

Ice-Candy – Man: A Tale of Partition & Its Repercussions

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Abstract – *Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man (1981), chronicles the exodus of prsis to india during pre-partition era, explaining their world-view, customs, religious practices and politics. Sidhwa's whole world in the novel is teeming with numerous happenings of surrounding day-to-day life depicting truthfully all its political, social and religious import. Sidhwa belongs to Parsi community and she takes the liberty to voice truthfully the isolation and aloofness from which her community suffers. Lenny, the daughter of a well-to-do jobholder, is the narrator of the story of the novel. Her narration starts in her fifth year an ends after hr eighth birthday. In the course of narration, she presents the panoramic views of existing social milieu. Lenny recalls her first conscious reminisential recollection of memory of her Ayah; "she passes pushing my pram with the unconcern of the hindu goddess she worship". She also remembers her house on waris road in lahore and how she used to find refuge in her godmother "one-and-a-half- room abode."In ice-candy-man, lenny leads us dwelling on interesting facts mingled as it were, with picturesque language. The main events, besides end of the second world war, india's independence and partition of subcontinent into Pakistan and india, revolve around the ayah.*

Kew-Words: *Prsis To India, Pre-Partition Era, Customs, Religious Practices , Politics, Parsi Community, Language*

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INTRODUCTION

The Parsi predicament is well-documented by creative writers. In fact, the Parsi community has thrown up quite a few creative writers who have chronicled the Parsi destiny in varied hues. Bapsi Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Faruk Dhondy, Ardhashir Vakil, Boman Desai and other Parsi writers have attained global acclaim. Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990), Farukh Dhondy's *Bombay Duck* (1990), Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters* (1990), Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1977), *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002) are all Parsi classics. These Parsi writers have articulated in their works their community's anxieties and aspirations, identity crisis, moments of agony and ecstasy, and its struggle for survival.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani writer and is settled at present in the USA. She was born in Karachi in 1939. She was brought up and educated in Lahore. She grauated in Kinnaird's College for Women in Lahore. Her marriage with a Bombay business man did not last long. So she settled with her daughter, and was compelled to leave India. Sidhwa started writing only at the age of twenty eight, after the birth of her three children, two girls and a boy. Altogether, she has written four novels. These are *The Crow*

Eaters (1980), *The Pakistani Bride* (1982) *Ice – Candy Man* (1988) (published as *Cracking India* in the USA) and *An American Brat*. (1993).

Bapsi Sidhwa has won international acclaim for her work. Her works have been translated into French and German. In American Universities, her works are taught as part of the curriculum. Pakistan and America have honoured her for her writings. She received in 1991, the Sitare-I-Imtiaz award. This is the highest honour in the arts bestowed on a citizen in Pakistan. As a social worker, Sidhwa represented Pakistan at the Asian Women's congress in 1975. She Iso taught creative writing at Rice university in Texas and the University of Houston.

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Sidhwa has received several honours and awards. She received the Lila Wallance-reader's digest writer's award in 1994, the US national endowment for the arts grant in 1994, the Sitara-Imtiaz, Pakistan's highest national honour in the art in 1991 and the literature parsis in Germany. Sidhwa has also held the prestigious bunting fellowship at bad cliff/ Harvard in 1986.

OBJECTIVES:

Following are the objectives of the present research:

- ▶ To study various literary facets of Bapsi Sidhwa's personality as a significant novelist and a creative writer of high quality.
- ▶ To study the upper-middle class complexity in the existence of modern Parsi culture.
- ▶ To analyze the cultural and familial traditions in Parsi and Western perspectives.

Sidhwa is minute observe of the society, she lives. She presents in her novel all the major and minor events of society. Ordinarily, a person is recognized by his language and clothings. The dresses adopted by people are also reflective of their culture. Lenny, therefore, asks ayah as to why she did wear Punjabi cloths despite being a Punjabi and ayah replies tht she didn't afford it becaue of her meager alary. The novelist shows the situation:

"shanta bibi, you are Punjabi, aren't you?

'for the most part',ayah agrees warily.

'then why don't you wear Punjabi clothes?

I have never seen you in salwar-kamize.'

Through it has never strikes me as stranger before-

I am so accustomed to ayah only in a sari-

I see the logic of his question and wonder about it."

'arrey baba, says ayah spreading her hands in

A fetching sister, 'do you know what salary

Ayahs who wear Punjabi clothes get? Half the

Salary of the gaon ayahs who wear saris!

I am not so simple!

The proposal of partition of indi had created havoc in 1947 among the minority communities, particularly living in Lahore. This is the reason that Col. Barucha feels that the Parsis living in Lahore will not be safe if the place is ruled by the muslims. He further feels that the Parsis in Lahore should shift to Bombay where majority of Parsis live. Sidhwa shows this socio- religious reality in following words:

"we will caste our lot with whoever rules Lahore!"

Continued the colonel.

"if the muslim should rule Lahore wouldn't we be safer going to Bombay where most Parsis live?" asks a tremulous voice weakened by a thirteen-hundred-year old memory of conversions by the arab sword.

