



VICTIMIZATION OF WOMEN: “ICE CANDY MAN- A FEMINIST AWAKENING

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ABSTRACT

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 graduated 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). The novel thematically deals with the oppression of women in context of psychological and sexual by men in the conservative tribal society. In the novel, there are three major women characters ranging from Zaitoon, Carol and Saki's mother, Hamida who represent different aspects of the problems faced by women in a patriarchal world. These are the different types of problems become symbols of traumatic life of suppressed women. The lives of women become very worse and their families are illiterate and live in tribal society. Although the men in her novels may often be weak, unreasonable, and cruel. Sidhwa sees them caught in the webs of another so-called immutable law that needs to be reversed. They, too, must rebel against the role in which tradition has placed them. In Sidhwa's view, only when this dual rebellion takes place the story of *The Pakistani Bride* be a happy one. Sidhwa's novel *Water* can be seen as a victimization of women to break through the constraints of patriarchal society and discover themselves as human beings. They are shown as the victims of male world and the role that a traditional society forces on them. Sidhwa's fiction has in its backdrop of the socio-political condition of 1936 India, with Gandhi's freedom movement and his making people conscious of their equality, liberation against ignorance, superstitions and backwardness. It also reveals the inner consciousness of mind and feelings of women's hearts in relation to the outer world. A deeper insight into her women characters; that live in a widow ashram, reveals them not as different characters with lives interwoven, rather as five stages of woman's life in a circle that undergoes repression of emotions and desires of various degrees. Sidhwa has highlighted the victimization of women through two novels *The Pakistani Bride* and *Water*. The present paper is an honest attempt to attract the attention of the readers towards the great novel of Bapsi Sidhwa's “Ice-Candy-Man” (1981), chronicles the exodus of Parsis to India during pre-partition era, explaining their world-view, customs, religious practices and politics.

Key-words: psychological and sexual Zaitoon, Carol Hamida suppressed women, *Water*, ignorance, superstitions and backwardness.

INTRODUCTION

Bapsi sidhwa, born in Karachi and grown up in Lahore, Pakistan, has been widely celebrated as the finest novelist produced by

her country. She now lives in Houston Texas but she frequently visits to the Indian subcontinent. She is graduated from Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore and began writing in her twenties after birth of two children.

Sidhwa has received several honours and awards. She is also recipient of the National Award for English literature by the Pakistan academy of letter in 1991 and the Putras Bokhari Award for literature for 1992.

Bapsi was included into the Zoroastrian hall of fame during the millennium celebrations in Houston in 2000 and won the Excellence in Literature Award in 2002 from the Zoroastrian congress, she also won the Chairperson Commonwealth Writer's Prize. She was nominated as judge of Michener/ Barthelme award for fiction.

She worked on postcolonial teaching fellowship in 2001 at Southampton, England. She was the feminist writer-in-residence at Brandeis University, Waltham, mass during 1988-1999.

Sidhwa has also successfully conducted novel writing workshop, rice university Houston, Texas during 1984-86. She thereafter was as an Assistant Professor, creative writing programme at university of Houston, Houston, Texas. She has also conducted fiction-writing workshop at Thomas University. 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 also

taught creative writing at Rice University in Texas and the University of Houston.

Sidhwa is deeply concerned at the exploitation of women and therefore highlights the exploitation of women in her novel. She highlights exploitation of women working as a prostitute or dancing girl in the chapter eight of novel. Nikka and Qasim go to the Hira Mandi by a taxi to enjoy the dance of a dancing girl, Shahnaz. The incident ironically satirizes the double standards of Muslim community. A woman at home are protected even by the people's glances by burkha and on the other hand, these helpless women working as dancing girls are compelled to display their body to please the sex-starved men for a little money.

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 clothing. 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 that she didn't afford it because of her meager alary.

OBJECTIVES

- 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.

THE PRACTICE OF PURDAH

The gender segregation in Pakistan means that women and men can lead almost separate lives. This varies with region and class, but the general rule is that men and women live in separate quarters of the house, eat separately and spend as little time together as possible. It is the middle class that practices segregation most vigorously.

Women, who are under the control and protection of the men in their families, do still move outside the house. Punjabi married women in the novel hide themselves in burkhas when they go out to visit friends or go shopping. They are often accompanied by a male relative or a servant, or by a group of other women. Younger women, who are not yet married, but who have reached puberty, wear a shawl to cover their heads and, when necessary, their faces and upper bodies. The girls are also accompanied by friends or family. Normally, none of the women in the novel go far on their own: a short walk to a close neighbour is the farthest they may go alone. Women are not supposed to talk to male strangers, or find themselves in a place where they have no specific business. When talking to elders or to men outside the very closest family, the women cover their heads and faces with a veil or shawl to show modesty and protect themselves from the male gaze.

