International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

# Sweetness to Savagery in Ice-Candy-Man by Bapsi Sidhwa

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**Abstract**-
Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi on 1938. She is a Pakistan origin author. Bapsi holds a unique position among the writers of English fiction of sub-continent. She is a balanced woman novelist in contemporary world of writers. Bapsi knows many languages-- English, Urdu, Gujrati and Punjabi; but she has written only in English. She has written four novels. Her first novel is: 'The Crow Eater (1980), The Bride(1982), Ice- Candy- Man ( 1991) and An American Brat(1994). Ice Candy Man was first published in America under the title " Cracking India " . She deals with the place of women, human struggle and dignity of man in her novels. In Ice- Candy- Man, Sidhwa describes that how religious fanaticism exacerbated the centuries- long unceasing bond of multiple communities. Partition caused unfathom loss to humanity. This novel distills love-hate relationship of the Hindus and Muslims. Sidhwa depicts the saga of partition in sub-continent. Being Parsee, Sidhwa tries to depict an unbiased description of holocaust of Partition. This novel has established Sidhwa' s reputation as Pakistan's leading English writer. She is a trail blazer in writing on Partition. The novel presents the saga of Partition. Ice- Candy- Man serves as a conduit for the savagery of violence associated with the Partition in the novel.

**Keywords**: Distill, Trailblazer, Exacerbate, Unceasing, Unfathom.

## Introduction

There are novels, poems, films and short- stories based on Partition. They are bald narratives of great human tragedy. Partition created a great upheaval in world history in which fourteen million people were dislocated and one million died. The literature of partition presents horrid images of raped women, orphaned children, blood- thirsty mobs and burning villages. The novels based on Partition have common theme such as Chaman Nahal's Azadi, Attia Hossaio's Sun Light on a Broken Column, Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh etc. Each novelist has written on Partition with a different perception. They have depicted the experience of trauma with different strategies, patterns and modes of expression. There are films like Garam Hawa, Tamas, and Arth that show the holocaust of Partition. Bapsi Sidhwa takes up the story of Partition in Ice -Candy- Man. The plot of the novel is compact. It moves from Pre-Independence social scence to Partition and its consequences. The novel covers a period of five years (1943-1948). It begins when Lenny is five year old and ends with her eighth birthday. Sidhwa studiously employs a child narrator Lenny in the novel to depict unbiased views on partition . The main action in the novel takes place in Lahore. The novel is written in the present tense about an historical event. Bapsi Sidhwa , who has been an eye – witness of the holocaust has blended fact with fiction. The novel contains in it a good deal of autobiographical tinge.

**Pre-Partition India**

Bapsi Sidhwa has depicted the experiences of trauma with different patterns and modes. The novelist has presented both pre and post scenerio of the massacre. No doubt the novel has multiple layers of meaning. The present-paper is an attempt to analyse destruction, ruin, bloodshed, upheaval, massacre and holocaust during Partition. All these things have been depicted very well in Ice- Candy- Man. I have tried to explore in this paper how the sweetness and congenial atmosphere of brother hood of undivided India turns into savagery and bloodshed. In 1947, India got the most awaited moment of freedom from the British Raj. Sidhwa introduces us the narrator- Lenny Sethi. She belongs to an affluent Parsi family. She is of eight years. Hers is house of secular accommodation. Almost person of all religions work in Lenny 's house indiscriminately. Lenny is a polio victim. Her family hires a nanny (Ayah) to look after her. Her ayah name is Shanta. She is a Hindu woman of eighteen years and possesses exquisite beauty. Ayah has many suitors of different religions like Ice-candy man (Dilnawaz), Masseur, the Hotel Cook, the Gardner, Sharbat Khan, the Pathan and the Chinaman. Every one ogles her. Ayah is the focal of narrative of the novel. As Sidhwa point out:

"Up and down the streets, they look at her… Stub- handed- twisted beggars and dusty old beggars on crutches their poses and stare at her with hard, alert eyes. Holy men, masked in piety, shove down their pretence to ogle her with lust." (1.)

