

## Saga of Trauma and Pain in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*

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### Abstract

The word 'partition' is noun which meant the act or process of dividing something into parts, or the state of being so divided or fragmented. There are so many philosophers and historians who have tried to define the concept of partition from various points of view. Literature presents the social problems intellectually. Literature has exposed sensitive topic systematically and provide unique solution on it. Literature has enlightened medium of society. As like 'Phoenix Bird', the partition literature rapidly becomes popular in the society. Partition literature is a multiple combination of historical painful memories of extra-ordinary human being. This study examines themes of trauma and identity in Partition Literature, with focus on Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man*. The novel shows how innocence transforms into a painful awareness of cruelty and novel fully describes the human cost of freedom or separate identity.

**Keywords:** Partition, Cruelty, Trauma, Pain, Identity Crisis

### Introduction

The concept 'partition'; especially refer for the separation of main object. 'Partition' has numerous senses and meanings in the literature. 'Partition' is an action of dividing subject on various purposes. In the literature, the word 'partition' aptly describes the country's breaking up into separate states. The word 'partition' presents the cutting up of an unity of society. 'Partition' majorly highlights society. Partition is an act or process of dividing areas of government into two or maximum parts. The concept 'partition' moulds the frame of society into separate political states. The word 'partition' creates new borders and boundaries in human being life. Majorly, the term 'partition' is deeply related with the separate independence or freedom. It is also performance to nationalism. It is belonging with violence,

slaughter, conflict and such many more phrases. It is closely related with shameful behaviour account or mistakes of human being. The word 'partition' also deals with migration of human being. It highlights the madness of peoples. Partition novel boldly speak on the human cruelty. Such novel snatches the naked dark truth of independence. The term 'partition' is a little more complicated in presenting a mosaic of diverse attitudes towards religious identity that often plugs the country into inhuman strife. Pain mentioned the past to avoid hurting human feelings. A saga of pain is a canvas of physical and emotional experience of human during separation. A word 'saga', 'pain', and 'partition' is an actual face of human mistakes which snatches truth behind divagation of land and culture. The term scribbles the lustiness of power of both sided leaders in the name of freedom.

The omission of women's writing on Partition or a feminist reading of the literary works or fictional representations of women in dominant socio-political roles in major Partition events or societal histories of women during Partition, etc., are all parts of this asymmetrical feature of writings on Partition. It is only recently that research on women's works on Partition has gained momentum. Thus, works like Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* (1988), which is a fictional representation of the dominant role a few Parsi women based in Lahore (undivided India) played in rescuing women victims of Partition violence; Jyotirmoyee Devi's *The River Churning* (1995), the story of a young girl victim of Partition violence and denunciation of Indian patriarchy's obsession with women's sexual purity; and Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), the story of a Muslim girl who asserts her identity as an individual in a strongly patriarchal family, have attracted researchers' attention of late.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a potent in voice among the modern feminist writers. She is not only Parsi woman writer but also wrote on the theme of partition. Her works include *Their Language of Love* (2013), *Jungle Wala Sahib* (Translation from Urdu in 2012) *City of Sin and Splendour : Writings on Lahore* (2006, US), *Water: A Novel* (2006, US and Canada), *An American Brat* (1993, U.S.; 1995, India), *Cracking India* (1991, U.S.; 1992, India; originally published as *Ice Candy Man*, 1988, England), *The Bride* (1982, England; 1983;1984, India; published as *The Pakistani Bride*, 1990 US and 2008 US), *The Crow Eaters* (1978, Pakistan; 1979 &1981, India; 1980, England; 1982, US). Her novels in English reflect her personal experience of the Partition of Indian subcontinent, abuse against women, immigration to the US, and

membership in the Parsi or Zoroastrian community. Sidhwa has been a witness to the communal violence and frenzy during 1947 partition. She also deals with Parsi milieu, the problems of Asian women and the theme of marriage. Her novel presents political overtone and also presents partition from Pakistan's point of view. His works take a look on disaster of partition of Indian Sub-continent through the eyes of both Hindus and Muslim communities. His works highlight the issues of women's and children's painful suffering, easy victims in communal riots through the partition. Sidhwa exposes the issues of murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, homelessness, blood flooded series in her works. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* evokes the trauma of acts of loots, fireraising, abduction, damages and rape committed by all the communities on either side people, women and children. The novel presents false religiosity shaped confusion in the lives of all. It also exposes the hollowness of communal peace embedded in the collective awareness of the rural areas. Bapsi Sidhwa examines the unstoppable judgment of separation. Sidhwa's has portrayal picture of men as perpetrators of dreadful outrage. She depicts that women's become victims and survives from serious conduction and faces many problems during Partition. *Ice-Candy-Man* presents a fictional account of Partition from three perspectives - Parsees, Pakistani and feminine. This saga of pain art lays the uniqueness of this novel. However the novel studied the minority complex and a mixture of doubt. *Ice Candy Man* presents fear and disbelief in the minds of people. Novelist present British policy, divide and rule. It is also a study of difference between Parsees, who evolved a strategy to co-exist with the Muslims, Hindu and Sikhs. Perhaps Sidhwa's painful drawn awareness of the women was crowded into the origin of the Ayah's story. Ayah abducted and forces her into the life of prostitution. The novel represents a realistic picture of experience. Bapsi Sidhwa's awareness of the ever burning issue of partition seems to lie at the base of her motivation to write *Ice Candy Man*. Her narrative of the event challenges and questions official history retrieving from silence the horror and loss experienced by men and, particularly, women, by showing the impact political decisions concerning the independence of the Indian subcontinent had on ordinary people's identity in terms of religion and nationality and in stressing one's position in terms of gender. In the novel, Sidhwa expresses the urgency of wording the tragedy and the difficulty of doing so. Her feeble voice has to struggle against the numberless voices of official discourses which make people's suffering speechless, secret and the mysteries.