The practice of purdah means that women and men socialize to a very limited extent in the novel. In Western countries, women and men are more used to socialize and relate to strangers, friends and colleagues of the opposite sex.

The men were not overtly sexual: rather she sensed their sexual tension. Their desire for her carried a natural tenderness that was reflected in their behaviour to all women. They showed a surprisingly gentle consideration of her vulnerabilities, of the differences between the sexes that made her

feel complete – and completed the men. (176-177)

Prostitution and the Virgin/Whore View of Woman: “Ice Candy Man” – Aaya;

“The pungent whiff of urine from back-alleys blends with the spicy smells of Hira Mandi – of glossy green leaves, rose petals, and ochre marigolds. Silver braid hems blue dancing skirts; tight satin folds of the chooridar pyjama reveal rounded calves; girls shimmer in silk, georgette, and tinsel-glittering satin. Qasim, like a sperm swimming, aglow with virility up to the tips of the hair on his knuckles, feels engulfed in this female street”. (63)

As the evening goes by and the dancing girl starts her strip tease, the narrator lessens the focus on her talents in singing, dancing and conversation and the objectification of her body becomes more extreme. The narrator says ironically:

To Qasim enjoying the atmosphere and the girls in Hira Mandi is a separate issue from the protection he is showing his own daughter. The youngest girls in Hira Mandi are not much older than Zaitoon, who is at this point around twelve, but this does not seem to bother him. The narrative link between the dancing girl and Zaitoon is made in the three-line quick transition the narrator makes between Hira Mandi and Qasim’s home. The men are sent home from the brothel in taxis early in the morning, and when Zaitoon finds her father sleeping drunkenly on the bed, she is frightened and runs to the neighbour and surrogate mother Miriam. The close approximation of Qasim in the brothel and Qasim as a father adds perspective to his double standard view of women. The fact that Shahnaz and Zaitoon are mentioned so close to each other in the text also works as a warning that, in this society, the road from

being an innocent girl to being a 'fallen woman' may not be so long.

The Female Body as a Site for Sex and Reproduction:

The preoccupation that Qasim has with prostitution and the bodies of dancing girls can be explained with his state of sexual frustration, not having remarried after he lost his wife at the age of thirty-four. Also, more generally for all men who visit the area, it is a sign of the virgin-whore mentality mentioned earlier. The comparison between women and land that Qasim makes is repeated later in the novel, when Farukh comments that the land gets 'more virginal the further one travels' (124).

To Zaitoon, the city is not female, but her female world is the zenana, the women's quarters of the house. The narrator describes Zaitoon's experience of visiting the homes of the other families in their community. The zenana is depicted as one, or many, female bodies: 'Entering their dwellings was like stepping into gigantic wombs; the fecund, fetid world of mothers and babies' (55). The description of the zenana corresponds to Qasim's impression of Hira Mandi in that it is compared to the female reproductive organs. The street of Hira Mandi is the vagina up which Qasim imagines himself swimming like a sperm. In Zaitoon's impression of the zenana, the women's rooms are wombs in which babies grow. The zenana is described as dirty, claustrophobic and smelly, and, in contrast to Qasim's Hira Mandi, there are no bells, flowers or glittering fabrics in sight:

Words like 'dim maze', 'odours', 'interminable' and 'unventilated' clearly shows what the narrator thinks of the zenana. In contrast to the claustrophobic and dirty atmosphere of the rooms is the hospitality of the women, the 'inmates' living in the zenana like in a prison. Perhaps the most disquieting

part of this description is the last sentence, where the womb is described as a 'mindless vortex'. In the female world there seems to be no room for a mind of one's own – all there is, is endless housework and 'armies of babies'. Whether a woman wants to or not, she will eventually be pulled into the vortex.

PUBERTY, THE FEMALE WORLD AND MARRIAGE

This is the time when Zaitoon's own body starts changing. From this point in the novel, Zaitoon becomes the protagonist, later to be joined by Carol, and Qasim takes a place in the background. "*You are now a woman. Don't play with boys – and don't allow any man to touch you. This is why I wear a burkha...*" (55). She also refuses to tell Zaitoon 'how babies come' (55) with the excuse that she herself is childless, and thus cannot know how it happens. Later in the novel, after Zaitoon has been raped, a touchingly innocent memory from her puberty comes back to her:

Miriam has for some time been trying to get Qasim started with arranging Zaitoon's marriage. To her mind, Zaitoon will "*be safe only at her mother-in-law's... A girl is never too young to marry...*" (53). Now she convinces Qasim that Zaitoon should be taken out of school, so that she can stay at home and learn how to take care of the house in preparation for her marriage. Interestingly, it is a woman who most strongly reinforces the traditional values of Pakistani society and who is the most eager to establish Zaitoon as a wife and mother. Miriam, who has not had any education, does not see the value for a woman in knowing how to read and write. From experience, she knows that a woman needs to be good at performing domestic tasks. She also reinforces the view of women as weak, with stating the traditional view that Zaitoon is only safe as a wife in her future in-laws' house.

