ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF POWER AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN FIVE STORIES FROM *THEIR LANGUAGE OF LOVE*

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Abstract
Bapsi Sidhwa is best known as a novelist of Partition, Parsi identity and gendered violence, while her short fiction has received little sustained critical attention. This article analyses how power is built in discourse, and how the conflicts it generates are handled, in five stories from Their Language of Love: "Ruth and the Hijackers," "Ruth and the Afghan," "Defend Yourself Against Me," "Breaking It Up" and "Sehra-bai." Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis provides the organising framework, and each story is read at the levels of text, discursive practice and social practice. Foucault's relational view of power, feminist critical discourse analysis, the Discourse-Historical Approach and postcolonial theories of hybridity are applied selectively, only where a story requires them. The analysis focuses on specific textual features: a servant's unhedged imperatives, a mother's collective "we" set against her daughter's singular "I," euphemism and interrupted disclosure in a Partition narrative, and verbs of physical care that reverse a mother and daughter's roles. Taken together, the stories show power to be unevenly distributed across class, gender, generation and geopolitical position, not held by any one figure. Conflict is never fully reconciled: it ends through self-regulation, a split between personal and historical scales, ritual acknowledgement, an unresolved standoff, or a provisional settlement that is later reopened. The article names this recurring pattern partial settlement and argues that agency in Sidhwa's short fiction belongs mainly to structurally subordinate characters, who act from within the structures that constrain them rather than against them.

Keywords: Bapsi Sidhwa, Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough, power, conflict resolution, partial settlement, Pakistani Anglophone short fiction, feminist discourse analysis

1. Introduction
Bapsi Sidhwa's critical reputation rests mainly on her novels. *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat* have made her a central figure in Pakistani writing in English, and critics have discussed at length the questions they raise about Partition, Parsi community life, diaspora and women's place in South Asian society. Her short fiction receives far less attention. *Their Language of Love*, the collection from which the stories studied here come, revisits these concerns in a compressed and often more intimate form. Domestic rooms, family quarrels, hospitality offered to strangers and conversations cut off before their point is reached carry much of the weight that historical panorama carries in the novels. This compression makes the stories especially suitable for asking how language builds, sustains and contests relations of power.

This article reads five stories from the collection: "Ruth and the Hijackers," "Ruth and the Afghan," "Defend Yourself Against Me," "Breaking It Up" and "Sehra-bai." Each approaches power from a different angle. The two Ruth stories follow an American woman in Lahore through encounters with her household staff, with an admirer whose attentions carry social risk, and with an exiled Afghan politician and his family. "Defend Yourself Against Me" addresses the gendered violence of 1947 through a narrator who learns of it only in fragments, decades later and far from Punjab. "Breaking It Up" shows a Parsi mother trying to talk her daughter out of marrying outside the community. "Sehra-bai" concerns an elderly mother whose stroke releases long-buried memories and the daughter who now has to care

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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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for her. The settings and scales differ, but each story is built around a relationship in which one party holds a recognised authority and another finds ways to limit, redirect or outlast it.

Two questions arise from this shared structure. The first concerns power. If authority in these stories is visibly attached to positions such as employer, mother, host or survivor, does the language confirm that attachment, or does it show power moving between positions in less predictable ways? The second concerns conflict. Much literary criticism, and much popular reading, expects a narrative conflict to end in reconciliation, defeat or triumph. Feminist and postcolonial criticism has long warned that such endings can mask the persistence of structural injury. Sidhwa's stories prompt a closer look at what actually happens at the point where a conflict should close.

The article addresses both questions through Critical Discourse Analysis, with Fairclough's (1992, 1995) three-dimensional model as its organising framework. The model treats every use of language as simultaneously a text with formal properties, a discursive practice that draws on and reworks existing conventions, and a social practice embedded in wider power structures. This allows the analysis to move from small textual choices, such as a pronoun, an imperative or an interrupted sentence, to the social arrangements those choices reflect and help reproduce. Where a story's meaning depends on a particular historical event, a gendered expectation or a cross-cultural encounter, the analysis draws selectively on supporting perspectives: Foucault's (1978, 1980) view of power as relational and productive, feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2005, 2007), the Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and Bhabha's (1994) account of hybridity. These perspectives sharpen particular points of the reading without replacing the structure that Fairclough's model supplies.

The study asks three questions.

1. How do the textual choices in the five stories construct power relations among characters of differing class, gender, generation and nationality?
2. Which discourses do the stories draw on and rework, and how do these link individual relationships to wider social and historical structures?
3. What patterns of conflict resolution recur across the five stories, and what do they reveal about the relationship between discourse and power in Sidhwa's short fiction?

The argument is that power in these stories is relational and unevenly distributed, and that conflict ends not in reconciliation but in what this article calls partial settlement: an outcome in which a conflict reaches a temporary or socially recognisable close while the injury, constraint or disagreement behind it remains in place. The stories reach partial settlement by several routes. A character may end a relationship after calculating the social risk. A story may settle a personal relationship while leaving its political cause untouched. An apology may acknowledge historical violence without restoring what was lost. A disagreement may simply be carried away by both parties, or a reconciliation may be achieved and then threatened anew. Across these routes, agency belongs most often to characters with little formal authority, and it works through discourse, through refusal, control of disclosure and the patient reworking of memory, rather than through open confrontation.

The remaining sections are organised as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework and situates the study in existing scholarship. Section 3 describes the method. Section 4 gives the textual analysis of the five stories. Section 5 brings the analyses together and develops the concept of partial settlement. Section 6 concludes and suggests directions for further research.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Sidhwa's short fiction and the critical gap

Commentary on Sidhwa has centred overwhelmingly on her novels, and the critical vocabulary built around her work (Partition memory, Parsi minority identity, patriarchal

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critique, diasporic hybridity) was developed with those longer texts in mind. Her short stories have not been treated as a body of work in their own right. Where individual stories from *Their Language of Love* are mentioned, the discussion tends to be thematic, saying what a story is about rather than how its language produces the relations it depicts. For at least two of the stories studied here, "Ruth and the Afghan" and "Sehra-bai," no story-specific critical discussion could be found during the research behind this article. That absence is stated plainly rather than filled by inference. It also supports reading the five stories as one corpus, since the scattered, uneven commentary that exists offers no consistent basis to build on.

A second gap is methodological. Critical Discourse Analysis has been widely applied to political speech, news media and institutional talk, and stylistic approaches to literature have shown that similar tools can illuminate how narrative constructs authority, credibility and point of view (Simpson, 2004). Yet systematic CDA of short fiction remains uncommon. The short story's economy, its reliance on a few scenes and voices, and its tendency to condense a social conflict into a single encounter suggest that the form suits the movement between linguistic detail and social structure that CDA performs. A third gap is conceptual. South Asian literary criticism has examined gender, class and postcolonial identity extensively, but often as separate lines of enquiry. Crenshaw's (1991) argument that axes of disadvantage combine and compound one another, rather than simply adding up, implies that a reading attentive to one axis alone will misdescribe characters who stand at several intersections at once. Sidhwa's stories are full of such characters: a servant who is also the household's cultural authority, a privileged expatriate whose body is treated as her husband's property, and a mother whose authority over her daughter depends on a community that constrains them both.

2.2 Fairclough's three-dimensional model

Across its variants, Critical Discourse Analysis shares the premise that language is a form of social practice, not a transparent vehicle for pre-existing meanings. Discourse both reflects and helps constitute social identities, relations and systems of knowledge, and so is one of the means by which power is exercised, naturalised and contested (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Fairclough's three-dimensional model gives this premise an analytical structure. The first dimension, text, covers vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and textual organisation; in a literary text this includes dialogue, narrative voice, description and figurative language. The second, discursive practice, covers the production, distribution and interpretation of texts, especially how a text draws on, combines or departs from established genres and discourses. The third, social practice, locates discourse within the institutional and social structures that shape it and that it in turn reproduces or unsettles. The model's value lies in requiring all three levels to be read together: a textual feature becomes significant when it can be tied to a recognisable discourse and, through that discourse, to a wider arrangement of power.

This structure is adopted as the primary framework because it lets each story be read in the same systematic order while leaving room for the emphasis each one demands. The model does not decide in advance which social structure will matter most. It may be the labour hierarchy of a postcolonial household in one story, Cold War politics in another and the endogamy of a minority religious community in a third.

