

Substratum of Destiny in Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man

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Abstract

The Partition of India and the emergence of Pakistan of 1947 is the notable greatest event in the Indian History. The great pains and pangs faced by the people during Partition and Independence served as a major theme in the the Sub continent writings after the Independence. Bapsi Sidhwa is an award winning internationally acclaimed Pakistani writer. The evils faced by common people due to the advancements, beliefs, traditions and customs are reflected in the works of Bapsi Sidhwa. .This paper endeavours the trauma on the basis of partition and the agony faced by the common people, especially the women of the country with special reference to Bapsi Sidhwa's third novel Ice-Candy Man. The heart trenching proceedings of partition the dread, horror, terror and chaos during Independence are find in a place in this paper. Finally the paper is concluded with the findings that Destiny is crafted by God and not by humans.

The negative comments and the events that took place after the Independence served as the major themes in the writings of the Pakistani Writers. The literature of Pakistan witnessed a drastic change in its texture and style after the Partition. Bapsi Sidhwa is Pakistan's leading diasporic writer. Her Novels are rooted with the consciousness of Political and historical partition.

Critics and Literates rank Ice Candy Man/Cracking India as the prominent noteworthy novel on Partition of Indian Subcontinent. The title Ice-Candy Man was changed into Cracking India in 1991. The vulnerability of men and the sexual awakening of women during turbulent times are examined in this novel. This novel also makes a widespread analysis of suppression and repression of women during conflicts. The ingrained elements like feminine will, privileged choice, masculine strength, patriarchal treatment of the society along with the feminine qualities of compassion and motherhood are reflected in the novel Ice-Candy Man.

The basic alertness of the fictional world of this novel is mirrored by the lame young girl Lenny. Lenny is introduced into the novel through the poetical words of Iqbal's Complaint to God “

“Shall I hear the lament of the nightingale submissively lendind my ear?

Am I the rose to suffer its cry in silence year after year

The fire of verse gives me courage and bids me no more to be faint”(1).

Lenny is attended by Ayah Shanta and helps her in doing things. She was medically treated by Colonel Bharucha, the surgeon. He helps her to place the limb on her leg. Ayah was admired and followed by admirers like Masseur - the Hotel Cook, the Gardener, Sharbat Khan, Ice Candy Man and many others. Even the beggars, holy men, old men and many young people were also the admirers of her feminine grace. The meeting of the Parsi community took a decision that they will not oppose the British Raj and will not become Indian nationalists. This created mental trauma and violence among the people within the country. People started to divide themselves on the basis of Hindus and Muslims. The villagers of Lahore discussed the situations in Bihar and Bengal by sitting under a large Sheesham tree.

Ice Candy Man had a fervor attraction towards Ayah Shanta whereas Ayah was heavily infused by the love songs of Masseur. The confusions and riots of Partition came into a complete scene after the mysterious death of Mr Rogers and the acquisition of his mutilated body from the gutters. The evil fire of partition struck the minds of the village like Pir Pindo and the sikh crowds started attacking the Muslim Community. Muslims in Pirpindo village were killed, Children were butchered and women were mercilessly raped and killed. Ayah was also abducted by a muslim mob headed by Dilnawaz, popularly known as Ice-Candy Man.

The mentality of Ice-Candy Man about love and relationship changes after witnessing the mutilated bodies of the Muslims. Ice Candy Man uses the love and concern of Lenny as a tool of betrayal. Lenny was guilt stricken after the revelation of Ayah's state to Ice-Candy Man. She brings out her agony as : "For three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror staring at my tongue. I hold the vile, truth—infected thing between my fingers and try to wrench it out: but slippery and slick as a fish it slips from my fingers and mocks me with its sharp rapier tip darting as poisonous as a snake. I punish it with rigorous scouring from my prickling toothbrush until it is sore and bleeding". (184).

Ice-Candy Man abducts Ayah marries her and ill treats her. She was shut inside a Kotha, a place of dancing girls by Ice Candy Man. Lenny grieves over the tearful displacement of Ayah's life and feels more troubled. The Government machinery took Ayah from the Kotha through the influence of the Godmother. Ice Candy Man felt dejected and wandered like a desperate lover singing songs and placing flowers for Ayah over the wall of the camp every morning and he sang in a sweet clear voice and filled Ayah with poems.

