

FEMINISM IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S *ICE CANDY MAN*

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ABSTRACT

Feminism plays an imperative function in Ice Candy Man. It is the key aspects of this novel and by this it caricatures the importance of feminism and the unique position of women in the world. Bapsi Sidhwa has portrayed her female characters as more distinctive, strong and active as the one who are aware of their surroundings. Unlike other female characters that give up their hope in critical situation the female characters of Bapsi stood about and fight against their fates and denied agree other's authority own them. This struggle made them matchless and exclusive from others.

Key Words: *Power of feminism, the strength of passion, the tenderness of love, lameness and sexuality.*

Ice Candy Man proposes a significant treatment of feminism and its demand the attention the interest of the readers on numerous counts. *Ice Candy Man* is the second partition based novel Witten by a women with so much intense and deep portrayal of the naked truth about the partition whereas the first novel of partition by women sunlight on a broken column by Attia Hosain does not compact deeply with the gruesome reality of partition. It is daring attempts on the side of women write to take the theme of partition and as to make diversion from the usual and traditional themes that women writers usually prefers.

The female characters in *Ice Candy Man* are very strong than the male characters. Though the male characters act as imitators they remain marginal and feeble. The female characters such as Lenny, the Ayath Shanta, Godmother remains crucial and insist their own power of authority they act as representative to expose the biases which prevail in the patriarchal society. The women characters are very certain and conscious of their individuality and they cannot be easily dominated. The experience which is presented here by the women characters is very fresh and new.

Kamala Edwards says,

Sidhwa is a feminist and realist. One sees in her women characters the strength of passion, the tenderness of love, and the courage of one's conviction. They struggle overcome the hurts of time and escape the grip of a fate in whose hands they are often mire puppets. In the conventional novels, usually the male characters will be illustrated and lauded as more



effective, magnificent, expressive and active and the female characters are only portrayed as the beneficiary of theme's effort and pictured as frail, pathetic and weedy. But it is feministic novel which change the tradition as vice versa. Women with their vigorous participation got hold of the situation under their control.... with this point of view *Ice Candy Man* can be truly termed as feministic novel and Bapsi Sidhwa as a proper feminist.

The very special feature of the novel *Ice Candy Man* is the chronicler Lenny. She is the right years old child who witnessed the bloody and gory partition and act as the projector in this novel. Being lame she recognizes the circumstance and distinguishes her liberty and is no point she feels for her lameness but on contrary she fights to gets triumph over her in activeness she feels herself as normal as others and though she enjoys some special benefits. She is aware of her world. Lenny can be compared to the persona that Chaucer adopts in his epilogue to the Canterbury tales, rendering credibility by being almost a part of the reader's consciousness... with the wonder of a child she observes social change and human behavior, her persona a source of sharp irony. (Novi Kapadia).

The lameness of Lenny is significantly portrayed because Sidhwa as a physically challenged person may have been faced many difficulties to becomes a writer since it was once considered as a male genre or fort. Thus the character of Lenny is represented as the replica of Sidhwa. Her mind-set towards her nameless cousin demands the feminine brazenness. Though she know that her world is compacted her hope for new things never gets loosened as she always try to attempts stuffs which is different and peculiar. Lenny comments her lameness and say, "Having polio infancy is like being born under a lucky star. It has many advantage it permits me to access to my mother's bet in the middle of the night".(p.10) She enjoys the life as it is unlike other children she is more interested in knowing the things that happens in her surroundings. She is a very keen observe and quick learner, this quality make her unique foremothers. About her learning and observing power she remarks, "I learn fast... I learn of human needs, fragilities, cruelties and joys. I also from her the tyranny magnets exercise over made". (p.20)

The social and religious split during her age made her more aware of her identity, her religion and apart from that she understands the distinction of genders and stereotypes prevailing for men and women. At the age of infancy itself also she recognizes the place of women and their duties towards the country. The character of Lenny is the mixture of irony, humor and wit. She observes many different personalities and traits of both man and women but she is neither influenced nor affected by that. The emotion of Lenny is disclosed when she feels sorry for the betrayal of Aysh and she even punishes herself for that.