2.3 Power as relational

Foucault's (1978, 1980) account of power is the main supporting perspective at the level of social practice. On this account power is not a possession held by a sovereign individual or institution and exercised downward through prohibition. It is relational, dispersed through social relations, and productive as well as restrictive, generating the categories of knowledge, norms of conduct and forms of identity through which subjects understand themselves. Where there is power there is also resistance, not as an external opposite but as a set of points within the same field of relations. This matters for Sidhwa's stories because they repeatedly

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locate authority where formal status would not predict it. A Foucauldian reading prepares the analyst to look for power in apparently minor practices, such as a habitual question about a dog, a decision about who may enter a house, or the management of what a family will say about its past.

Butler's (1997) account of agency complements this view. If subjects are constituted within discourse, agency cannot mean stepping outside discourse altogether; it means acting from within the structures that constitute the subject, by repeating, redirecting or resignifying their terms. Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the patriarchal bargain offers a more specific tool for the gendered relationships in the corpus. Kandiyoti argues that women in particular patriarchal systems adopt strategies that maximise their security and options within those systems instead of confronting them directly, and that these strategies can bind women to reproducing the very constraints that limit them. Both perspectives caution against looking for agency only where there is open revolt.

2.4 Supporting perspectives

Feminist critical discourse analysis extends CDA's general concern with power to the workings of gender ideology. Lazar (2005, 2007) argues that its task is not merely to describe gendered patterns in language but to show how they sustain a patriarchal social order that often presents itself as natural or consensual, while attending to how gender intersects with class, ethnicity and culture. This orientation guides the readings of "Breaking It Up" and "Sehra-bai," where what women may say openly is shaped by expectations of duty, discretion and care.

The Discourse-Historical Approach holds that discourse cannot be interpreted without reference to the specific historical and intertextual context in which it is embedded (Wodak, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). It is most relevant to "Defend Yourself Against Me," whose meaning depends directly on the communal violence of 1947 and its long afterlife in family memory. Van Dijk's (1993, 1998) socio-cognitive approach adds attention to the shared mental models through which communities and readers interpret discourse. It is used narrowly here, where a story relies on background knowledge that the text never states, as with the Cold War context of "Ruth and the Afghan."

Postcolonial theory is internally varied. Said (1978) showed how colonial discourse constructed the East as an inferior and exotic Other. Spivak (1988) asked whether, and under what conditions, the subaltern, marginalised by both colonial and patriarchal structures, can be heard at all. Bhabha (1994) stressed hybridity, ambivalence and the instability of the boundary between coloniser and colonised. For the two Ruth stories, Bhabha's account of hybridity is more productive than a binary of self and Other, because these stories show cultural authority moving across the East-West line instead of resting on one side of it.

Finally, the study draws on two traditions for understanding conflict and its resolution. Theories of conflict transformation stress narrative, dialogue and the moral imagination as means by which adversaries arrive at new understanding (Lederach, 2005). Feminist and postcolonial criticism, by contrast, tends to see resolution less as dialogue between equals than as the recovery of voice by those who have been silenced (Spivak, 1988; Lazar, 2005). The two emphases are compatible but point attention in different directions, the first toward mutual change and the second toward redistributing who may speak. Treating resolution as a spectrum rather than a binary allows both emphases to be tested against the stories. The spectrum runs from full reconciliation through negotiation, ritual acknowledgement and accommodation to conflict left unresolved.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design and data

The study uses a qualitative, interpretive and inductive design. It tests no hypothesis; it aims instead to produce context-sensitive interpretations traceable to identifiable features of the

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texts (Patton, 2015). The data are five published short stories from Sidhwa's *Their Language of Love*. Because the material is a published literary text, it is stable, publicly available and open to verification by other readers, and the study involves no human participants.

The five stories were chosen by purposive sampling. The aim was not to represent the whole collection but to assemble a small corpus in which distinct but related axes of power are clearly foregrounded, so that the stories could be read closely on their own terms and then compared. "Ruth and the Hijackers" foregrounds class, nationality and cultural authority within a household. "Ruth and the Afghan" extends the same household setting into the politics of exile and superpower conflict. "Defend Yourself Against Me" concerns the gendered violence of Partition and its transmission across generations. "Breaking It Up" concerns communal obligation and individual choice in marriage within a minority community. "Sehra-bai" concerns generational authority, concealment and care between mother and daughter. Stories in the collection that overlapped substantially with these concerns without adding distinct analytical value were left out.

3.2 Procedure

The analysis proceeded in five stages, combining an initial phase of qualitative content analysis with a later critical phase guided by Fairclough's model (Schreier, 2012).

1. **Familiarisation.** Each story was read repeatedly, with notes on narrative situation, the relationships at its centre and the points where conflict emerges and recedes.
2. **Initial coding.** Recurring textual features relevant to power were marked and given provisional definitions: mood and modality in dialogue, pronoun choice, evaluative and generalising statements, figurative language, narratorial glosses, euphemism and interruption, and verbs that position characters as agents or recipients of action.
3. **Linking codes to discourses.** Codes were grouped into larger discursive formations, such as the discourse of expatriate domesticity, communal endogamy, Partition testimony and family concealment, and the analysis traced how each story draws on or departs from them.
4. **Contextualising through social practice.** The identified discourses were related to the social and historical structures in which the stories are set: the labour hierarchy of the postcolonial household, Cold War displacement, communal violence in 1947, diasporic minority survival, and the gendered norms governing what a woman may say openly about her marriage.
5. **Comparison and refinement.** Themes were compared across the five stories, revised where the textual evidence required, and organised into the account of power and partial settlement given in Section

The analysis of each story in Section 4 follows the same order. It starts with the textual dimension, moves through discursive and social practice, and then turns to the configuration of power and to how the conflict is closed or left open. This shared order makes cross-story comparison possible, although the weight given to each dimension varies by story.

3.3 Illustrative instances and their handling

Textual evidence appears as illustrative instances: short quoted words or phrases from the primary text that perform a particular discursive function. Quotations are kept brief and are analysed for their function, not offered as plot summary. Page numbers in Section 4 refer to Sidhwa (2013). Instances were chosen because they represent a pattern recurring across a story, not because they are isolated or striking moments. Where the analysis rests on a pattern that a short quotation cannot capture, such as the alternation of tense in "Sehra-bai" or the recurrence of withheld speech in "Defend Yourself Against Me," the pattern is described and its function argued from its recurrence.

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3.4 Trustworthiness and limitations

In interpretive research, validity is better understood as trustworthiness, which rests on credibility, dependability and transparency of procedure (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is pursued by grounding every interpretive claim in a cited textual feature and by working within an established analytical tradition. Dependability is supported by applying the same sequence of steps to every story and by keeping the analysis iterative, returning to the texts as patterns emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Three limitations should be acknowledged. Interpretation in CDA is never free of the analyst's theoretical commitments, and a reading that foregrounds gender and class may underplay religious or aesthetic dimensions that another reader would stress. The study works only with the English text, so resonances that depend on Urdu, Punjabi or Gujarati registers lie largely beyond its reach. Finally, five stories cannot support statistical generalisation about Sidhwa's work; the aim is analytical depth and a framework that other studies can test on further texts.

4. Textual Analysis

4.1 "Ruth and the Hijackers" and the displacement of household authority

The story establishes Ruth's position before introducing any conflict. It opens with Ruth directing the gardener and the cart driver as they place new pots of ferns, looking forward to lunch served outdoors and wondering whether the Brazilian polo team is playing, since Raj Roy "might be there" (p. 56). Each detail presupposes a household where others do the labour and Ruth's time is hers to fill. Raj is introduced in the same opening pages as a Buddhist hill-tract king who moved to Pakistan, won a seat in parliament and became "federal minister for minorities" (p. 56). Romance and household are thus set up together, and every later challenge to Ruth's authority registers against this initial settlement.

Ruth's relationship to the country around her is marked by a different kind of language. When the cart driver kicks her dog, she coos to the animal to model kindness, a quality the narrative, focalised through her, finds "woefully lacking in the general population of Pakistan" (p. 59). The construction makes a whole population a single grammatical subject and attaches one negative attribute to it. Such generalisations are a familiar resource of an observer who stands outside a society and summarises it, and they place Ruth outside even though she lives in a Lahore household and depends on it. The rest of the story steadily erodes this stance of distance.

