



ANALYTICAL STUDY ON PARTITION LITERATURE IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S ICE CANDY MAN

S S RATNAPRASAD KOLLI
Associate Professor of English, SR &
BGNR Arts and Science College,
(Autonomous), Khammam, Telangana
State & Research Scholar, Dept of English,
NEFTU, AP
syamkolli1964@gmail.com

**Dr. GOMATAM MOHANA
CHARYULU**
Professor and Research Supervisor,
Division of English, Dept of Science and
Humanities, VFSTSR Deemed to be
University, Vadlamudi AP

Abstract: *India, the ancient land known as the torchbearer of peace, spirituality and humanism became testimony to one of the ghastliest and flabbergasting acts ever committed in the history of mankind. Her own offspring who had lived as a single unit were suddenly bifurcated on communal lines due to political vendetta. Many authors have incorporated the sufferings during the partition. Bapsi Sidhwa has distinguished signature in the arena of English literature who has published novels based on the theme of partition. She has portrayed the distressing picture of that time making the reader to feel the pain of humanity. Thus the present paper focuses upon the literature of partition with special reference to the strain and stress in the writing of and Bapsi Sidhwa.*

Keywords: *Humanism, bifurcation, vendetta, partition, sufferings, pains and wounds*

Introduction

India broke the chains of slavery and flew into freedom from the foreign yoke of British Raj but with a heavy price. The ancient land whose civilisation stood against the test of time was bifurcated into two parts- India and Pakistan. The biggest emigration of people ever in the history of humankind took place from one part to another. A state of religious frenzy and bigotry spread in the entire Indian subcontinent. People became worse than beasts ever ready to slaughter fellow beings in the name of religion. The single most affected victim was humanity which was ragged into pieces by its own children. All hell broke loose when people in both nations were killed just due to their religious affiliations. A plethora of literature is produced on this subject particularly from the authors of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz lamented,

This stain covered daybreak, this night bitten dawn.

This dawn is not that dawn we craved for.

Muslims migrated to Pakistan and Hindus to India leaving back their ancestral homes, tradition and culture to become refugees in a distant land just in the name of fanaticism. Bigotry spew its venom particularly on women who were assaulted, sexually abused and tortured if they were found to be of different religion. The tragedy of partition has given way to literature in almost all languages of the Indian subcontinent particularly Hindi, English, Urdu, Bengali and other vernacular languages. A common element in all these pieces of literature is pathos. It is different from historical account as it embodies the human suffering

and pain due to partition. Authors such as Krishna Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Amrita Pritam, Saddat Hasan Manto, K.S. Duggal, Nanak Singh and others have revolved their prose on the subject of partition. Khushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan", Bapsi Sidhwa's "Ice Candy Man" and "Bride", Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children", K.A. Abbas "Inquilab" in English, Bhishma Sahani's "Tamas" and Yashpal's "Jhoota Sach" in Hindi give a insight into the hardships that common people had to endure in this nasty battle of power and politics. An author while dealing with a formidable historical event such as the partition has to maintain isolation from historical facts and not adhere to any perspective. Instead the author provides an amalgam of human emotions, fantasies, tale of hope and sorrows with a message to the world. This common characteristic is evident in almost all the literary writings of the partition. Thus history loses its sense of time and facts and in its place hovers around the author's flight of fantasies.

Almost every literary piece related to the partition depicts hooliganism, rape, murder, treachery, barbarism and a common thirst of blood amongst people. They were ready to slaughter their neighbours who had lived arm in arm for centuries just because they practised different religion. Few authors have depicted the restoration of human rationality and prudence after the holocaust. However, many disillusioned authors have given tragic account of the events without taking any sides. They accuse both the sides for their mud sledging and dog fight for power. The Present paper analyzes the works of Sidwa and her plights expressed through the fiction. Bapsi Sidhwa is a novelist of international repute from Pakistan. She witnessed the trauma of partition as an eight-year child and vividly describes sufferings from a child's perspective. Her novel "Ice Candy Man" is a profound attempt by the author to unravel the trauma of partition through a girl Lenny growing up in Lahore. Bapsi Sidhwa is a Sitara-i-Imtiaz awardee and currently resident in the USA. She is considered an authoritative signature in the field of English literature worldwide. Literature is a potent tool in the hands of craftsman that can bring about a sea change in the society. Bapsi Sidhwa uses her literature to give a voice to sufferings of women and restructuring social norms regarding them. She portrays a determined woman capable to bring about a positive change in society.

