tasks, but she desires to carve her own path and often contemplated how she could achieve this. Adichie states:

“She wanted to start school, to find the real America, and yet there was that gnawing in her stomach, an anxiety, and a new, aching nostalgia for the Brooklyn summer that had become familiar; children on bicycles, sinewy black men in tight white tank tops, ice cream vans tinkling, loud music from roofless cars, sun shining into night, and things rotting and smelling in the humid heat. She did not want to leave Dike---- the mere thought brought sense of treasure already lost and yet she wanted to leave Auntie Uju’s apartment, and begin a life in which she alone determined the margins”.⁵

Adichie challenges African stereotypes by depicting Ifemelu, the protagonist, as a woman and African who thrives in the technologically advanced Western world. Her aim for African women is to surmount challenges. Ifemelu challenges a woman who claims that race was never a problem during her three-year relationship with a white man in California. Ifemelu tells her that it was not the case. Ifemelu expressed her opinions on racism with great intelligence and insight. She says:

“I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black in America and you fall in love with a white person; race doesn’t matter when you are alone together because it is just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. But we don’t talk about it”.⁶

Ultimately, we discover that Ifemelue evolves into a new woman who upholds her African roots while also embracing American culture. Race and racism have influenced Ifemelu's identity. She investigates her identity and transforms into a daring, self-assured, and confident woman who is independent and self-sufficient. Ifemelu has established an identity as a woman that enables her to be outspoken, self-sufficient, and sexually liberated, regardless of the expectations placed on women by Nigerian society.

6. Comparative Findings

Bapsi Sidhwa's New Woman character, Feroza Ginwalla, in her novel, *An American Brat*, as well as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's New Woman, Ifemelu, in her novel, *Americanah*, offer two distinctly different but thematically similar constructions of the New Woman in diasporic literature. The parameters of the title, from displacement to resistance, are well encapsulated in the challenges as well as the triumphs in the migration, cultural upheaval, transformation, and feminist awakening of each woman. They hail from quite diverse cultural settings in Pakistan and Nigeria, respectively, but share the same parameters in terms of challenges and triumphs in defining diasporic femininity.

In addition, Feroza and Ifemelu each embark upon a transformative change triggered by physical displacement. Feroza, a Persian Muslim, relocates to the U.S. at the instigation of her family to be 'liberated' from Islamic extremists and conservative values in Pakistan. Feroza's parents think relocating her to the United States will 'cure' her rigid attitude, but in reality, it will empower her enough to confront everything she has been previously taught. This move made by Feroza, although non-self-volitional, becomes the catalyst for her self-concept as well as defying patriarchy.

Ifemelu, on the other hand, decides to relocate from Nigeria to America in pursuit of educational opportunities. While her move to America is based on financial as well as educational objectives, it also becomes a search for race, gender, and personal learnings. Unlike Feroza, Ifemelu has more intellectual capital at the onset, but her perception of her self-identity becomes disrupted by her first-hand experience of racial discrimination in America. The blog she starts eventually becomes a platform for her personal expression, which helps her regain her voice in her state of cultural displacement.

In this way, the other protagonists experience cultural conflicts in gendered ways, as the relationship, as well as personal choices, remain under constant scrutiny. Feroza receives training in the virtues of femininity and domestic commitment as offered by the Parsi culture. The issue of cultural norms, specifically in the light of interreligious affairs, becomes apparent as she falls for another man from a non-Parsi religious background. Finally, her defiance of this moral code in favor of her chosen life shows a robust form of defiance as well as a return to her physical as well as mental autonomy as she becomes the New Woman.

But Ifemelu's experience also stems from cultural discord, although it becomes intensified by her racial identity. In Nigeria, Ifemelu was never termed "Black." But in America, her racial identity suddenly becomes her defining factor. Ifemelu's black hair represents authenticity, acceptance, and defiance. The decision to celebrate her natural hair means she has regained her identity. Unlike Feroza, whose body is controlled by her faith family, Ifemelu's body becomes the site where racial tropes clash with cultural norms.

Feroza and Ifemelu's transformation represent the concept of the New Woman, smart, confident, and liberated enough to make her own choices. Feroza refuses the idea of marriage as her destiny, defies her parents' values, and decides to stay back in the U.S. in the face of her family's condemnation. Feroza's defiance of her upbringing is subtle but effective, as she starts defying the moral and gender values of her conservative upbringing in her day-to-day choices of clothing, speech, and affection.

On the other hand, Ifemelu's defiance takes a more ideological and political form. She resists the Nigerian patriarchy as well as the American liberals' racism. Ifemelu's blog looks at the double standards involved in the concept of race in the West, even as it looks at other issues like sexism, the vestiges of colonialism, and cultural standards. Ifemelu concludes her story in the novel not with marriage but in returning to Nigeria—a return to her origins, but on her terms.

While the two characters achieve empowerment as a result of the diaspora experience, the process also involves a sense of loss. Feroza loses the acceptance of her family and her culture. The cost of independence involves emotional detachment. Ifemelu also faces the reality of emotional detachment—not just from the United States but also from Nigeria when she decides to return home. They know fully well that achieving full acceptance in either society isn't quite possible. The identities of the two characters, however, are constructed in this in-between zone as the New Woman, shaped by the liminal zone.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Feroza and Ifemelu are examples of the "transition from displacement to defiance." Feroza's transformation centers around her family and cultural understanding, while Ifemelu's transformation centers around her racial understanding and intellectual development.

Together, they retain the complexities of the New Womanhood in contemporary diasporic literature—the women, irrespective of their varied upbringing, shared experience, and transformation, are unified in the pursuit of voice, agency, and authenticity. Feroza and Ifemelu, in particular, share a common thread in terms of cultural differences, but in terms of objectives, they remain united in the conscious repudiation of silence, submissiveness, and meekness, which are conditions, in the ideal sense, pertaining to the definition of womanhood. They are resisters in the truest sense, as they trigger change in themselves by overlooking rigid definitions pertaining to culture, gender, and identities. In other words, rather than uprooting the associations between the homeland and the diaspora, they recreate the tradition in light of their own definitions, developing hybrid identities that boast the influence of the homeland as well as the diaspora's influence. Sidhwa and Adichie, through personal experience, show the New Woman in the sense that she isn't defined geographically but by the power to challenge, resist, and move through in her own fashion.

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