The erosion happens chiefly in Ruth's exchanges with her maid, Billo. When a ragged mullah calls at the gate, Billo turns him away by invoking the propriety of the house, telling him it is not seemly to disturb its sanctity "when the Sahib is away" (p. 66). When Ruth, appalled at the rudeness, invites the cleric into the hall, Billo slams the door on him. Ruth objects that the same thing could have been said "more politely," and Billo replies, "Memsahib, you so little understand our ways!" (p. 66). The exchange inverts the expected relation of mood and politeness between employer and servant: the employer appeals to politeness, and the servant speaks with "scathing finality" (p. 66). The possessive "our" draws a boundary between local knowledge and Ruth's outsider status, and puts Billo on the side of that boundary that holds authority. The narrative confirms the inversion in the same passage, where Ruth feels "like a rebuked cub" (p. 67).

The pattern recurs when a plain-clothes officer arrives. Ruth asks why he has been left standing in the porch and tells Billo to show him in. Billo answers with a bare directive, "No. Better you talk outside," and holds out Ruth's robe (p. 67). The narrator adds that Ruth, once infuriated by Billo's habit of correcting her, has "learnt enough not to question her judgement on matters of apparel" (p. 67). In terms of Fairclough's (1992) attention to mood and modality as markers of social relations, the unmitigated negative and the imperative belong to the speaker who controls the situation. At such moments situated cultural knowledge outranks the formal hierarchy of employer and servant

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At the level of discursive practice, the story draws on two recognisable discourses. The first is the discourse of Western expatriate domesticity in postcolonial South Asia, in which servants are individually named (here Billo, Grace the sweeper and the gardener) yet remain structurally subordinate. Ruth notices Grace's beauty and reflects that, as a sweeper, she is "largely invisible" to everyone else (p. 62), a perception that marks both Ruth's sympathy and her distance. The second is the discourse of Khalistani hijacking in the late 1980s. The narrator explains that Sikh dissidents were forcing Indian domestic flights across the border and that Pakistani authorities would delay permission to land (p. 62). Ruth first meets this discourse as a spectator, watching from her lawn as the cook shouts "Indian jet is hijack!" (p. 61). The story does not leave her there. A sub-inspector from the ISI questions her for hosting an Indian woman in the cantonment, which he tells her is a crime (pp. 68 to 69). Later Raj takes her to the shrine complex where the hijackers are confined during their trials, and the Sikh elders welcome her as the minister's "begum" (p. 89). The geopolitical discourse thus reaches Ruth through surveillance of her hospitality and a public misreading of her relationship with Raj. It enters her life chiefly as a regulator of her conduct as a woman and a foreigner.

At the level of social practice, the story stages the meeting of Western expatriate privilege with the labour structures and security apparatus of Zia-era Pakistan, which the narrative names directly (p. 69). Ruth's authority is materially real, since she employs and directs the household staff, but in matters of propriety, safety and dress it repeatedly depends on Billo's judgement, and in matters of residence on her landlord's standing as a retired general (p. 69). Bhabha's (1994) account of hybridity helps describe this: authority does not rest securely on either side of the East-West line but shifts according to which kind of knowledge a situation requires.

The romantic plot adds a further axis of power. Raj's courtly diction, which repeatedly addresses Ruth as "my dear" (p. 57), builds a discourse of admiration that invites her to imagine herself outside the household's routines. Against it the story sets the gatekeeper, Jungi Khan, who has been instructed not to let strange men disturb the memsahib while the sahib is away (p. 77). The decisive scene comes when Raj, alone with Ruth upstairs, notices the armed guard on the landing and understands that Jungi Khan would kill him if he so much as touched her, because the guard is "honour bound to protect Rick's possessions" (p. 98). The phrase is focalised through Raj, and it is precise: it records how the code the guard lives by classifies Ruth, as property held on her husband's behalf. The same woman who directs the household is positioned, within another discourse, as something the household protects.

The affair ends that night. Ruth knows it is over and feels "a sense of relief," remembering the "merciless gossip" that followed another woman's discovered affair (p. 99). The ending is therefore not a calm calculation made in isolation. It follows directly from a threat of lethal violence, and Ruth's own reflection converts that threat into a judgement about reputation. This fits Kandiyoti's (1988) account of the patriarchal bargain: Ruth does not contest the order that regulates her conduct. She calculates her position within it and acts to preserve it, and the relief she feels shows how fully she has absorbed its terms.

Billo, by contrast, exercises the more visible agency in the story, turning visitors away, dictating dress and controlling access to her employer. Neither woman is simply powerful or simply powerless, nor does the story's interest lie in the distribution of authority between them.

4.2 "Ruth and the Afghan" and the domestic refraction of geopolitics

Where "Ruth and the Hijackers" foregrounds domestic and romantic registers, "Ruth and the Afghan" interweaves the same domestic register with geopolitical reflection that begins with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (p. 103). The most revealing textual instance is a small one. Ruth goes into the kitchen to ask whether Chikoo has been fed, and the narrative

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voice glosses the question as "more a ritual than a query," an unconscious means of reclaiming the house from the servants and "establishing her domain" (p. 102). The gloss makes explicit what discourse analysis would otherwise have to infer: a question that seems to request information performs a different act, the repeated assertion of territorial authority over the household. A trivial speech act becomes a technology of domestic power, and the narrator points to the gap between its form and its social function.

Abdul Abbas is introduced through Ruth's memory of an earlier balance of power. Four years before, in Kabul, he had been "Minister of Trade and Finance" with authority over a sale Rick was negotiating, and he had received Ruth and Rick in his own house (p. 109). News later reached them that he had been exiled in the overthrow and had fled with his family to the United States (p. 113). The story therefore reverses the expected hospitality relation. Abdul Abbas was once the host, and when Ruth meets him again it is not as her guest but at a polo dinner at the Punjab Club in Lahore, in the company of two young Americans she takes to be covert operatives (pp. 109 to 115).

Their exchange is the story's key textual instance of power negotiated through register. Asked whether he and his wife had migrated to America, Abdul Abbas says they had to flee Kabul "with only the clothes on our backs" (p. 115). Ruth, "desperate to lighten the mood," asks whether he took his goats and rooster with him. He repeats his phrase with an added term of address, "Only the clothes on our backs, my dear," with "a quiet, rueful look" (p. 115). The repetition works as a gentle correction: it declines Ruth's joke without rebuking her directly, and the address term softens the correction while keeping its force. Ruth blushes and apologises for being flippant. Abdul Abbas then repairs the moment himself with a joke of his own, "We ate the fellow in the end" (p. 115). Within three turns he has refused the comic framing of his loss, restored Ruth's face and taken back control of the conversation's tone. The exiled man, materially dispossessed, holds the conversational initiative. Note also that "my dear" is Raj Roy's habitual address to Ruth in both stories (p. 109), so the phrase carries different social meanings for different speakers, flirtatious in Raj's mouth and rueful in Abdul Abbas's.

At the level of discursive practice, the story draws on the discourse of the Soviet-Afghan war and America's covert support for the Afghan resistance, filtering it through friendship, hospitality and party conversation rather than reportage. Van Dijk's (1998) attention to shared mental models is useful here, since the story's meaning depends on readers supplying background knowledge of superpower involvement that the text sketches only briefly. Political discourse surfaces most directly in Ruth's unease "about her country's motives in supporting the Afghans" (p. 105). The narrator complicates even this, observing that she found herself defending American actions in Pakistan "as she never would have done at home" (p. 105). Ruth's political consciousness is thus positioned, shaped by where she stands as much as by what she believes. The American operatives give this consciousness a human form: Ruth first sees them as "trained assassins" and then, briefly, as homesick boys (pp. 116, 121).

At the level of social practice, the story connects one named family to the structure of displacement produced by superpower conflict. Abdul Abbas declares that the mujahedeen will protect him once he is back in Afghanistan (p. 121), and Ruth later learns that he was carried wounded across the border to a refugee camp lashed to a mule, before returning to exile (pp. 125, 127).

Power operates on two scales at once. On the geopolitical scale, Abdul Abbas has lost the ministerial authority he once held and depends on the patronage of the very power about whose motives Ruth is uneasy. On the personal scale, he retains the dignity and conversational authority displayed in the clothes exchange.