The story revolved around a young and lame Parsee girl Lenny who witnessed the horrors and stigma of partition. A maid Shanta worked in her house and was wooed by a string of lovers. Of these the Massuer and Dilnawaz (Ice Candy Man) had strong rivalry against each other to win her favours. The Ayah took care of her with innate love and affection. There was concord and harmony in the city of Lahore until the news of Partition breaks. This brought tension and turmoil in the city. The ice candy man killed the masseur out of sheer hatred and jealousy. Then, one day a train from India arrived at Lahore platform with dead bodies and sacks full of breasts. Dilnawaz's sister also was murdered in the incident. This caused disgust and hatred towards all Hindus in his mind. He joined the rioters and became a party to the frenzied mob. He also abducted the Ayah whom he loved so much but forced her into the brothels of Lahore just because she was a Hindu. Later, he married her but she was rescued from prostitution by the help of Lonny's relatives and shifted to refugee camps in Amritsar.

The most disturbing aspect of the partition is that people who lived with peace as brothers became enemies and even molested women of each other's communities. This is a blot on the face of civilised society which is depicted in both the novels. Lenny in "Ice Candy Man" laments,

"The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot. I think my flesh and clothes will catch fire. I start screaming: hysterically sobbing -- how long does Lahore burn? Weeks? Months?"(p 139).

Thus, the entire world seems to be burning to the little child. Bigotry gains currency in this frenzied state of affairs. Mob lynching and vandalism became a daily sight in the streets. All these has been painfully depicted in both the novels. Dilnawaz, the Ice Candy Man became insane after her sister was murdered and decides to take revenge on all Hindus. He says,

"I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off from the Muslim women. He becomes so thirsty of gore that he abducts the same girl Ayah whom he once wooed"

Thus, fratricide is vividly depicted in the literature of partition and this also creates an eerie sensation in the minds of readers who are aghast by the horrid and painful descriptions of violence. The officer in "*Ice Candy Man*" shrieks that these British are throwing cities like pack of cards at random. It is highly ironical that freedom which meant a rebirth just as a Phoenix emerges from its own ashes gives a by-product as nasty as hooliganism, murder and vandalism. The reminiscence of partition is still today which emerges as cross border terrorism, hate speeches against each other time and again. Bapsi Sidhwa has also given voice to feminism and pitches for just treatment of women and their rightful place in social hierarchal order. The protagonist is a female and many strong characters such as the mother and Ayah epitomise an assertive role. The novel has strong feminine characters who have a soul of their own. The author has depicted insight into the thought process of a woman's mind with great sensitivity. Each female character represents a way of life be it Lenny, mother or Ayah. The novel hits hard at patriarchy and oppression of women by depicting victimisation of women in a most horrid and dreadful manner. This invokes a sense of individuality in female minds and an urge to raise voice against oppression. Lenny is surprised by the patriarchal norm wherein purity of a woman vanishes if touched by a man.

Human sufferings and pain during the days of partition have a far reaching effect even to this date. The Indian Subcontinent witnesses terrorism, riots, plane hijacking all in the name of religion. No religion teaches bloodshed or violence. Different religions are like flowers of different colours which make the bouquet of life colourful and lively. The greatest wealth of this world is vividness. Homogeneity is dull and monotonous. People should respect conflicting ideas as they help to bring the bigger picture of truth. It is the benign face of humanity which allows conflicting ideas to grow as no one can be completely right. Tolerance is a virtue which is required for organic growth of any civilisation



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