Anita Desai, comments in Dawn and Milkweed, that Sidhwa's characters are an embodiment of an abstract idea and the exact victory of Sidhwa's characterization lies in creating rich, hilarious and accurate detail of every characters which serves as a visual treat to the reader's eyes.

Lenny Sethi , the child narrator of Ice Candy Man is an eight years old lame Parsi girl, living a luxurious life in Lahore with her parents, during the time of struggle for Independence and Partition. Though Lenny is physically disabled she is taken as a mirror to reflect the rapid changing scenario of the country's partition. The character of Lenny is designed on creative and keen observation. Her isolated life enhanced the creative

observations. Lenny after observing the Warris road brings out a comment that she feels sadness for the dumb creature and imagines the lurkings behind the wall. Lenny tries to lend her shoulder to the struggling people. She helps Ayah to come out of the clutches of Kotha and Ice Candy Man. Lenny is shown as a strong willed dominant young girl with the passion of creative writing as her passion to expose the views on social evils of domesticity. Lenny was strengthened by the waves of Independence by the caretaker Ayah. Though she was shown as an innocent child in the beginning of the novel through the end there is a great transformation in Lenny. She understands the reality of the world and its people at the end of the novel when Ice Candy Man uses Lenny as a source to abduct Ayah. The Love and trust of Lenny was taken into trail and she felt herself as betrayed. She portrays the act of Ice Candy Man as his crew as "They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet that want to move backwards—are forced forward instead"(183).Lenny felt dejected when her trust on Ice Candy Man was Broken. The rejection and betrayal arouses a great temper in the minds of Lenny and on the sight of Ice Candy Man she says she had a suffocating explosion within her eyes and head her sight got disoriented and saw Ice-Candy-Man float away in a bubble and dwindle to a grey speck in the aftermath of the blast.

Ayah Shanta is shown as a symbol of sensuousness and vitality of sexual wrath among men. Ayah has different suitors from different cultures and communities like the Faletti's Hotel cook, the Government House gardener, the butcher, Sharbat Khan, and the zoo attendant, Masseur and Ice-Candy man the muslims comes as the prominent one. Ayah is reflected as a inducer of Independence, Love and hope. Bharucha describes Ayah as the symbol of the Indian earth: "Lenny's ayah, the chocolate-brown, desirable, round-cheeked, full-breasted woman, is symbolic of the Indian earth" (Bharucha 81). Though she acts as the Queen of the village and had a great influence to control the masculine society the destiny of fate was unexpectedly different to her. She was alienated from her whole village and was kept segregated and isolated. She was forced to live with Ice Candy Man and her love for Masseur was plucked out. The identity of Ayah was was changed from Shanta to Mumtaz and was kept in a kotha after her marriage with Ice Candy Man. When Lenny meets Ayah after her marriage she was shocked at the sight of Ayah's physical appearance. Lenny questions herself that Lenny observes: "Where have the radiance and the animation gone? Can the soul be extracted from its living body? Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever: wide-opened with what they have seen and felt... She, buries her head in me and buries me in all her finery; and in the dark and musky attar of her perfume"(260).Lenny demonstrates the pitiable role of Shanta's fate as "the potent creative force generated within the Kotha that has metamorphosed Ice-Candy- Man not only into a Mogul Courtier, but into a Mandi poet. No wonder he finds poetry as if he popped out of his mother's womb spouting rhyming sentences."(267). After the exit of Ayah from Kotha Ice Candy Man places flowers for Ayah on the wall camp.

Though the novel has a tragic end it is filled with poignant scenes along with murder and violence. The London Magazine remarks the novel Ice Candy Man as " With skill and sympathy, and a delightful scene of humour, Bapsi Sidhwa shows the small girl Lenny growing up in comfort and tranquility. The book's many characters all come to exuberant life, exhibiting the odd tastes and unpredictable behavior of real individuals. The novel Ice Candy Man ends up with a notable point that there is an underlying basis for the destiny of every people.

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