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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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The story's ending, set years later in the United States after 2001, closes the relationship on the geopolitical scale as well. At a Washington conference Ruth meets Abdul Abbas's son, Zalmai, who tells her his parents have returned to Kabul (pp. 128 to 129). When Ruth and Rick propose a visit, Zalmai advises against it, because Americans with their "military footprint" are considered occupiers and contact with them would put his parents' lives at risk (pp. 129 to 130). He then softens, hugs Ruth and suggests that perhaps they can go "in a few years" (p. 130). The friendship survives as memory and goodwill, but the political order that Ruth's own country helped shape now forbids its renewal. The result is a scale-split settlement in an unusually sharp form: the personal register is preserved in courtesy and affection, while the macro-political register reaches into the relationship and forecloses it. Ruth's resistance remains internal, in her unease, her tears and her wish to return.

4.3 "Defend Yourself Against Me" and the contest over who may speak

The story is narrated by a woman from Lahore, a teacher at a Houston university who calls herself a scion of Anglican Protestants and is writing a novel about Partition (pp. 210, 211, 215). It opens not with 1947 but with a wedding photograph of her friend Vijay's grandparents. The bride, "her nervous eyes wide, her lips slightly parted," barely reaches the bridegroom's ribs, and the narrator guesses she could be ten or sixteen (p. 208). She then generalises that "marketable Indian brides" of that era wore the bewildered faces "of lambs to the slaughter" (p. 208). The photograph has nothing to do with Partition violence. Its function is to establish, before the central narrative begins, a figurative frame in which girls are goods. The adjective "marketable" carries the logic of exchange into the language of marriage, and the simile anticipates the story's later image of women sold in the streets in 1947. The opening thus prepares the reader to see communal violence against women as continuous with ordinary structures of exchange rather than as an aberration.

The central event, the abduction of Ammi-ji, mother of Sikander Khan, a neighbour from the narrator's Lahore childhood, is never narrated directly. Access to it is mediated by euphemism, whispering and withheld speech. Mrs Khan whispers that Ammi-ji once told her she "went mad" (p. 225). The narrator gathers from remarks Mrs Khan "let slip" at a party that Ammi-ji was kidnapped, and wants to know what she was about to say "when she checked herself" (p. 238). Sikander answers the narrator's questions candidly but "balks at any mention of Ammi-ji" (p. 239), until he reproduces, in a harsh voice, the street cry his mother heard, "Zenana for sale!" (p. 239). The pattern is analytically significant. Silence and partial telling are not the absence of discourse here but a discursive strategy through which the family manages a painful history. The narrative's own structure, assembled from fragments and retreats, reproduces the withholding it describes, and trauma theory's account of experience that returns belatedly and resists direct narration (Caruth, 1996) has a close textual counterpart in this pattern of near-disclosure.

The story's discursive practice is unusually self-conscious. It carries a dedication to a named individual and frames its narrator as a novelist actively seeking a survivor's story. She asks Sikander whether she may use his family's experiences of Partition "in the novel I am writing" (p. 238). This metafictional framing draws on the discourse of Partition testimony and oral-history recovery while exposing an ethical asymmetry within it, between the outsider who seeks material and the family who must decide what may be said. A DHA-informed reading (Wodak, 2001) is essential, since the story's meaning depends on the specific history of communal violence it invokes and on the genre of testimony on which it draws. The title points to a further intertext. The story closes with the narrator recalling fragments of a poem by the Bolivian poet Pedro Shimose, from which the title is taken, a poem that addresses a woman and urges her to defend herself against the speaker and the fathers who live on in him (pp. 248 to 249). The story thus ends by turning its account of male violence back on the inheritance of the male speaker.

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At the level of social practice, the story refuses to assign violence to one community. Mrs Khan describes women as "the spoils of war" whatever their religion, "Hindu, Muslim, Sikh" (p. 224). Sikander, explaining his friendship with the Sikh cousins Khushwant and Pratab, says they "weren't even born" and recalls that his own uncles brought "a stable of kidnapped Hindu and Sikh women" across the border, concluding that "We Muslims are no better" (p. 239). The narrator generalises the point in her own voice, describing the "metamorphosis" of mothers, daughters and granddaughters "into possessions" on whose bodies victors and losers alike take revenge (p. 245). Gender is presented as the axis of victimisation that cuts across religious community, and the story places this history in Houston, among friendships that cross religious lines.

The climactic scene complicates any simple account of who holds power over disclosure. At a dinner held to welcome Ammi-ji to America, Khushwant and Pratab arrive dressed as fakirs, fall prostrate and cry "Ammi-ji! Ammi-ji! Forgive us" (p. 243), then "Forgive the wrongs of our fathers" (p. 245). The possessive "our fathers" accepts an inherited responsibility while marking the speakers as distinct from those who acted. What follows is a contest over who may speak for the survivor. Mrs Khan announces that the men are asking forgiveness and then, "speaking on her mother-in-law's account," declares "She forgives you, Brothers," and the sisters repeat the gesture on Ammi-ji's behalf (p. 246). Sikander demands that his mother be sent forward to "finish it now" (p. 247). The women of the family and the son thus each try to perform the act of forgiveness for the person to whom alone it belongs. Ammi-ji refuses to be spoken for. In an altered, high-pitched voice she screams "I will never forgive your fathers!" and calls the men "shaitans" (p. 247). Only after this does she place her hands on their heads and say, in a flat voice, "My sons, I forgave your fathers long ago," adding "How else could I have lived?" (p. 248).

This sequence is the story's most important instance for a discourse-analytic reading. The speech act of forgiveness is first usurped by proxies, then withheld by its rightful speaker, then granted on her own terms and redefined in the granting. Ammi-ji's final words recast forgiveness not as a gift to the penitents but as a condition of her own survival, made long before they asked. Spivak's (1988) question of whether the subaltern can speak finds an unusually literal staging here: the survivor is surrounded by people speaking for her, and her refusal is the means by which she recovers her own voice. The narrator calls the outcome Ammi-ji's "weary capitulation" and hopes the young men's gestures may ease old animosities enough to allow Azra and Khushwant to marry (p. 248). The conflict closes in ritual acknowledgement, but the ritual is contested, and what it achieves is a redistribution of voice rather than restitution.

4.4 "Breaking It Up" and the pronouns of community

The story opens in Lahore with Zareen holding a letter from her daughter, who is studying in the United States. Choking on her tears, she tells her husband Cyrus that Feroza "wants to marry a non" (p. 29). Feroza's letter has already anticipated one line of objection, explaining that she and David have resolved their religious differences "by becoming atheists" (p. 30). Zareen then flies to Denver, where the confrontation takes place in the house Feroza shares with David and two other students (pp. 31 to 33). From the first scene, the conflict is fought largely through grammar.

The first pronoun to cause trouble is Feroza's. Pulling into the drive, she announces "Here's where we live," and Zareen realises with a start that "the 'we' included David" (p. 32). Feroza's household is a new collective that the story sets against her mother's. Zareen's own speech leans heavily on the first-person plural in the name of family and community. When Feroza praises David's mother, Zareen replies, "We are not going to throw you away on the first riffraff that comes your way" (p. 34). She explains the procedure that follows a proposal, "We investigate," and asks about David's antecedents, "his khandan" (p. 34). She tells Feroza

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that her father and she could not sleep, that her grandmother fainted and will be "heartbroken," and that Feroza will be barred from the funeral rites of all three (p. 35). The plural constructs family and community as a single authority speaking with one voice, and lets an individual speaker borrow the weight of absent others; the reader is aware that Cyrus and the grandmother are present only through Zareen's report. The plural is a discursive construction, not a record of agreement.

Zareen's vocabulary does the same work. The threat of "outcast status" (p. 35) and the charge that Feroza "will disgrace the family" (p. 36) place a private decision within a moral economy of honour and shame. Feroza's reply reverses the frame in a single sentence: "I'm only getting married," she says, adding "if the family wants to feel disgraced, let them!" (p. 36). The minimising adverb "only" shrinks the event from a communal crisis to a personal act of ordinary scale, and the conditional clause hands the feeling of disgrace back to the family as their own choice. At this point "Zareen checked herself," recalling her husband's advice not to push their daughter to rebellion (p. 36), and switches from accusation to tears. Feroza comforts her and pleads, "It's just that I love him" (p. 36). Zareen's response, "Love comes after marriage!" (p. 36), sets two incompatible accounts of marriage against each other in four words. In Fairclough's (1992) terms the two women are not simply disagreeing about a fact; they are contesting which identities and relations the conversation will recognise as legitimate.