She cries, for three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror staring at my tongue. I hold the vile, truth-infected thing between my fingers and try to wrench it out... I punish it rigorous souring's from my prickling toothbrush until it is sore and bleeding. Concern about woman,

allegation colonization, the discomfort that prevailed and the soreness which fully filled in the minds of the people are very apparently conceived in the question of the child, Lenny. Her mental mentation is seen when she urges Godmother to take her to see Ayah. She says gallantly, "I want to tell her I am her friend... I don't want her to think she's bad just because she's been kidnapped". (p.254)

Sidhwa blended the character of Lenny in such a way that she can carry the story of partition with confident and delicateness. Lenny easily socializes with everyone and this made her to visit the village pindo. There she finds the true situation of women and the responsibilities of Parveen and Khatija, for her they appear as the imitation of mother and aunt. After the abduction of the Ayah, Shanta she finds herself very lonely and later her mother appoints a new ayah to look after her named Hamida. At first she finds difficult to manage with her. But later on by understanding the situation she adjusts with her, she won't remain adamant as she knows that life must be goon. She hides the truth to her mother about the "fallen women", Hamida as she does not want to spoil the life of her.

She says, "I looked down at you from a hole in the roof. You couldn't see me -but saw you, I recognized you straight way when you were talking to mother about the job... But I didn't tell her!" (p.214) this attitude shows her care and concern for others. Her shrewdness and prudence is shown when she answer for her cousin's question, "May be I don't need to attract you. You're already attracted" (p.220) the relationship between her nameless cousins highlights the importance of feminism and she doesn't allow him to man ever or operate her sexually. In no way the lameness of Lenny becomes the cause for sympathy and retrenchment of her intelligence.

One can promise Lenny's conscious towards her mushrooming sexuality. Her broadminded, free and independent up bringing makes her accessible for the premature sexual arousalment. And she takes pleasure in the covetous looks that Ayah receive from her admires such as Ice Candy man toes, Gardener's talk, sharbat Khan's sight and deep intimacy with masseur. Her relationship with her cousin leading to the secret exploration of sexuality shows her mental maturation and freedom. By making Lenny as the narrator the novel demands more wright and swiftness and she can be compared to Stephen in James Joyce's '*A Portraits Of The Artist As A Young Man*' and to Ammu in Arundhati Roy's '*The God Of Small Things*'. The foremost influence of Lenny is her Ayah, Shanta from whom she learns many things both worldly and domestic things like emotion, love and so on. For Lenny Ayah is the epitome of belief and faith. She is the one who conveys all the silly and grand never to Lenny. When cousin doubts on the Ayah's information about the struggling of petrol Lenny says. "If Ayah says there is petrol in the car's dickey, there is petrol in the car's dickey". (p.172)

Shanta, the Ayah in the blaze of sanity and the vigor of feminism. She acts as a green be that controls the entire male bee that hang over around her. She has thirteen admires including



Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Parsi. She is the counter of attraction. Everyone likes her a lot for her work and for the love she has for others. Her height of power is shown when she easily prohibits the talk about politic among her multi-religious friends by saying "If you all talk of nothing but this Hindu-Muslim business, I'll stop coming to the park". For which Ice Candy Man replies, "such talks helps clear air... but for you sake, we won't bring it up again." (p.92). The character of Ayah is the best example for Bapsi Sidhwa portrayed of a true feminist. Vast part of the novel revolves around Ayah. She is the eighteen years old girl who works as a care taker in a Parsi family. Though she works in a well natured place she is not guarded with safety because she was treated as a sex subject by all other admirers and she is aware of that. By seeing this Lenny educates about sexuality and Ayah becomes an unconscious teacher for us.

Lenny remarks,

The covetous glance Ayah drakes educate me. Up and down, they look at her. Stub entered twisted beggars and dusty old beggars on crutches drop their poses and stare at her with hard, alert eyes. Holy men marked in piety, show aside their pretenses her with lust. Hawks, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes, pushing my pram with the unconcern of the Hindu Goddess she workshops. (p.3)

So she uses her feminine grace for getting silly advantage such as badam, cashew nuts, extra serving of food and so on. She uses her charm as a stratagem of social and endurance but this was possible till the aggression of partition as the violence destroys all her recognizable world. She is aware and confident of her individuality. By representing the feminist of a female she educates Lenny with intelligence and choice. Though she is flirtations with other she is extremely obedient to Lenny and her family. She takes care of Lenny as a mother. Ayah is the combined image of both beauty and intelligence. Though she talks with everyone like Ice Candy Man, Sharbat Khan, Hari and all her admirers her love towards Messieur is pure, true and incomparable. Her care and concern for others show her kind and motherly nature.