A slight nervousness stirs admist the rumours. There is much turning of heads, shifting on the seats and whispering".

The rumours spread all around the country was worsening the situation in the country during the turmoiled condition of 1947. There was rumours that hindus are being murdered in Bengal and muslims killed in bihar. The british government was not taking any positive steps for controlling the situation.

"my brother, he says. And as

Our eyes turn to him, running

Trail fingers through has silky

White, he says, ' I hear there is

Trouble in the cities. Hindus are

Being killed in Bengal..... muslims

In bihar. Its strange the English

Sarkar can't seem to do anything about it".

The novelist criticises congress leaders or who were sitting on dharna and blocking rail tracks as a measure of protect political protest by them. It was nothing, feels sidhwa, but a political stunt. The muslim-hindus communal riots were turning into sikh-muslim notes also. The police were engaged in shifting them from the railway tracks.

“Sly Killings, noting and bottom charge

By the police long matches by mobs.....

The congress-wallahs have started new stunt... they sit down on rail tracks- women and children, too. The police lift them off the tracks But one of these days the steam engine will run over them.... Once aroused, the English are savages.....

“then there is this hindus-muslim trouble, he says, after a pause.’ Ugly trouble..... it is spreading sikh-mulim trouble also”.

Birdwood barracks, inspector-general of police, told that if the britishers leave the country then hindus-muslims-sikhs will fight with each other and cut each other’s throat. Mr. Singh replied him that there fights are because of your divide-and-rule monkey trick. He said further that the moment we get our home rule, i.e., swaraj, then we won settle our dispute and differences.

ICE-CANDY-MAN IS A “MYSTERIOUS AND WONDERFUL NOVEL :

Ice-candy-man is a “mysterious and wonderful novel” sidhwa’s humour comes in pungent one-liners and her style is highly visual. Sidhwa bitterly satirizes those scrupulous business. Such person make money by selling such wonder oils and dupe people at large scale. Sometime they claim that if fingers touch such oil, then it may even grow hairs on finger tip. The novelist highlights such types of frauds found commonly in our country:

“masseur and ice-candy-man drift over to us and join the circle. Masseur is raking in money. He has invented an oil that will grow hair on bald heads. It is composed of monkey and fish glands, mustard oil, pearl dust and an assortment of herbs. The men listen intently, but masseur stops short of revealing the secret recipe. He holds up the bottle and ayah reaches out to touch the oil. ‘areful’, says masssrue, whipping the bottle away. It will grow hair on your fingertips”.

Sidhwa’s amusingly mention in the chapter eleven, the well-known saying of two muslims who asked each other to initiate first and accordingly lat opportunity. In the novel, two muslim gentlemen arrive at a toilet at the same ime and asked each other out of tehjib to go first an in the process one of

them resigned due to pressure. The novelist creates considerable humour while mentioning this incident:

“two muslim gentlemen arrive at a public toilet at the same time. One insists, ‘after you, sir.’ No, sir, you first! After you ! insist the other. Until, eventually, one of them resignedly says: ‘you might as well go first, sir..... I have been.

Sikhs and muslims lived together years and years with solidarity. They helped each other in distress while living amicably in one and same village. But the partition of india and follow up communal riots have spoiled their relations. This is the reason that sher singh asks ice-candy-man as to why he being a muslim will not to a sikh:

“ ‘ at first sher singh hemmed and hedged; says ice-candy-man. Then he said: you are a muscleman the tenant’s are muscleman’s..... why should you help a sikh?” his raconteur’s sif places us in sher singh’s shoes and we look t him with the same questions in our eyes”.

The novelist ironically pleads for communal harmony between Sikhs and mulims. She reminds as to how the holy Koran is kept next to the granth sahib in the golden temple. She further reminds that guru nanak carried inscription from the Koran. She further pleads that in fact the sikh faith came into existence for the sake of creating hindu-muslim harmony:

“don’t fool yourself.... They have a tradition of violence, says the wrestler. ‘ haven’t you seen the portraits of the sours holiday the dripping heads of butchered enemies?’ shut up,yaar’, says masseur, his face unusually dark with a rush of blood. Its all buckwas! The holy Koran lies next to the granth sahib in the golden temple. The shift guru nanak wore carried inscriptions from the Koran... in fact, the sikh came about to create hindu-muslim harmony”.

The claim and counter-claim in favour gainst the formation of Pakistan was being raised by both sides. Muslims were demanding vehemently th creation of Pakistan but the sikh were opposing it. Th novelist shows us the tense situation:

“holding a long sword in each hand, the curved steel reflecting the sun’s glaze as he clashes the sword above his head, the sikh soldier-saint shouts: ‘we will see how the muslim swine get Pakistan! We will fight to the last man! We wil show them who will leave Lahore ! raj karega khalsa, adi rahi na koi! “

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL:

The novel appears to be autobiographical in the sense that sidhwa shares her personal experience

she faced during the partition of india in 1947. She recollects “the constant roars of the mobs” heard by her as a witness of violence during communal riots during partition. Justifying her theme of partition and personal experiences in the novel and the crowd, sidhwa says:

“this book was written in '66 and very little had been written about the partition until then khushwant singh's train to Pakistan was there. Azadi there, plus some literature in urdu and hindi. I felt there really was a big vacuum because this was a defining moment of our history and almost nothing was written about. And it felt I had to talk about it because I was in the unique position of having been a child then and certain scenes are still vivid in my memory. One of them is the constant roar of the mobs.”