The focus on the female body as seen from the outside is very strong in the first half of *The Pakistani Bride*, with prostitution as the central theme. The looks resting on Zaitoon and Carol, both the wanted and unwanted ones, in the second half are outweighed by the deep focus on female sexuality in this part of the novel. Both the women's feelings about their own sexual and sensual feelings, as well as their experiences of sex are explored in this half. The focus on female sexuality is foreshadowed in the early days of the marriage between Qasim and Afshan, where Afghan tells Qasim openly about her sexual feelings before marriage: *'I used to wander by streams or sit on some high place dreaming of my future husband. Gusts of wind enveloped me and I'd imagine the impatient caresses of my lover. My body was young and full of longing. I'd squeeze my breasts to ease their ache'* (10). Here, the tables are turned upside down from the traditional pattern. The woman is the one who expresses longing and desire, while she is normally in this culture expected to be responding to male sexuality rather than being active herself.

A FEMINIST AWAKENING

Suddenly a great deal became clear to her. "So that's all I mean to you," she said. "That's really what's behind all the gallant and protective behaviour I've loved so much here, isn't it? I felt very special, and all the time I didn't matter to you any more than a bitch in heat. You make me sick. All of you."

Mushtaq's sexual attraction towards her has ebbed out, and now he feels tenderness towards her. She has become more like his wife and thus she is no longer interesting to him.

Cracking India is Bapsi Sidhwa's most acclaimed novel. It has become a classic Partition story, both as a book and on the screen. The novel is centred on an upper-

middle-class Parsi household in Lahore during the tumultuous time of the Partition of British India into India and Pakistan. *Cracking India* deals with life in Lahore before, during and after Partition. The novel is filled with childhood memories and everyday anecdotes from the life of the young girl Lenny and her family. Lenny's childhood universe is populated with people named after their professions or the relationship they have with Lenny: Mother, Father, Godmother, Cousin and Ayah (nanny) are all important characters in the novel. Where *The Pakistani Bride* is fragmented both in style, plot and point of view, *Cracking India* is more unified. The novel has a fairly realistic style of narration and has many traits in common with the classic Bildungsroman. The young heroine goes through a process during the book: In the end, she is no longer a small child starting to collect her first memories, but a girl on the threshold of puberty, who has learned about the darker sides of human nature.

SUMMING UP

To sum up; we come to the point that "Ice Candy Man" as a metaphor for those who wield power provides an inventive and indirect way to explore the role the politician played in the bloody birth of Pakistan and the new India. Realistic elements are the characterizing elements of the school of literary realism. Realists opine that literature should be accessible and comprehensible by all, and not only by the privileged educated upper-class people. Bapsi Sidhwa's all novels are full of inspirations. They render true service in exposing the veneer of society. In the twenty-first Century, women writers' works are considered as a powerful medium, which changes the social life of women. It makes to proceed further research in her novels.

Sidhwa could have picked any historical period or geographical setting, including her own, and she would have found more than

enough material about which to write. Like many Indian and Pakistani writers, Sidhwa chose the period before and after Partition for both *The Pakistani Bride* and *Cracking India*. The novels are set in different neighbourhoods of the large city Lahore, but also in tribal areas in the mountains and in Punjabi villages – perhaps to be able to show several aspects of the patriarchal society. The novels aim to show the reader how women were treated and how women suffered in those times. The situation for women, and especially for rural women, had, however, not changed much in the years that lie between the action of the novels and the time of writing. The choice of historical settings for her novels may be deliberate: Perhaps it was easier for Sidhwa to criticise the conditions of women's lives when she told her stories from a historical perspective. In the present paper; the researchers has tried to write about the condition of women. They tried to prove that women are as equal as men. The must be respected and regarded by everybody.

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Acknowledgements

We consider it is our moral duty to pay honour, regards and thanks to the learned authors, Learned Researchers, Research Scholars, librarians and publishers of all the books, Research papers and all other sources which we have consulted during the preparation of the present paper.
