



## Detriment of Nationalism and Identity in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice- Candy Man*

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### Abstract

Nationalism is not merely an idea which is embedded with love towards one's nation. It's a rather wider term which tends to foster the national spirit in an individual through devotion, acceptance, diligence and sanguine approach. It's a belief that encourages the pride in one's culture, ethics, values and ideals. This paper aims to highlight the quandary of Nationalism and Identity Crisis during the partition of India through the novel *Ice-Candy Man*, one of the most prominent works of the post-colonial time by Bapsi Sidhwa. The purpose is to depict the upheavals of women and minorities.

*Key words: embedded; foster; sanguine; quandary; catechize.*

In *Ice – Candy Man* Bapsi Sidhwa, an eminent post – colonial writer, has catechized the societal norms while presenting the complexities of minors and females during partition. Her novel posits a *cracking* picture of the country during partition of India and Pakistan. Many post – colonial writers have showcased that with the birth of a democratic nation the diverse groups came into limelight and started showing concern for their respect and existence. Their endeavours to present the large scaled impact of migration upon the emotional, mental and social status of the individuals have succeeded phenomenally. This paper focuses on the unique style of Bapsi Sidhwa while expressing her concern for the victims of partition. It also ascertains the sudden loss of their identity as they were no longer a part of their own village or city or state or even nation.

A vast amalgamation of cultures, traditions, beliefs and values that makes India a diverse nation also becomes the cause of disputes and violence

amongst different groups. The endurance and persistence of the great warriors that have always evoked a sense of nationalism seemed to be fainter at the time of partition of the country after Independence. Although the concept of nationalism was perverted with the arrival of colonial power that started controlling and reforming the ideals according to their own beliefs. With the advent of these powers, technological advancement was expected. No doubt they succeeded in the same to some extent but the price paid for this was exorbitant and its adverse effects continue to impact our nation and its development till date. As James P Welch has mentioned in his paper 'The British Raj and India: British Colonial Influence: 1612 – 1948', "*The establishment of the British Empire was a process of evolution, which passed through several periods marked by significant historical events. The initial phase began with a purely commercial and financial perspective and eventually passed through a more realist paradigm, based on expansion and*

*maintaining power. This was, then, followed by a steadfast determination to maintain imperial dignity in the face of the bitter and revengeful, post 1857, mutiny period."*

Bapsi Sidhwa has added a flavour of feminism in the post – colonial complexities to depict the upheaval and torso of the victims of partition. Innocent children, women and minors were mutilated by the religiously furious groups. Sidhwa has presented this torment perpetuated on all of them physically as well as mentally in a very effective manner. The portrayal of barbarity towards women has been presented through the outlook of an innocent child. The language aptly holds the readers and takes them to the sentimental journey of all the characters.

Through the strong character of Lenny, an innocent Parsee girl, she has highlighted the agony of women during this upheaval. As she herself has experienced disconsolate social life since her childhood, this novel aptly gets the touch of the real apathy and trauma. Her historical perspective has facilitated her to go into the detail of the dilemmas and crisis. Social, political and cultural demolition was inevitable amid such an uproar. People were compelled to adopt the language, customs and traditions of the others. People were bound to hide their identity in order to escape the atrocity. The intense fear of the upcoming coercion haunted them to such a great extent that nationalism and identity seemed to be a hoax. In a comparative analysis of 'Ice – Candy Man' and 'Train to Pakistan' Hafiza Mavra Sultan and Prof.Dr.Abdul Ghafoor Awan have mentioned, "Ice-Candy-Man described the harrowing story of the partition days when the noble ideal of nationalism bartered early to think together, which devastation social and political sensitivities without absurd precedent disturbed."

During the hours of partition a lot of exchange and chaos emerged adding disruption and vexation to the lives of the migrants. Bapsi Sidhwa has expressed her concern for the migrants in general and women in particular. In this novel she has mentioned how this hasty decision of Indian Independence brought a never ending fracas in everyone's life.

India's Partition was a volatile period. Due to the intensifying communal riots, people of all age groups were being affected by the complexities. Lenny, a young child, lost her childhood pleasure as she has gone through excruciating pain and witnessed the torment in the name of religion upon minors and females. An eight year old girl gained maturity very soon due to an inconducive environment she grew into. As Asma Mansoor, an English professor, has mentioned in her paper on 'Ice Candy Man', *Through Lenny's precocious observations from approximately the ages of four to eight, the novel canvases the socio-political terrain of pre-partition India as the region stumbles from one politically engineered catastrophe to another.*

Abduction, molestation and child abuse delineates a real picture of this transition. No religion or community was an exception. Women and children had to confront the ennui seeping into their life. Ice candy man, a genuine person who had nothing to do with communal indifferences, raged with an incident and turned into a hostile man. Religiously biased, he started exploiting Lenny's maid 'Ayah' smashing her respect and dignity.