## Major Thrust

Bapsy Sidhwa's world famous novel *Ice Candy Man* (1988) has been hailed as one of the modern classics dealing with the Indian subcontinental Partition, and its far-reaching impacts on human lives, especially those of women. The chief achievement of Sidhwa in *Ice Candy Man* is three-fold: one, the history and events of Partition told and experienced from a female point of view (autobiographically Sidhwa's own in the indirect sense); two, how the Parsis, divided between British rule and native struggle for freedom, react contradictorily to opposing forces; and three, the way Sidhwa rewrites Partition history to convey that the communal divides are not compulsive, but are deliberately and systematically created. *Ice Candy Man* is a book sprinkled with captured vignettes, knitting together a narrative of passion, revenge and betrayal, the unscrupulous nature of desire and the pitiless face of love. The Partition is the shaping force of the novel; socio-political equations altering kaleidoscopically in the pre-partition India are deftly presented by the novelist; growing communal tensions among the people pertaining to different religions, in which religion is used as a definition of individual identity, political opportunism, and power, are taken up as the leitmotif of the novel. The scene is set in Lahore alongside the aftermath of Partition.

*Ice-Candy-Man*, divided into thirty two chapters, sparkles with the subcontinent teeming with political, social, and religious import; partition forms the main body of the book; main events, besides Second World War, India's Independence, and the division of the nation, moves around Ayah Shanta, a significant woman character of the novel who is appointed by Mrs. and Mr. Sethi to look after their handicapped girl Lenny; Shanta is a chocolate brown and short woman at the age of eighteen years, Lenny is the narrative persona; her narration begins with her fifth year of age, and it comes to an end after her eighth birthday. Due to her disability, Lenny feels herself different from other children, and thus feels solitariness: to fill up life's emptiness, she spends her day with her lovable companion Ayah Shanta and her friends. Shanta has friends in all communities; Imam Din, the Ice-candy-man, Yousauf, Hari, and Moti, are all her admirers; everyday, all these friends arrange meeting, and make gossips at Queen's Park. The news of Hindus killing Muslims bursts into flames of revenge among the Lahore Muslims; they start attacking Hindus, and Sikhs; on fearing this, Hari, the gardener, converts to Islam, and becomes Himmat Ali. The whirlwind of Partition perturbs

the unity and affection of the friends also; in the wake of communal riots, Shanta is abducted and her lover, Masseur, is bumped off by her once-time friend and admirer, Ice-candy-man; on the one hand, he deceives Shanta and makes her a dancing girl at Hira Mandi, a brothel house; while on the other, he goes down the aisle with her. What is remarkable about him is his transformation; he repents, becomes a poet, then a faqir and goes to India in search of Shanta, indeed, in search of his love, and his beloved.

*Ice-Candy-Man* is a novel of political upheaval in the subcontinent and its aftermath, involving characters from all communities—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Parsis. Thus, a multiple perspective of Partition emerges as witnessed by all the affected people. But what distinguishes Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* from other partition novels is her use of Parsi sensitivity to delineate the story. Another distinct quality of the novel is the character of Lenny, who is like the persona that Chaucer adopts in his "Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*, rendering credibility by being almost a part of the reader's consciousness. Partition is shown as a series of images and events depicting human loss, agony, and dislocation. The dislocation of settled life is brought before us by Lenny's understanding of the demographic change in Lahore. In awe she observes that Lahore is not cosmopolitan anymore. The Sikhs and Hindus have fled: *Lahore is suddenly emptied of yet another hoary dimension: there are no Brahmins with caste marks—or Hindus in dhotis with bodhis. Only hordes of Muslim refugees* (ICM, 175). The child narrator senses the difference and pain caused by the huge exchange of population. The dislocation and uprootedness of Partition is thoroughly experienced by Lenny and her brother, Adi, as they drift through the Queen's Gardens searching in vain for familiar faces and acquaintances: *Adi and I wander from group to group peering into faces beneath white skullcaps and above ascetic beards ... I feel uneasy. Like Hamida, I do not fit. I know we will not find familiar faces here* (ICM, 237). The dislocation of life during Partition caused emotional upheavals. This is best exemplified by the attitude of Lenny when she comes to know that Masseur is one of Ayah's several suitors who proposed marriage. Even in the child, there is a feeling of insecurity as she clings to Ayah's hands and persuades her not to marry Masseur as it would amount to separation. The scenes of violence and arson, and, above all, the venomous hatred of friends who had months earlier insisted on the impossibility of violence have a frightening impact on the young Lenny. Violence breeds

