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Dislocation and Sense of Loss in Baspi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*

Abstract

This research paper explores how Baspi Sidhwa employs the genre of partition novel in her *Ice-Candy-Man*, known as *Cracking India*. She exposes Pakistani, Indian views on partition and Lenny, girl narrator's perspective on the great communal divide showing dislocation emotional turmoil and sense of loss. Sidhwa probes that partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism sparked by hardening communal attitudes. She shares her view on the calamities of partition and she emphasizes the vulnerability of human lives. This relentlessly divided friends, families, lovers and neighbors in both countries. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, are the

characters from all communities- Hindus, Muslim, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis. Thus a multiple perspective of partition as viewed by affected people. However, what really distinguishes Baspi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* is the prism of Parsi sensitivity in which she depicts cataclysmic event. Another fascinating aspect of this novelist the use of the child narrator, the precocious Parsi girl, Lenny The impact of violence on the girl child narrator, Lenny, who depicts the horrors of partition, the role of rumor, the dangers of communal frenzy and the rise of obscurantism are all aspects of the partition, which reflects in *Ice-Candy-Man*. And it is the subsequent sub-divisions how the novelist employs witty banter, irony and parody in her sensitive handling of the impact of the partition on the Parsi community, the girl narrator and deteriorating human relationship. It is these aspects that make the novel unusual otherwise the cruelty, the horrors, the human toll and dislocation of partition.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-candy-man* published in America under the title of 'Cracking India' in 1991 and in 1998 Indo-Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mahta adapted story of *Ice-candy-man* and produced film named '1947: Earth'. Lenny the narrator of the novel is a little Parsi girl. Due to lameness caused by polio, her world is small and full of colors. Ayah, eighteen years old, who is always with her, has friends and admirers of all races and faiths. Ayah keeps them united but as the communal tension mounts, the group disintegrates.

They get polarized along communal lines. Riots start and the worst victims are women. Here, Sidhwa is an eyewitness to the communal violence and frenzy during 1947 partition. Sidhwa presents the disaster of partition of Indian subcontinent through the eyes of both Hindus and Muslim communities. The novel highlights the issues of women's and children's painful sufferings, easy victims in communal riots through the bloody partition. Sidhwa exposes the issues of murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, homelessness, blood flooded series in her novel.

Bapsi Sidhwa aptly explains the unstoppable logic of partition that is never – ending left even sane people and friends helpless and in effective. Sidhwa shows her own technique of reportage. Bare facts present the horror of the greatest communal divide in history of both countries. The neighbours of the semis, Mr. and Mrs. Singh hurriedly leave Lahore with their two children and a few belongings. Other goods are left behind with Lenny's parents. Sher Singh the 200 attendant flees from Lahore due to insecurity after his brother– in–law is killed. Similarly, the students' fraternity of king's Edward's medical college is disrupted.

Prakash and his family migrate to Delhi and Rahool Singh and his pretty sisters are escorted to a convoy to Himmat Ali and Moti becomes David Massih, showing the politics of compromise and survival. Ayah's lover the masscur's mutilated dead body is found in a gunnysack. The moneylender Kirpa Ram flees leaving guineas and other wealth behind communal mayhem and riots cross the class divide. Even middle–class families like the Shankars flee in haste.

Pir Pindo is a Muslim village, in the rural area, is attacked at dawn and swamped by Sikhs. Men, women, children are massacred. Bapsi Sidhwa as a sensitive novelist shows that humanitarian deeds are performed by individuals like Rodabar, known as Godmother, Lenny's mother and Jagjecet who with a furtive group of Sikhs visit the Muslim village of Pir Pindo under cover of darkness to warn them of an impending Akali attack. She shows that individual acts of kindness and bravery can only help some victims and alleviate their misery but not stem the tide of organized violence.

Events of bloody partition images depict human loss and agony. The dislocated of settled life is revealed by Lenny's understanding of the demographic change in Lahore. In owe she observers that Lahore is no more cosmopolitan. The Sikhs and Hindus have fled. "Lahore is suddenly emptied of yet another hoary dimension; there are no Brahmins with caste mark–or Hindus in dhotis with Bodhis, only hordes of Muslim refugees" (175).

Lenny senses the difference and pain caused by the huge exchange of populations. The dislocation and uprootedness of partition is well experienced by Lenny and her brother Adi as they drift through Queen's Garden's searching in vain for familiar faces and acquaintances. "Adi and I wonder from group to group peering into faces beneath white skull-cap and above ascetic beards... I feel uneasy. Like Hamitha I do not fit I know we will not find familiar faces her" (237).

The dislocation of life during partition caused emotional upheavals. This is the best exemplified by the attitude of Lenny when she learns that Masseur one of Ayah's several admirers has proposed marriage. Even in the child there is a feeling of insecurity as she clings to Ayah's lards and Cajoles her not to marry the Masseur as it would entail separation.

The partition novels of Manohar Malgsonkar, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal focus on Punjab and the dislocation of life and emotional turmoil in that region. So Bapsi Sidhwa's novel is similar to the novels in this genre. The only differences are that pointless brutality of communal frenzy is parodied as it is presented and narrated by Lenny. The properties of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are destroyed.

The terror of the fight for Lahore between Muslims and Sikhs is palpable. For Lenny that it is a spectacle, a variation from routine life, but mingled with terror and horror. The Shrieks of "Pakistan Murdabad! Sat Sri Akaal! Bolay So Nihaal!" of the Sikhs mobs when listening to master Tara Singh at Queen's Garden and "Allah-o-Akber!, Yaa Ali and Pakistan Zindabad"! of the rampaging Muslim mobs give Lenny as many nightmares as when she recollects the roaring of the lions in the Zoo, with such subtle comparisons and ironic exposures Sidhwa shows the brutalization which communal frenzy causes. Even lovers turn hostile.

The Ice-candy man, the Muslim lover of the Hindu Ayah watches Shalmi and Mozang Chowk burn with, "the muscles in the face tight a strange exhilaration I never want to see"

(136). Bapsi Sidhwa handles the delicate and sensitive theme of partition without verbosity and sensationalism. The horror of human loss, bloodshed, and separation is portrayed without lurid details and maudlin sentimentality.

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