When ice candy man approaches her and says, there is an animal inside me straining to break free. Marry me and perhaps it will be contained. 'At that time also she denies to marry, because for her, true love must come from heart but neither by compulsion nor by demands. Even though she knows that the situation prevailing is not apt for her, she strengthens herself and gets ready to face the circumstance. She was loved by everyone. Irrespective of her religion but during the awake of partition she becomes a Hindu for all.

She is also very keen observer of the surroundings. She is the one who informs Lenny and her cousin about the seizure of petrol which was done by their mothers. She says to them, "Look in the ago down next to me quarters sometimes. It's full of gallons and gallons of petrol".

(p.172) during the riots of the partition, Ayah got through the lot of sufferings. Her beloved Masseur was been murdered and this lost cannot be equalized by anyone. Lenny says, it looks like a house pinning for its departed haunted-like Ayah's eyes are by memories of Masseur. She secretly cries. Often I catch her wiping tears" With the help of some hooligans Ice Candy man abducts Ayah and she was send to kotha-the place of prostitutes and dancing girls. Now is beloved Ayah becomes a Hindu for him. "They drag Ayah out. They drag her by arms stretched taut, and her bare feet-they want to move backwards-are forced forward instead".

In spite of the conviction that she is seduced and kept in kotha for months after marriage also her self-respect and dignity does not vanishes. Her name is changed as Mumtaz. Even after her marriage she reminds assertive and says to Godmother, "I want to go my family.... I will not live with him". (p.261) this shows her courage and daring nature. Though Ice Candy Man pleads with love to make her to stay with him, he pleases to Godmother, 'please. Please persuade her ... explain to her... I will keep her like a queen... Like a flower... I'll make her happy' Ayah never changes her decision and she stands stubborn in that and says, "But i cannot forget what happened". Her rejection to declare or accept the defeat regardless of physical and emotional marring and defacement her determination to look into future conveys moral courage to her. Thus the character of Ayah is unique and different from all other women characters as they accept their fate when they undergo a physical mutilation.

She is the symbol of self-respect and dignity. Though she knows that survival of a Hindu is very difficult she never talk about conversion as other did for their survival. She values everyone on the basis of human nature and character but not on religious creditability. Thus Ayah can be compared to Hardy's Jess as she also denies marring the one who physically main her. Godmother is the supreme example for feminist characters. She is the pulsating figure by whom Lenny is very much inspired and influenced. Her personality shows her character her sharp approach, infinite love towards Lenny and her attachment and involvement in social activities shows as the power of feminine. Her sense of humor is flawless and showed. Despite the old age, she is very active in her activities and respects her a lot. Her depth of understanding and carrying the situation is known when she convinces Ayah saying that, she was fated daughter. In can't be undone. But it can be forgiven worse things are forgiven. Like goes on and the business of living buries the devisor our pasts. Hurt, happiness... All face impartially... To make way for fresh joy and new sorrow that is the way of life. (p.262)

Godmother's relationship with Leeny stronger and chooser that all other relationship Lenny describes it as,

She is childless. The bond that ties her strength to my weakness, my fierce demands to her maturing, my trust to her capacity that contain to trust-and my loneliness to her compassion-is stronger than the bond of motherhood. More satisfying then ties between men and woman. (p.3)

The relationship between Godmother-Rodabani and slave sister creates a new dimension in the treatment of feminism. Sidhwa urges and demands the points that women may be harassed exploited not only the men but also by other women. Slave sister is poorly treated frequently by her elder sister Godmother.

'It will evaporate... You can't imagine how hot it is!' says slave sister, unperturbed. 'Can't I? Where do you think I live? In the North Pole?... What if the houses decide to perform on a grander scale? Will that evaporate too? How often must I tell you not to let the Tonga come in?