violence as Lenny is also a victim. Her rage is directed at her collection of dolls. In a frenzy she acts out: *I pick out a big, bloated celluloid doll. I turn it upside down and pull its legs apart. The elastic that it holds them together stretches easily. I let one leg go and it spans back, attaching itself to the brittle torso* (ICM, 138). The destructive urge overcomes Lenny, and she is not satisfied till she is assisted by her brother Adi; she wrenches out the doll's legs and examines the spilled insides. This violent act by Lenny is an apt allegory of the mindless violence of Partition.

Sidhwa aptly shows the inexorable logic of Partition, which moves on relentlessly, leaving even sane people and friends helpless and ineffective. Communal riots spread from towns to small villages like Pir Pindo. To avoid further loss, people like Sher Singh, Prakash, Kirpa Singh, and Shanker decided to move to safer places with their near and dear ones. The degree of insanity reached its pinnacle when small kids were not left out of this communal frenzy. Ranna, the young playmate of Lenny, is made to suffer tremendously and forced to take shelter at a refugee camp and fortunately gets reunited with Noni Chachi and Iqbal Chacha. The impact of this communal frenzy is that even characters like Hari and Moti are forced to change their names. Thus, they suffer a change of religious identity as well. During the tragic history of Partition, vicious acts were not confined only to adults. Even children were also exposed to the same violent and angry world. They, too, could not escape the harsh realities. Those children who were lucky enough to survive Partition were haunted by the horrible memories so much so that they were physically and psychologically handicapped forever. Sidhwa has focused on this aspect of tragedy through the characters of Lenny and Ranna. In one of the incidents, Lenny witnesses a Sikh mob attacking the streets, burning buildings, and fighting with Muslims. Lenny's eyes focus on a man tied to several vehicles and then viciously torn apart:

*Her eyes focus on an emaciated Banya wearing a white Gandhi cap. The man is knocked down. His lips are drawn away from rotting, paan-stained teeth in a scream. The men move back and in the small clearing, his legs sticking out of his dhoti right up to the groin—each thin, brown leg tied to the jeep.* (ICM, 145)

The most abhorring scene in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* is the abduction of Ayah. Ice-CandyMan abducts Ayah, the very woman he loves, because she is Hindu. Ayah is

subsequently gang-raped, and as if this physical abuse by the Muslim mob was not enough, she is then condemned to a life of prostitution in Hira Mandi. Although Ayah escapes her abductor, even with her family in Amritsar, she was marked for defilement during Partition. Thus, she suffers psychological and emotional outbursts forever.

In *Ice-Candy-Man* Sidhwa is rewriting history not just from the Pakistani but also from the Parsi point of view. Having migrated from Persia thirteen hundred years ago to save their religion from being Islamized, Parsis have always faced the dilemma of assimilating themselves into an alien culture, risking the loss of identity. At the same time, they have never asked for any reservation and have maintained a strong sense of group identity and cohesiveness. They have shown an unstinted loyalty to the British power which is on decline with the impending independence and Partition of India. The novelist has portrayed the Hindu Ayah of Lenny as a symbol of the composite culture in Lahore. She is a pivotal figure, surrounded by a group of multireligious admirers who include, as stated above, the government house gardener Hari, the Ice-candy-man, the masseur Sharbat Khan, Imam Din and the zoo attendant Sher Singh. Another symbol of communal amity is provided in the novel by visitors at the famous Queen's Park where people belonging to different religions and creeds are seen rubbing shoulders with one another.

## Conclusion

Bapsi Sidhwa handles the delicate theme of Partition through subtle insinuations, images and gestures. So the stark horror of loss, bloodshed and separation is portrayed without verbosity, sensationalism, lurid details and maudlin sentimentality. The sensitive portrayal of the horrors of Partition enhances the poignancy and cruelty of the event even without the author ever appearing pedantic or pretentious. She reveals the trauma of Partition with a sprinkling of humour, parody and allegory, describing how friends and neighbours become helpless and ineffective in the face of the mob frenzy. Bapsi Sidhwa enables the readers to understand the extent of the trauma of Partition and thus suggestively delineates the horrible impact of violence on individual and collective lives.

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