Ayah has been depicted as a Hindu girl of eighteen who is treated merely as an object of pleasure. Mutilated by many, she was sold and resentfully became a prostitute. Lenny and the grandmother eventually found her as a subdued person who had lost her spirit. Hasanat Ahmad in 'Feminist approach in Ice Candy Man' has quoted, *Her portrayal also represents the male exploitation of female sexuality. Ice-Candy-Man manages to kidnap her with the help of some criminals and forces her into prostitution. Despite her conviction that she is now a contaminated person, she retains her will to go back to her family and face life anew. When events in the story took a violent turn, Ayah became one of poor sufferers. Her former lover (Dilnawaz) dragged her to the worst of the destinies. She was being sold by him to the business of prostitution. And once full of life Ayah became like a soulless body.*

After the servitude of almost two centuries, psychological and mental impact upon the people was surmounting. Amidst that India had to set forth with new ways overcoming the challenges coming

across in her path towards progress. Democracy brought an unfortunate turn of events like communal violence, mass migration, molestation of women and children and what not. Things started going from bad to worse. Nationality and identity crisis was the major challenge for all specially the migrants. Religious identity surpassed national identity. This communal disparity led to the division of India casting aside all the efforts of a united nation to retrieve freedom. The iconic leaders and their inspirational speeches couldn't fan the flames of nationality anymore. As a result, the whole nation was enflamed by communalism and people on both the sides were the victims of this rage and fury.

Assessing the situation through the works of some prominent post-colonial writers reveals that it was a decision that invites annihilation followed by unanimous repentance. There was a substantial impact of migration upon the lives of people in both the communities - the receiving and the sending. Khwaja Asim, Prashant Bhardwaj and Atif Mian have considered this transmission as "one of the largest and most rapid population exchanges in human history". They have analysed that such a massive movement of resettling has not only impacted their identity or status but has also affected the nation's growth as they have mentioned in their paper 'The Partition of India: Demographic Consequences', *Despite the fact that the overall net effects of the flows are muted due to the two way nature of the flows, there is considerable variation in how districts were affected. The top decile of affected districts in each country experienced dramatic changes in its literacy rates, occupation structure and gender ratios.*

Amidst that crisis, people had to endure the humiliation and fanatical frenzy. Everyone struggled – men for their survival, minors for their rights, women for their respect and liberty, and children for their security. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* also presents an explicit picture of this chaos. Not only does his novel deal with the partition geographically, but also demarcate the British colonial era from that of postcolonial independence. This novel illustrates how the liberation of a nation gave vent to the religious strife. Besides pointing out people's loss of identity, Singh has also mentioned

the pangs of uneasiness and qualm of absolute horror. Through his strong characterisation, he has depicted the gigantic uproar - *Not a soul was left alive. Women killed their own children and jumped into wells that filled to the brim with corpses.*

The article written by Dorothy Mcmenamin 'Anglo-India Experiences during Partition and its impact upon Their Lives' illustrates agony of common people due to the political interest of the leaders of both the sides. It also instantiates the role of Britishers in the communal commotion that led to the bedlam of migration. The maxim of non-violence initiated by Mahatma Gandhi proved null and void as it couldn't curb the vengeance during the cacophony. She has written, *Bapsi Sidhwa's now famous novel Ice-Candy-Man demonstrates that Parsees were also exempt, and this has been substantiated by three Parsee interviewees.* It has been clearly elaborated that how Anglo-Indians were exempted during this discordance as they were not the target of communal violence. It demarcated to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.

No doubt, the celebration of Independence restricted to the privileged elite group and dangerous fragmentation of the unfortunate common mass. As a result, the identity crisis was subtle and survival was prominent. Dr Malika Tripathi in her article 'Literature of Partition: An Analysis with Special Reference to the Trauma in the Writings of Bapsi Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh' has successfully been able to emanate the feelings of pain and suffering through the portrayal of traumatic scenes of the partition. She has mentioned, "People became worse than beasts ever ready to slaughter fellow beings in the name of religion." She opines that this was the biggest evacuation of mass in the entire history of mankind. People of both the religions were riven by the partisanship and they quenched their thirst by the blood of each other.

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