Her personal experiences of “the constant roar of the mobs” is reflected in the following lines of the novel:

“we hear the ubiquitous chanting of the mobs in the distance: allah –o – akbar!” comes the fragmented roar from muslim gonads of mozang. ‘bole so nihal ; set siri akal from the sikh goondas of beaten road standing at attention with the sun I feel ready to face any mob”.

ICE-CANDY-MAN JUSTIFY HIS INDULGENCE IN COMMUNAL VIOLENCE :

Ice-candy-man justify his indulgence in communal violence and say that he wants to take revenge of killings of muslims and the mutilated bodies on the train from gurudaspur. For the sake of revenge, he says, he has lobbed grenades through the windows of hindus and Sikhs. He says to the ayah:

“what's is to you, oye? Says ice-candy-man raising his voice and flaring into an insolent display of wrath.. if you must know, I was! I will tell you to your face I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train from gurudaspur..... that height I went mad. I tell you! I lobbed sandas through the windows of hindus Sikhs. I would know all my sides! I hated their guts..... I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the muslim women... the premisses!.

To save life, many hindus preferred to be converted and to become a muslim. Hari was one of them. He shaved his bodhi and circumcised his penis. The novelist explains the situation:

“hari had his bodhi shaved. He became a muslim. He has also penis circumcised: ‘by a barber’ says cousin, unbuttoning his fly in electric-aunt's sitting room. Treating me to a view of his uncircumcised penis, he stretches his foreskin back to show me how hari's circumcised penis must look”.

Sidhwa reiterated in another interview with Hindustan times that the experience of Lenny in ice-candy-man much similar to her own experiences gained during the partition, she says:

“off all the books, ice-candy-man was very personal. I had to create a distance between a Lenny and myself. I have given her incident from my life, the body in the gunny bag. I grew up hearing the shouting mobs. I didn't have a cousin or an ayah or an ice-candy-man, but knew enough people to be able to write about them. Even if you are writing about centre space, it is coloured by your experience.”

Lahore hanged entire after declaration of partition of india and formation of Pakistan. Hindus and Sikhs migrated at large scale. There were now no Brahmins with caste-mark on their forehead or hindu in bodies. There were only hoards of muslim refugees from india. The chapter twenty three of the novel shows:

“beadon road, bereft of the colourful turbans, hairy bodies, yellow short, tight pajamas and glitting religious ascend of the Sikhs, looks like any other populous street. Lahore is suddenly emptied of yet another hoary dimension : there are no brhmins with caste-marks-or hindus in dhotis with bodhis-only hardis of mnolim refuses”.

The palatial building of hindus in model town were badly looted and shops were gutted. Rioters looted away furniture, carpets, utensils, mattresses, clothes,etc. other bungalows of affluent neighbourhood were also looted away in similar way.

“every bit of scrap that can be used has been savaged from the gutted shops and tenements of shalmi and gowalmandi, the palatial bungalows of hindus in model town and other affluent neighbourhoods have been thoroughly scavenged. The first wave of looters, in mobs and procession, has carried away furniture, carpets, utensils, mattresses and cloths. Succeeding waves of marauders, riding in rickety carts, have systematically striped the houses of doors, windows, bathroom fittings, ceiling fans and rafters”.

Lenny's houses is attacked by the rioters for finding the hindus shelters hiding there, Lenny's ayah is a hindus as such she hides herself to have protection from them. They asked about Shankar and Sethi is also. They assumed that his are hindu from the name-plate are not hindus but parses. The tense situation is reflected from the following lines:

“where are the hindus ? a amn shouts. There are no hindus here! You namak-haram dogs, penis..... there are no hindus here ! there are hindus name-plates on the gate.... Shankar and Sethi ! the

Shankar took off long ago.... They were hindu. The sethis are Parsi. I serve them sethi is a Parsi name too, you ignorant bastards”.

SUMMING UP:

To sum up; the research scholar comes to the point that *Ice-candy-man* is a “mysterious and wonderful novel” sidhwa’s humour comes in pungent one-liners and her style is highly visual. Sidhwa bitterly satirizes those scrupulous business. Such person make money by selling such wonder oils and dupe people at large scale. Sometime they claim that if fingers touch such oil, then it may even grow hairs on finger tip. The novelist highlights such types of frauds found commonly in our country:

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The novels assign sidhwa as a feminist and a idealist, who sees in her women characters the strength of passion, the tenderness of love, and the courage of one’s convictions.

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