At the level of discursive practice, Zareen draws on the discourse of Parsi communal ritual and endogamy. With Feroza she uses its terms freely, warning that girls who marry out become "ten times more religious" and citing an acquaintance who now wears her sudra and kusti conspicuously and longs to be readmitted to the Fire Temple (pp. 34 to 35). With David she deploys the same discourse differently. She describes the wedding ceremonies at length, the planting of a mango for fertility, vermilion, garlands and coconuts, adding with "acid relish" that they will break a coconut on his head (p. 50). When David, who is Jewish, says his own parents are not happy about the wedding either, Zareen replies, "All the better. We'll honour your traditions" (p. 51). The offer of respect is a further move in her campaign, and the narrative names the campaign through David's perception: he realises that "Zareen's offensive was not personal but communal" (p. 51), and feels a subtle force in her undermining his worth (p. 51). The ritual detail is not illegible to him. It is explained, generously and at length, precisely so that its weight and its exclusions are felt.

At the level of social practice, the story dramatises the tension between the pressure on a small diasporic minority to sustain itself through in-marriage and the individualising, secular norms Feroza has absorbed during two years in the United States (p. 36). Both positions are presented as coherent on their own terms. A feminist critical reading (Lazar, 2005) notes that two women carry this conflict, and that the communal norm is enforced not by a patriarch but by a mother.

Zareen's power is discursive and emotional rather than coercive. Her authority works through guilt, ritual invocation and the borrowing of communal voice. Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the patriarchal bargain clarifies her position: she negotiates within a communal structure that limits her room for manoeuvre as much as Feroza's, and she appeals to collective obligation precisely because she has no direct authority to compel compliance.

Feroza's counter-power appears most sharply when, after watching David's growing distress, she "instinctively hit back" (p. 54). When Zareen praises the housemates Laura and Shirley as decent girls without boyfriends, Feroza tells her they are lesbians and lovers (pp. 52 to 53). The disclosure introduces a discourse Zareen has no vocabulary for. She is shocked, contemplates "the disgrace" of having raised a daughter who speaks this way, and resolves to tell no one (p. 53). The narrator observes that both women's assaults were "too vicious" and their hurts "too deeply felt" for either to admit (p. 54).

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
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The ending leaves the engagement formally intact but visibly damaged. David withdraws to his room without looking at Zareen, and at the airport Feroza stands beside him looking "insecure and uprooted" (p. 54). On the plane Zareen weeps, then reassures herself that her daughter is "resilient" and would "bounce back," and that she would too once among family and friends, whom she needs "to be assured she had done the right thing" (p. 55). The final clause suggests that the visit has achieved something of what the title names. The story does not say whether the engagement survives, but it makes clear that the mother's discursive campaign has left its mark on the couple and that Zareen carries her own doubts home. This is an unresolved accommodation, but one tilted toward the communal authority the daughter set out to refuse.

4.5 "Sehra-bai" and the return of what was not said

"Sehra-bai" opens two years after its title character's stroke. She goes through "phases of intense reminiscence" in which old memories return so immediately that the "rage, or guilt, or sadness" that accompanied them returns too (p. 173). The narration responds to this condition. It is set in the present tense and moves into the past whenever memory takes hold, so that the reader experiences in the form of the text the collapse of temporal boundaries the stroke has produced. This feature enacts the story's central concern with the return of suppressed memory, an effect that trauma criticism associates with the belated and intrusive character of painful experience (Caruth, 1996; Whitehead, 2004).

Ruby's care is described through verbs of physical tenderness. She "holds her mother's wasted body," rubs her face against Sehra-bai's and strokes her chest to calm her (p. 173). In terms of transitivity, Ruby is the agent and her mother the affected participant, and the grammar registers a reversal of the conventional mother-daughter relation. The same opening page adds that the two women "discuss the episode as if it has present currency" and "structure new strategies to cope" until Sehra-bai feels more in control (p. 173). The management of memory is presented as collaborative labour carried out through talk, which prevents the reversal from becoming simple domination.

The story's discursive texture is built from two kinds of disclosure, one delayed and one present. The delayed kind belongs to Ruby's childhood. Sehra-bai's confidential conversations with her advisers, among them Mr Jariwalla and Dr Bharucha, were held in low voices so that servants and children would not overhear (p. 204). Her bedroom door was often shut though "seldom locked" (p. 204), and when Ruby "blundered into the room" the talk stopped (p. 205). The verb "blundered" casts the child as an accidental intruder into adult discourse. The narrator adds that Ruby also heard "hushed altercations" at night and sounds she "grew up to realize were furtive blows" (p. 204). Ruby's understanding is assembled retrospectively, through constructions such as "Ruby now realizes" and "It occurs to her" (p. 202). These verbs of cognition mark knowledge pieced together decades after the fact.

The present kind of disclosure is Sehra-bai's own, and it gives her a voice that is easily overlooked. The narrator states that it takes "an illness that causes Sehra-bai to confide the emotional turmoil of her past" before Ruby can understand her mother's despair (p. 206). Ruby invites the confidence directly, saying "Talk to me . . . we'll discuss it" (p. 196). Sehra-bai then narrates the night an anonymous caller told her where her husband was, and she performs the voices of the past. She mimics Dr Bharucha's warning that jealousy "will become a monster" so exactly that Ruby almost believes the doctor's spirit has been conjured (p. 196), and she reproduces the caller's "guttural laugh" (p. 197). She also controls her audience, sending Perin away with "Tell her to leave" (p. 196). Mimicry is a significant discursive resource here: it allows Sehra-bai to re-voice the men who once spoke to her, giving her authorship over a history in which she was the one spoken to.

At the level of social practice, the story places Sehra-bai's marital unhappiness within the norms governing what a woman of her class and community could say openly. Her distress

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
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was channelled through discreet and socially sanctioned confidants, and her pain was eased with medicine that "had opium" (p. 196). Feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2007) identifies such reticence as gendered: not merely a personal disposition but a norm that regulates which experiences women may voice and where.

Power in the story shifts across the span of time it covers. In the remembered past, Rustom held economic and marital power, and his sudden wealth made him, in the narrator's words, "a creature of irresistible attraction" to other women (p. 202). Sehra responded with the means available to her, cultivating glamour to hold him (p. 202). In the narrated present, that configuration has given way to Ruby's authority as carer over a dependent mother. The story does not present this reversal as a gain: Ruby cried while her mother was in hospital and after she came home, and at times wishes she were back in America with her own family (pp. 193, 206).

The conflict between mother and daughter is resolved only in part. After Ruby returned from America the two women "made their peace" through shopping trips, restaurant meals and visits to friends, and Ruby's childhood resentments "evaporated" (pp. 206 to 207). Then the stroke "snatched her mother away," and Sehra-bai began "again withdrawing, and this time with a finality that would not be denied" (p. 207). The word "again" ties the medical crisis to the emotional withdrawal that shaped their earlier relationship. The reconciliation was real, and it

Agency in the present is constrained for Sehra-bai by her condition, yet the story grants her a real form of agency through speech, in confiding, mimicking and choosing her listener. Ruby's agency appears in the sustained labour of care and in her reinterpretation of a mother she once experienced mainly as remote.

5. Discussion

5.1 Overview of findings

Read together, the five analyses show consistent discursive patterns beneath considerable variation in setting and scale. In each story a relationship organised by a recognised hierarchy proves less stable in language than in social structure, and in each the conflict that arises from it closes without being resolved at its source. This section develops these patterns under seven headings: the household as a field of authority (5.2), the politics of voice (5.3), silence and disclosure (5.4), gender across privilege and community (5.5), geopolitics through intimacy (5.6), agency (5.7), and the typology of endings this article calls partial settlement (5.8). It closes with implications and limits (5.9).

The table below sets out, for each story, the axis of power most at stake, the textual features that carry the analysis, the supporting perspective that proved most useful, and the mode in which the conflict closes. Page numbers refer to Sidhwa (2013).