The novelist weaves a conventional plot that deals with a chronological sequence of that unfortunate event. Sidhwa blends action and character together. The undivided country people of multiple religions lived together since ages. How could their relation be snapped? Without any communal hatred, they call each other brothers. They respect each other cultures and religions. Therefore, people develop a sense a of brotherthood and equality irrespective of their cultures and religions. The novelist has depicted socio-cultural diversity, which has been an integral part of our country. The child narrator Lenny ' s house is an epitome of cultural diversity. She hails from Parsee family, her nanny (Ayah) is Hindu, cooks in the family are Muslims. Her family is an epitome of Indian villages at macro level of undivided India. At the village of Pir- Pindo the Muslims of the village are friendly with the Sikhs of their neighbouring village Dera Tek Singh. The Muslims of Pir- Pindo even attend the Baisakhi of the Sikhs at Dera Tek Singh. When Imam Din visits his village Pir- Pindo with Lenny to warn the villagers against the communal troubles brewing in the cities. Both the Muslims and the Sikhs of the two villages dismiss any threat saying that they would stand by each other as they have done so long. At this the Sikh Granthi, Jagjeet Singh says:

"Brother, our village came from the same racial stock, Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are bothers. How can we fight each other?' ' (2).

People of both the villages often assembled beneath a huge sheesham tree to discuss about approaching Partition. The undivided India had cultural multiplicity. They lived together in perfect peace, brotherhood and communal harmony.

**Post- Partition**

Partition was a doleful event in the history of India. It was a game of killing, murder, mayhem, raping and looting. Partition left both India and Pakistan devasted. During Partition things became violent. When the British announced the nation ' s division into India and Pakistan, people on both sides went berserk. The most affected area was the Punjab province since it was one of the two provinces that were

divided into two halves. Lenny narrates the madness of all communities-Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. Sidhwa describes the brutal killing of Muslims by Sikhs in East Punjab. Pir- Pindo(Muslim-Majority) is a small village turns into a mayhem and bloodshed. It becomes a witness to the destruction of Muslims. Once people of both villages vowed to protect and stand by one one another, during Partition, the Sikhs of Dera Tek Singh, were beheading the Muslims. The atrocities of during Partition is narrated by Rana(grandson of Imam Din). He was the sole survivor of Imam Din family. He narrates to Godmother:
"Setting fires, looting , parading the Muslims women naked through street...raping and mutilating them in the centre of the village and in mosques. The Bias, flooded by melting snow, and the monsoon, is carrying hundreds of corpses . There is an intolerable stench where the bodies , caught in bends , have piled up. (3).
Sidhwa describes the ugly and terrifying face of Partition. She recollects the traumatic and agonizing memories of those unfortunate days. She also tries to recreate history in emotionsladen and poignant scences. The rumblings of Partition are felt in the beginning. The tension mounts and the atmosphere becomes grim and awesome. Partition had the genocide memories in the history of mankind. Ice – Candy- Man is a handsome young man. He possesses immense popularity in Lahore. He is a generous fellow who is miles away from religious fanaticism. But one incident shakes his entire existence. His belief in the goodness of man is shattered. He become a witness to the trainload of mutilated bodies of Muslims in the hands of Hindus of Gurdaspur. He takes a vow to avenge the death of his Muslim fellows. This incident wrenches out the darker side of his personality. Now he becomes violent and frenzied person. Earlier Ice-Candy-Man (Dilnawaz) doted on Ayah, made an evil plan to avenge through Ayah. He manipulates Lenny by telling her that he will save Ayah from brutality of Muslims. He says "
"Don' t be scare " . Lenny baby, " he says " I am here " … I shall protect ayah with my life. You know I will… " (4)
When Lenny reveals the truth, she feels guilty. For three days she stands in front of mirror staring at her tongue. She repents that truth can also ruin one ' s life. "There is an animal inside me straining to break free." The bloody Gurdaspur shook everyone. Ice- Candy- Man lost his balance of mind. He now becomes a staunch Muslim rioteer of Lahore. Violence continued on both sides of borders. Affected people were vacating their old homeland in search of new homeland. Within three months seven million Muslims and five millions Hindus were uprooted from their ancestral homes. Man is transformed into a brute, savage quenching his thirst for blood. The colourful streets of Lahore seem dreadful, deserted following arson, murder and mayhem. The Hindus and the Sikhs are still reluctant to leave their ancestral land where they have lived and prospered. Now each community visualize a future devoid of hope. One feels goosebumps to recollect those traumatic and painful moments that turned the noble one into beasts. Indeed, Partition of India remains the most agonizing experience in history. Sidhwa ' s Ice-Candy- Man is a politically motivated novel. The Partition caused unfathom loss to people. They had to leave their families, homes, and culture. Men experienced genital mutilation and women were subjected to rape. Partition led to the largest migration in history. The child- narrator Lennny does represent Sidhwa's childhood. Sidhwa, in her novel, blends two narrative together the first-- objective narrative exposes the real suffering, the second- subjective rendering is impressionistic. She possesses biased views on partition. She re-narrates the events of Partition from a Pakistani perceptive. She believes that the Muslims in Punjab suffered more because Sikhs retaliated with much greater brutality. In her moral vision, she tells that common men helping each other. But the novel depicts the sad story of Ayah. As the story begins, we find that she is surrounded by her thirteen admirers belonging to every community.

