

Trauma of women and children in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

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Abstract

The major focus of this paper is about issues of violence against women during the communal riots that followed by the aftermath of Partition of India in 1947. When people are speaking about partition they give importance to chat on the boundary between the two nations India Pakistan and their properties alone. Most of the times we forget to remember the plight of women and children of that time. Women are symbolized as the mother of a nation in Hindu society. But during the riot situation their symbolization was assaulted by both the sides. The untold story of partition witnessed to the huge massacre of many women and children. They were gang raped, physically assaulted by the males to prove their strength. A man from Hindu or Muslim religion wants to insult women of other religion respectively. Women were lost their dignity as a worshipped one to dishonored creature. Their body became platform to take revenge by the Hindu, Muslim men. Without any doubt, Partition and its aftermath deteriorate the lives of ordinary women. Partition literature plays a vital role to unveil the sufferings of marginalized women and children. Literature which is used as the background of partition scenario helps us to understand effectively the impact and its aftermath vividly. The portrayal of characters reflected the sufferings of real time people during the partition and afterwards. Government and many NGO's come forward to support the women sufferers and strive to bring back their lives.

Keywords: Communal riots, Massacre, Symbolization, Assaulted, Deteriorate

1. Introduction

The paper highlights the issue of offended women, the recovery and rehabilitation programmes undertaken by the government to rescue them, and the working ideology behind the state's actions. Sidhwa is well-known as one of the most renowned Pakistani novelists. She was raised in the Parsi community, a minority religious and ethnic group in Pakistan. Her famous novels *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1981) and *Ice Candy Man*. The novel *Ice Candy Man* was first published in 1988 and it was republished in the name of *Cracking India* in. Sidhwa's partition novel captures the sensible representation of that carnage times through her characters. She speaks for her muted women characters in this novel.

Ice Candy Man is a heartbreaking story about the Partition of India and the upheaval of 1947 that left millions of people into homeless, refugee in their own land. Due to this splitting up of two nations paved way for brutal massacre and exodus of masses over the borders. This period of time has been observed attention from various sides, but Sidhwa's novel approaches the theme from the point-of-view of a young child narrator Lenny Sethi through this novel who witnessed the troubles. Lenny, finds herself distorted from the reality world around her.

The main protagonist of *Ice Candy Man* is Lenny Sethi (Sidhwa herself), a Parsee girl. When Lenny was around 4 years the story begun. When she was eight the novel came to an end. Lenny grew up in a reputed Parsi Family background in Lahore with her father, mother, and godmother known as grandma along with her younger brother. Due to her lameness Lenny is not permitted to go out as like her brother and cousin. Her father arranged a private tutor for education. So, Lenny does not make contact with the world as normal children Lenny's parents offered

job to other religion people in their household. People from distinct religion served as a car driver, cook, and the servant maid or Ayah. These people belong to different religious group respectively. So it is evident that the Parsi people are not against the religious bias. They supported both Hindus and Muslims equally and stand neutral during the riot situation. The novel moves about the story of Lenny's observation of people around her and her transformation of surrounding during the time of Partition.

In this novel Lenny's Ayah, her real name is Shanta. Throughout this novel Shanta was addressed by Lenny as ayah who means "maid". Lenny's ayah is vastly overwhelmed by her admirers from different religion groups. Ayah plays an important role in Lenny's life, even though she is unable to help her ayah when fire breaks out initially. The bond between maid and Lenny captured the reader's attention like Ayas admirer. As a Parsi child Lenny observes the cultural differences among the people. Several times Lenny compared her mother's upper-class outward show with Ayah. Due to her lack of ability to walk Lenny grows Interacting with adults, and watching their behavior, allows her to grow up with more knowledge of the world, as it changes around her, than other children have. She spends a great deal of her time in the adult world of her Ayah. Ayah takes Lenny everywhere she goes. Lenny's unique viewpoint allows the novel to transcend her childhood concerns in the depiction of life in Lahore. When Lenny witnessed the conversation take place inside her adult world came to know that India is going to be broken, she has many unanswered queries:

The young mind pity on the plight of nation: "Can anyone break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then?" Though Lenny is

baffled by such questions, she gradually becomes aware of religious differences. She worriedly remarks: "It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves –and the next day they are Hindus, Muslims, Sikh, Christians."