Story	Principal axis of power	Key textual features (pages)	Most useful supporting perspective	Mode of settlement
Ruth and the Hijackers	Class and nationality inside the household, and gendered honour	Billo's unmitigated directives and "our ways" (pp. 66 to 67); "Rick's possessions" focalised through Raj (p. 98)	Bhabha's hybridity; Kandiyoti's patriarchal bargain	Self-regulated withdrawal

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Story	Principal axis of power	Key textual features (pages)	Most useful supporting perspective	Mode of settlement
Ruth and the Afghan	Geopolitical position refracted through domestic and social talk	Ritual question glossed by the narrator (p. 102); the repeated "only the clothes on our backs" (p. 115); "military footprint" (p. 130)	van Dijk's shared mental models	Scale-split settlement, later foreclosed
Defend Yourself Against Me	Gender across religious community, and the right to speak for a survivor	Withheld disclosure (pp. 225, 238 to 239); proxy forgiveness and Ammi-ji's refusal (pp. 246 to 248)	Discourse-Historical Approach; Spivak	Contested ritual acknowledgement
Breaking It Up	Communal obligation against individual choice in marriage	Competing uses of "we" (pp. 32, 34); "only" (p. 36); ritual detail addressed to David (pp. 50 to 52)	Feminist CDA; Kandiyoti	Unresolved accommodation, tilted to communal authority
Sehra-bai	Generation and marriage, concealment and care	Tense movement and verbs of care (p. 173); retrospective cognition (p. 202); mimicry of past voices (pp. 196 to 197)	Trauma criticism; feminist CDA	Provisional reconciliation reopened

The five stories produce five different endings, and none is a reconciliation that removes the cause of the conflict. In each case the evidence lies in small, recurrent textual features, not in plot.

5.2 Power as relational, the household as a field of authority

In every story the home is the main ground on which power is negotiated, and in every story it holds more than one centre of authority. This is the corpus's clearest support for Foucault's (1978, 1980) account of power as relational and exercised from many points, not possessed by a single sovereign party.

The Ruth stories show two forms of authority coexisting in one house. Billo decides who may enter, telling the mullah that the sahib and memsahib are Christians and that it is "not seemly to disturb the sanctity of the house when the Sahib is away" (p. 66). She decides what Ruth will wear and where an official will be met, and the narrator records the result in one clause: "Confronted by so much authority, Ruth didn't dare argue" (p. 67). Ruth's counter-practice is the daily question about the dog, which the narrator calls "more a ritual than a query" whose function is to reclaim the house "from the servants" (p. 102). Neither form displaces the other.

In "Breaking It Up" the household is Feroza's, and Zareen holds no material authority in it. Her first discovery is that it has its own collective voice, since Feroza's "Here's where we

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live" includes David (p. 32). What follows is a contest between the absent Lahore family Zareen invokes and the Denver household Feroza has formed, and Zareen's power travels in the discourses she brings with her. In "Sehra-bai" the same house holds two regimes decades apart. In the past, authority worked through a bedroom door "often shut" though "seldom locked" (p. 204), and Sehra shielded her daughter so successfully that Ruby "had felt shut out of her mother's life" (p. 205). Protection and exclusion are one act seen from two positions. In the present Ruby governs as carer, yet Sehra-bai still sends her granddaughter away with "Tell her to leave" (p. 196) and, however much she indulges Perin, will not let familiarity "undermine her authority as grandmother" (p. 177).

The stories also attach different kinds of authority to different kinds of knowledge. Ruth commands economically but defers in matters of local propriety. Zareen commands in matters of community but loses ground in the American idiom of individual choice. Ruby commands as carer but depends on her mother's willingness to confide. Fairclough's (1992) claim that discourse both reflects and constitutes social relations is borne out at this small scale, where social position is made and remade exchange by exchange.

5.3 The politics of voice, speaking for and speaking back

A second pattern concerns who speaks, and on whose behalf. Spivak (1988) distinguished speaking for someone, as political representation, from representing them, as portrayal, and warned that both can leave the represented without a voice of her own. Several of these stories turn on the moment when the person spoken for answers back.

The clearest case is the climax of "Defend Yourself Against Me." When Khushwant and Pratab beg Ammi-ji's forgiveness, Mrs Khan, "speaking on her mother-in-law's account," replies "She forgives you, Brothers," and her sisters forgive the men "on Ammi-ji's behalf" (p. 246). Sikander calls for his mother to be sent forward to finish the matter (p. 247), and guests whisper that she "never talks about it" (p. 246). The narrator, who has sought Ammi-ji's story for her novel (p. 238), is a proxy of another kind. Ammi-ji's own response can be read through the Discourse-Historical Approach's attention to nomination, the means by which social actors are named (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). She first calls the men "badmashes" and "Goondas" (p. 244), then "Sons and grandsons of shaitans" (p. 247), and finally "My sons" (p. 248). The sequence moves from criminality to inherited evil to kinship, and she alone performs it. Kandiyoti's (1988) account of classic patriarchy, in which senior women gain authority over junior women in the household, sharpens the point. Here the junior woman assumes the senior woman's voice, and the senior woman must reclaim it.

The pattern recurs elsewhere in lighter keys. Zareen speaks for absent relatives, reporting that the grandmother "told me to beg you on her knees" (p. 35), and Feroza answers by separating the family's feelings from her own act (p. 36). Billo defines her employers to the mullah as Christians who give to their own church (p. 66). Ruth, abroad, finds herself defending American policy "as she never would have done at home" (p. 105), so that position rather than conviction determines her speech. At the shrine a misnaming of Ruth as the minister's "begum" stands because neither she nor Raj "could think to correct the inference" in time (p. 89).

"Sehra-bai" offers the most inventive form of speaking back. Sehra-bai, who "has always been an extraordinary mimic" (p. 196), re-voices Dr Bharucha so exactly that Ruby almost believes his spirit has been summoned (p. 196), and reproduces the anonymous caller's laugh (p. 197). This is not Bhabha's (1994) colonial mimicry and should not be assimilated to it. It is a domestic, gendered practice through which a woman once addressed by others' warnings and taunts becomes their narrator. Across the corpus, proxy speech is not presented as simply illegitimate, since Mrs Khan's intervention is called "magnanimous" (p. 246). It is shown to have limits, and the person spoken for retains a claim the proxy cannot extinguish.

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
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5.4 Silence, disclosure and memory

Silence in these stories is not empty. Foucault (1978) argued that silence is less the limit of discourse than an element that works alongside what is said, and that there are many silences, not one. Sidhwa's stories distinguish several, and often show one silence doing more than one thing.

"Defend Yourself Against Me" is built on a protective silence that the narrator wants to break. What she learns of Ammi-ji arrives through a whisper (p. 225), a remark Mrs Khan "let slip" before she "checked herself" (p. 238) and a son who "balks at any mention" of his mother (p. 239). The story does not treat breaking this silence as straightforwardly good. When the Sikh cousins prostrate themselves, Azra fears they are "resurrecting a past that is best left in whatever recesses of the mind Ammi-ji has chosen to bury it" (p. 245). The verb "chosen" locates the silence in Ammi-ji's own decision. Her final words, that she forgave "long ago" because otherwise she could not have lived (p. 248), confirm that silence was the form her response had taken for decades. The narrative form mirrors this. Caruth (1996) describes trauma as experience not fully grasped when it occurs, returning belatedly and resisting direct representation, and Whitehead (2004) identifies fragmentation, repetition and intertextuality as recurrent strategies of trauma fiction. The story uses all three. Its central event is never narrated, the street cry "Zenana for sale!" is repeated by Sikander and recalled again at the climax (pp. 239, 244), and the story closes on another text, the poem that gives it its title (pp. 248 to 249).

"Sehra-bai" shows silence that first excludes and is later undone by illness. The narrator reflects that it takes decades, "and an illness that causes Sehra-bai to confide the emotional turmoil of her past," before Ruby understands her mother's despair (p. 206). The story is careful about what returns. Ruby cannot be sure whether certain words were Mr Jariwalla's or Dr Bharucha's, and wonders whether "her memory" is "playing tricks" (p. 204). Disclosure, when it comes, is partial and reconstructed. The story also records a chemical silence. The medicine Dr Bharucha gave Sehra "had opium," and afterwards "Nothing mattered" (p. 196). The sanctioned response to a wife's distress is sedation, a practice presented as care that feminist critical discourse analysis asks us to read as part of a gendered order (Lazar, 2005).