As the partition approaches near, Hindus leave Lahore. She is abducted by her own lover and raped by his gang. She is made Mumtaj and later is rescued by Godmother. Sidhwa depicts that religious differences exploited on the eve of Partition. Sidhwa describes:

" It is sudden, one day everybody is themselves and the next day they are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians. People shrink, dwindling into symbols." (5).

Religious intolerance erupts into violence. Lenny witnesses many acts of killing, maiming, and death. Lahore becomes a refugee centre and an entrance to the new country of Pakistan-majority- Muslims country. The Hindus and Sikhs are driven out the city. The religious intolerance also becomes a way for men to subjugate women. For example- Ayah was the cynosure of Queen ' s Garden and surrounded by her admirers. As the riot begins, she is kidnapped by the Ice- Candy- Man and let her raped by the hoodlums. She is forced to become Ice- Candy- Man ' s bride. Her name is changed from Shanta to Mumtaz. Ayah is kept at kotha, at Hira Mandi, Lahore. Her " chocolate- chemistry " is lost as she is used by "drunks, pedlars, sahibs and cut-throats like a sewer " . Partition victory was celebrated on a woman's bodies; vengeance is taken on a woman's body. Sidhwa being a witness of Partition(through Lenny) watches men turning into beasts leaving no room for moral and human values. Human mind is a reservoir of noble thoughts gets corrupted easily. Men decelar supermacy over each other by sexually assaulting women. The countless rapes, kidnappings of women and young girls are perhaps the most sordid tales of Partition. These women, some with children in their arms, are abducted, raped treated like a commodity and passed from one to another to satiate their sexual appetite.

Eight decades after the Partition, two nations are still trying to heal the wounds left behind Partition. The Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had been leading a life of co-existence. Their identity had been embedded in the regions where their ancestors were born. Partition not only divided the country but also created a rift in the hearts of people which caused catastrophic riots. Times tested friendships suffered a big jolt. Friend turned into foe. The Partition snatched the lives of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike. Many are still in search of an identity. India and Pakistan have been to war four times since Partition. Both nations are still deadlocked over the possession of Kashmir. The issues of boundaries and divisions, Hindus and Muslims still persist. Arguably before the Indian Partition the twentieth century had not experienced such a massive and excruciating migration.

**References:**

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5. Ibid. p.(94)