Lenny details how the people round her react to the Partition by commenting on the varied people in her life, including her Hindu Ayah, the Sikh zoo attendant, the Muslim cook and the ice candy man Sidhwa graphically portrays the inner changeover taken place in the mind of a child narrator. Lenny reveals how her Hindu ayah, her real name is shanta. When the turmoil of 1947 breaks out in the form of the Hindu-Muslim wars, transformation started from peace to devastation, including love. The ice candy man actually turns on the ayah, abusing her due to Hindu caste. Before the riot situation ice candy man longing for ayah's love. The crucial scenario left a scar in the heart and soul of a little girl. She was emotionally imbalanced by the tragic plight of her maid. When Ayah was found by the group of mobs to dishonour her, Lenny was helpless to support her. The little girl was shocked to see the brutal face of Ice Candy Man against his ladylove, Ayah. Ice-Candy-Man, leading the Muslim mob raids Godmother's house in search of the Hindus. Mad with the rage, he throws Ayah into the hands of the frenzied mob:

"They drag Ayah out. They drag her by arms...her bare feet-that want to move backwards-are forced forward. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like dead child's scream...Four men stand pressed against her...their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces."

The communal harmony brought hatred between the friends mind and heart. The little one was fully forgotten to accept the changing nature of their surroundings. In the beginning of the novel, there is no place for the feeling of enmity among Hindus and Muslims but with the passage of the time this friendly situation completely reverses and they become killers of one another. To take revenge murder of his sisters who are raped and murdered in riots of Hindu and Muslim, Ice Candy Man murders Masseur who loves Aaya and promises to marry her. He also gets indulged in other activities of violence. The novel clearly shows that this reversed situation is not a sudden result of any particular incidents but a result from policy of dividing rule imposed by the British rulers. They create uncertain and dangerous atmosphere where Hindu and Muslim can't live together for long time. Hindus and Muslims start hating one another for the cause. In this situation, thousands of innocent people including women, children, and old people and so on are killed mercilessly by Hindus and Muslims without thinking who really is responsible for this situation. During the partition, women are raped and murdered on the open street as presented in following lines: Setting fires, looting, parading the Muslim women naked through the streets - raping and mutilating them in the centre of village and in mosques. The Bias, flooded by melting snow, and therefore the monsoon, is carrying many corpses. There is an intolerable stench where the bodies, caught in the bends, have piled up. (Sidhwa,p.,172). Sometime it happens that she gets failed to understand from where the sound of wailing of women is coming: "The mystery of the women in

The courtyard deepens. At night we hear them wailing, their cries verging on the inhuman. Sometime I can't tell where the cries are coming from. From the women or from the house next Door infiltrated by our invisible neighbours" (Sidhwa.1991p.,212).

Sidhwa's observation of harassment against women is lively example of the partition scenario. People joined together to fight against the British rules to get freedom. When they heard about the news of division of nation into India and Pakistan, these people are fight against each, others, forgot their love, affection and unity. Similar situation graphically presented in the novel too. When Lenny spent her time with friends in a garden they heard news through radio about the partition of the two countries India and Pakistan. Initially they all worried about it. But these scenarios rapidly change their mind and everyone wants to prove their (Communal Majority) superiority. During this time Ice candy man is waiting to receive his sister from Gurdaspur at Lahore station. A train from Gurdaspur has just come...Everyone in it is dead...butchered...two gunny-bags full of women's breasts. It is loaded with dead bodies. To make gets worsen one compartment of train is filled with breast of women. These women are physically tortured to the core. When the train of dead bodies and gunny sack reached the station Ice candy man witnessed this scene. It increases the wrath of his inner conscience to take revenge on the whole.

When the arson breaks out Ayah becomes a victim for the lustful men around her. She was abducted by ice candy man and left her in Hira Mandhir, a place is similar like red light area. Here ayah is forced to offer her body, satisfy the need of men. Later she was forced by ice candy man to convert from Hindu to Muslim religion. The maid was helpless to accept these things without her wish. All these Men found women are there to bear the torture given by them.

Bapsi Sidhwa gave voice for the weaker section of women and children in her eminent novel "Cracking India". The novel enriches the definitions of Partition and pictures the real time of cruel sufferings faced by the voiceless. The pain and sufferings of women in the novel are muffled because of their physical inability to stand against the strongest men. Rape is the greatest violence because it implies that a woman has no right on her own body and it can be used by anyone. Such acts of violence are an intimate destruction of the feminine. History shows that women have always been victims of violence whether it is religious riots or caste based riots. The novel demonstrates that the revenges are realised through the victimization of women in riots. The character of Aaya and sisters of Ice-Candy Man are not just characters but they represent those innocent people who become the victims of partition of India crafted by British rulers. The child Lenny also psychologically disturbed the events around her. When the child witnessed to the cruel beating of mob she enacts the cruel through Cracking India, Bapsi Sidhwa has undeniably brought to emotional and real implications of the Partition of India.

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