The Ruth stories add the silence of not wanting to know. Ruth has "no wish to know" the young Americans with Abdul Abbas, "or, for that matter, what they were up to" (p. 115), and she had noticed the ISI's red Suzuki by her lawn without understanding it (p. 69). Here silence is a privilege of position. Across the corpus, then, silence protects Ammi-ji and is also what her family speaks over, shields the young Ruby and isolates her, sedates Sehra and spares Ruth. A reading that treated silence only as oppression, or only as resistance, would misdescribe every one of these stories.

5.5 Gender across privilege, class and community

Gender is present in every story but never alone. Crenshaw (1991) argued that women positioned at several intersections of disadvantage cannot be understood by analysing any single axis. The stories bear this out in two directions: women in very different positions are subject to a shared logic of gendered possession, and that logic means different things according to class and community.

The shared logic appears in a lexical motif that crosses stories. Jungi Khan is "honour bound to protect Rick's possessions" (p. 98), a category that includes Ruth. "Defend Yourself Against Me" speaks of "marketable Indian brides" (p. 208), of women as "the spoils of war" (p. 224) and of the "metamorphosis" of mothers, daughters and granddaughters "into possessions" (p. 245). The wealthy American wife, the child bride and the abducted women of 1947 occupy very different positions, yet the stories describe all of them in the vocabulary

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
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of property and exchange. This continuity suggests that the stories treat extreme violence and ordinary arrangements of marriage and honour as points on one continuum.

Class decides what the logic means in practice. Ruth's status as one of "Rick's possessions" brings her an armed protector whose presence ends her affair, but she can also resolve to tell "Rick's office to get rid of him" (p. 99). Grace, the sweeper in the same compound, is "largely invisible," and her beauty matters only to other sweepers and, should they get hold of her, pimps (p. 62). The same economy of female value protects one woman and endangers the other. The narrator of "Defend Yourself Against Me" likewise marks her distance from Mrs Khan's sisters, setting an "English-speaking scion of Anglican Protestants from Lahore" against "Muslim village belles" (p. 210), even as the story insists that the violence of 1947 fell on women "no matter what you are" (p. 224).

Women also enforce gendered norms. Zareen tells Feroza she had "better bleach your face before you come home" (p. 32), answers her declaration of love with "Love comes after marriage!" (p. 36) and pictures life outside the community as "rattling like loose stones in America" (p. 36). Lazar (2005, 2007) argues that a gendered order is reproduced through apparently consensual everyday practices, including those carried out by women. The story keeps this from becoming a merely Parsi or South Asian trait through David's view of his own mother, whom he has seen "perform the cultivated rituals of a closed society fending for itself" (p. 52). Kandiyoti's (1988) patriarchal bargain explains why women defend arrangements that constrain them. When Rustom's wealth makes him attractive to other women, Sehra "rallied with whatever random means she had at hand" (p. 202), and the story counts the costs in jealousy (pp. 195 to 196), nights of "hushed altercations" and what Ruby "grew up to realize were furtive blows" (p. 204). Gender, in short, is the medium through which class, religion, nationality and generation are lived in these stories.

5.6 Geopolitics through intimacy

Partition, the India-Pakistan conflict, the Khalistan movement, the Soviet-Afghan war, military rule in Pakistan and American intervention after 2001 are all present in the corpus, yet none is the subject of sustained political narration. Each enters through a household, a party, a friendship or a family dinner. This is the most consistent way in which the stories connect text to social practice in Fairclough's (1992, 1995) sense.

"Ruth and the Hijackers" places its domestic plot in "the late 1980s," when Sikh dissidents were hijacking Indian flights and Pakistani authorities delayed permission to land (p. 62). The same history reaches Ruth's porch. An ISI officer questions her for hosting an Indian woman, and the narrator notes that the distrust between the two countries "bordered on paranoia" (p. 68). Her own right to live in the cantonment depends on a landlord who is a retired general, at a time when "General Zia was Head of State" (p. 69). At the shrine, Raj cannot say what he thinks of the hijackers' cause, because it "would create a political crisis" (p. 92). A story that begins with ferns and servants becomes a story about a security state regulating private hospitality and public speech.

"Ruth and the Afghan" follows a longer arc, from the Soviet invasion of 1979 (p. 103) through the covert war, glimpsed in young Americans Ruth regards as "trained assassins" (p. 121), to the years after 2001 and the anger at "perceived American meddling" (p. 127). Zalmai's warning condenses that history into a single refusal, since Americans with their "military footprint" are "considered occupiers" (p. 130). Van Dijk's (1998) account of ideology as socially shared mental models describes what the story asks of its reader, who must supply the history the story only sketches.

Van Dijk (1998) also describes ideological discourse as polarising a positive in-group against a negative out-group. "Defend Yourself Against Me" dismantles this from within. Asked how he can befriend Sikhs, Sikander recalls that his own uncles brought "a stable of kidnapped Hindu and Sikh women" across the border and concludes, "We Muslims are no better" (p.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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239). The story sets this beside guests who remark that "You can't beat the Punjabis when it comes to drama" and that "The Sikhs have a screw loose in the head" (p. 246), at which the narrator frowns. The story clearly values the harder recognition of shared guilt over the reflex of blaming the other group.

Diaspora frames several of these encounters: a Parsi mother's campaign in Denver, a Partition reckoning in Houston, and a daughter caught by what the narrator of "Sehra-bai" calls "one of the more poignant dilemmas of migration" (p. 193). Bhabha's (1994) account of identities formed between cultures is useful, but the stories do not present hybridity as a happy synthesis. The narrator of "Defend Yourself Against Me" first finds the Sikh men's prostration "incongruous and melodramatic in this oil-rich corner of the pragmatic Western world" (p. 243), then revises that judgement as she sees the history in Ammi-ji's face (p. 245). Ruth's perceptions are themselves a geopolitical discourse. Her judgement of "the general population of Pakistan" (p. 59) and her impression of Afghanistan as "a moderate nation state" (p. 113) are generalisations made from a position of outside authority. Said (1978) showed how such statements about whole societies have underwritten Western claims to know the East. That the second judgement is favourable does not change the position from which it is made, and the stories expose its limits through Billo's correction in one story and Zalmai's in the other.

5.7 Agency from within

Agency in the corpus is exercised mostly by characters whose formal standing is weak, and mostly through discourse. Butler (1997) argued that because subjects are constituted in language, agency lies not in escaping its terms but in taking them up and redirecting them. Almost every effective act in these stories works in this way.

The acts take five forms. The first is refusal in the other's terms, as when Feroza accepts the vocabulary of disgrace and hands it back, saying that if the family wants to feel disgraced, it may (p. 36). The second is redefinition of a speech act. Ammi-ji neither refuses forgiveness in the end nor grants it as others had in her name. She relocates it in her own past and her own need: "How else could I have lived?" (p. 248). This is the strongest instance in the corpus of the redistribution of voice that feminist and postcolonial criticism associates with resolution (Spivak, 1988). The third is control of disclosure and audience, seen in Sehra-bai's choice of listener and her mimicry (pp. 196 to 197) and in Abdul Abbas's repeated phrase and joke, which decline Ruth's levity and then restore her composure (p. 115). The fourth is situated expertise: Billo's knowledge of what is seemly, whose success the narrator records when Ruth "learnt enough not to question her judgement on matters of apparel" (p. 67). The fifth is reinterpretation. Ruby revises her judgement of her mother, and the narrator turns the question on her present, asking whether she now sees her mother "from the condescending and bullying perspective of a woman trundling an aged mother in a wheelchair" (p. 206).

Ruth's agency differs because she holds real authority. She resolves to have "Rick's office" dismiss the guard (p. 99), using her husband's power against the man who enforced her husband's claim on her, and she ends the affair. Both acts accept the verdict of the code Jungi Khan embodied while removing the man himself. The limits of all these forms must be stated plainly. Billo remains a servant, Feroza does not change her mother's mind, Ammi-ji cannot undo 1947, Sehra-bai cannot recover her health, and Abdul Abbas cannot restore his ministry or receive his American friends. The stories present agency as exercised from inside positions that remain structurally constrained, which is what Butler's account predicts and why the endings take the form described next.

5.8 Partial settlement, a typology of endings

The most significant cross-story finding concerns the way conflict ends. No story closes in a reconciliation that removes the cause of its conflict, and none simply breaks off with nothing settled. This article uses the term partial settlement, proposed here as a descriptive term, for

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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an ending in which a conflict reaches a close that is temporary, socially recognisable or locally sufficient, while the structure that produced it survives intact. The term is narrower than "open ending." An open ending leaves the outcome undetermined, whereas a partial settlement fixes one outcome precisely and leaves another unresolved, and the analytical interest lies in the relation between the two. The five stories realise five distinct modes.

Mode	What is settled	What persists	Story and pages
Self-regulated withdrawal	The affair ends, by the woman's own decision	The order of honour and reputation that the guard enforced	Ruth and the Hijackers (pp. 98 to 99)
Scale-split settlement, later foreclosed	Personal goodwill between Ruth and the Afghan family	Exile, war and the politics of occupation, which finally bar a reunion	Ruth and the Afghan (pp. 115, 128 to 130)
Contested ritual acknowledgement	The apology is made and forgiveness is spoken	The injury of 1947, and the question of who may forgive	Defend Yourself Against Me (pp. 243 to 248)
Unresolved accommodation, tilted to communal authority	The visit ends and each woman privately composes herself	The disagreement over the marriage, and the damage the visit has done	Breaking It Up (pp. 54 to 55)
Provisional reconciliation reopened	Mother and daughter make their peace	Withdrawal, now through illness rather than estrangement	Sehra-bai (pp. 206 to 207)

Several details sharpen the modes. Ruth's "relief" on the night she knows the affair is over (p. 99) shows how fully the settlement belongs both to her and to the order she has absorbed. In "Ruth and the Afghan" the historical scale eventually reaches back into the personal one, and Zalmai's warning forecloses the friendship's renewal (p. 130). In "Defend Yourself Against Me" the right to perform the ritual is itself fought over by Mrs Khan, her sisters, Sikander and Ammi-ji (pp. 246 to 248). Zareen's final need to be "assured she had done the right thing" (p. 55) leaves her doubt as visible as her resolve. In "Sehra-bai" the word "again" in "again withdrawing" (p. 207) ties the new loss to the old.

The typology connects the two traditions of thinking about conflict outlined in Section 2. Lederach (2005) emphasises the moral imagination and the capacity of relationships to change people over time, and the stories contain such moments: a friendship survives decades and a war, Ruby's childhood resentments dissolve in a late companionship (p. 207), and the narrator of "Defend Yourself Against Me" hopes the young men's gestures may ease old animosities enough to allow Azra and Khushwant to marry (p. 248). Feminist and postcolonial criticism tends instead to locate resolution in the recovery of voice by the silenced (Spivak, 1988), and this too is present, most clearly in Ammi-ji's refusal to be spoken for and Feroza's refusal of her mother's frame. In no story, however, does either form of change reach the structure itself. The household hierarchy, the security state, the geopolitical order, the history of communal violence, the norms of endogamy and the gendered expectation of discretion all survive the endings.

Partial settlement is therefore not a failure of resolution. Nor can it be put down simply to the brevity of the form, since the pattern holds across stories set in different decades, countries

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

and communities, some of which, like "Ruth and the Afghan," span many years. It is better understood as the stories' account of how conflict ends when the structures that produce it remain in place. The stories decline to console the reader with closures their social worlds would not provide, and attend instead to the small, real settlements people make in order to go on living. Ammi-ji's question, "How else could I have lived?" (p. 248), could stand as an epigraph for the whole pattern.

5.9 Implications for Critical Discourse Analysis of fiction, and limits of the reading

Three implications follow for the use of CDA in literary study. First, the supporting perspectives proved useful unevenly, as the table in 5.1 shows. Different axes of power are salient in different stories, which is why an organising framework able to accommodate them, Fairclough's three-dimensional model, suits a varied corpus better than any one supporting theory.

Second, features often treated as merely stylistic carry social meaning when read through discursive practice into social structure. A narrator's gloss turns a household question into territorial assertion (p. 102), a minimising adverb shrinks a communal crisis into a personal decision (p. 36), and a sequence of nominations traces a survivor's movement on her own terms (pp. 244 to 248). Point of view matters as much as wording. Simpson (2004) shows how the presentation of a character's perception shapes what a text asserts and on whose authority. "Rick's possessions" (p. 98) carries its force because it is Raj's realisation of mortal danger, and Ruth's verdict on "the general population of Pakistan" (p. 59) belongs to her perception, not to the story's judgement.

Third, the evidence must be verified in context. Checking every quotation against the full text substantially changed the account of who forgives whom in "Defend Yourself Against Me," of who hosts whom in "Ruth and the Afghan" and of how far the hijacking reaches into Ruth's life. Qualitative interpretation earns credibility through such transparent return to the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and in literary CDA, which works from short quoted instances, the speaker, addressee, surrounding exchange and point of view of each instance must be confirmed.

The reading also has limits. It works from the English text, and words such as "khandan," "zenana," "badmashes," "Goondas" and "shaitans" carry associations that an analysis attentive to Urdu and Punjabi could develop further. Five stories from one collection cannot support statistical generalisation about Sidhwa's work. The reading foregrounds gender, class and community, and the comic register that runs through several stories, from Zareen's coconut joke (p. 50) to Abdul Abbas's rooster (p. 115), deserves fuller attention than a study of power and conflict can give it. These limits mark where further work could test and extend the argument.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined five stories from Bapsi Sidhwa's *Their Language of Love* through Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, supported selectively by Foucauldian, feminist, discourse-historical, socio-cognitive and postcolonial perspectives. In answer to the first research question, the analysis has shown that textual choices in the stories construct power as relational and unevenly distributed. A servant's unhedged imperatives outrank her employer's formal authority in matters of local knowledge. A habitual question about a dog functions as a claim to territory. A mother's collective pronoun borrows the voice of a community that is not present. Verbs of care register a daughter's reversal of her mother's former authority. In each case formal status is an unreliable guide to who holds discursive power in a given exchange.

In answer to the second question, the stories draw on and rework recognisable discourses, among them expatriate domesticity, international terrorism, Cold War displacement, Partition testimony, communal endogamy and family concealment. Through these discourses they

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

connect individual relationships to wider social structures, including the labour hierarchy of the postcolonial household, the politics of superpower conflict, the gendered violence of 1947, the survival strategies of a diasporic minority and the norms that govern what women may say about their marriages. The stories rarely state these connections directly. They encode them in small textual choices that the three-dimensional model is designed to trace.

In answer to the third question, the analysis has identified a recurring pattern in how conflicts end, which this article has called partial settlement. No story ends in full reconciliation. Conflicts close through self-regulated withdrawal, scale-split settlement, contested ritual acknowledgement, unresolved accommodation or provisional reconciliation reopened. In every case the structure that produced the conflict survives its close. Agency within these settlements belongs mainly to characters with little formal authority and works mainly through discourse, by refusing, withholding, disclosing selectively or reworking memory, rather than through confrontation.

The study contributes to scholarship in three ways. It offers a sustained discourse-analytic account of Sidhwa's short fiction, a body of work that has received far less critical attention than her novels. It extends the application of Fairclough's model to the short story and shows that features often treated as merely stylistic carry social meaning when read across all three dimensions. It also proposes partial settlement as a concept for describing how literary conflict ends when the structures that cause it remain in place, a concept that may prove useful beyond Sidhwa's work.

Several directions for further research follow. The framework could be tested against the remaining stories of *Their Language of Love* and against Sidhwa's novels, to establish whether the patterns identified here hold across her wider work. The same five stories could be reanalysed with the Discourse-Historical Approach or the socio-cognitive approach as the primary framework, to see what a different weighting of perspectives reveals. Comparative study of short fiction by other South Asian and diasporic Parsi writers could clarify what is distinctive in Sidhwa's treatment of communal endogamy, Partition memory and care between generations. Finally, reception research on how different reading communities respond to these stories, particularly "Defend Yourself Against Me," would extend the analysis into the domain of interpretation that Fairclough's model addresses only in part.