As there is very much interested socially she tries to know everything and also about every one and she try to help them whenever and however she can. She is the combined image of both tough and smooth. She donates blood and with her influence she manages to get a seat in school for Ranna and also she helps Ayah to get back to her place when she is confined that Ayah is made to stay there without her will her husband and her sister appear to her just as a peripheral and marginal.

The words of Lenny illustrate the power of Godmother.

Over the year Godmother has established a network of espionage with a reach of even she is not aware. It is in her nature to know things: to be aware of what's going on around her. The day-to-day common place of our lives caravel to her undercurrents that are lost to less perceptive humans nobody -not even a kitten-is delivered within the sphere of her influence without her becoming instantly aware of its existence. (p.210)

The most important incident which makes us to view the authoritative power and efficiency of Godmother to carryout condition in smooth way is the conversation between Ice Candy Man and Grandmother. It is not an easy task to talk and win with *Ice Candy Man* but Godmother achieves that. Affected at last by Godmother's story silence, *Ice Candy-Man* lowers his eyes. His voice divested of oratory, he says, 'I am a salve, Baijee. I worship her. She can come to no harm with me', 'No harm?' Godmother asks in a deceptively cool voice- and arching her back like a scorpion its tail, she closes in for the kill. 'You permit her to be raped by butches, drunks, and good as and say has come to no harm?' *Ice-Candy-Man's* head jolts back as it's been struck.

“Is that why had lifted off-led hundreds of eyes probe her-so that you could marry her? You would have your own mother carried off if it suited you! You are a shameless badmash! Nimakharmal Faithless! (p.248)

Godmother takes Lenny with her to the kotha despite slave sister. She is the representative of

the inborn strength of female and also she showcase before that everyone. Her daring visit to Hira Mandi along with Lenny shows her power and magnifying strength.

"How can you dream of talking the child there!" says mini aunty, her eyes brimming with reproach, the chubby disc of her cheeks lengthening in solemn consternation.

'I'm not taking her there', says Godmother. We are only visiting a simple housewife in her simple house. The house merely happens to be there'.

'One can't tell you anything. Have your own way....'

'Have I ever done otherwise...? Then why you are wasting my time?'

This conversation shows her sister and her power of knowledge. Without Godmother the novel doesn't attain its height. She is the only character of the novel that works beyond the domestic things and sexuality and emerges as the vivacious figure. The most important factor for which the character of Godmother is portrayed is to explore the 'self-important' and 'self-worth' of female. Though the character of Lenny mother is portrayed very lightly she also plays a significant role in the novel and also she exposes the fact about feminism. She is pictured as the merge of both tradition and modern. At situation she acts as the typical traditional house wife, looks after her husband with much care and concern. Even at time she untightens his shoes, and according to the mood and situation of her husband she submits herself and soothes him.

Her mother lines nature is revealed at the times when she takes Lenny to the doctor, she feels herself responsible for Lenny's polio and feels guilty. "Should she sit me out in the sun? Massage like this... or that? Use almond oil or mustard oil? Can she give Mr. Phailbus's homeopathic powders? Cod liver oil? I'm to blame; she says I left her to the Ayash...."(p.8) the true feminism in her heart evolves out when she witnesses the blood-shed. She takes step to safe guard the lives of the victims, who suffered during the partition. She voluntarily helps out only Ayah, but also the unseen and unfamiliar scapegoats, who faced the strange situation and underwent the physical harassment without being a part of the revolution.

She acts as women of accent along with her sister in reusing the kidnapped women. They play an excellent humanitarian and heroic role of fighting for the lives and properly of Hindus. She clears the misconception of Lenny saying that "We were only smuggling the rationed petrol to help our Hindu and Sikh friends to run away... And also for that conveys to send kidnapped women, like your Ayah, to their families across the border". (p.242) Thus, it is the two women who carry out the dangerous and risky job of saving the lives in danger.

The relationship between Ruccho and Papoo exploits the theme that women reflexively bound themselves to the fate and treats marriage as they are for all ills which are not true. Moccho always finds fault with her daughter Papoo. She says, "I turban my back the bitch slacks off! I say something; she becomes a deaf-mute I'll thrash the wickedness out of you!"

(p.94) Muccho takes Papoo as her enemy and does everything against her. Sidhwa portrayed this character to show how women wrongly consider a female child as their rival and contender. This is followed for years through the character of Papoo Sidhwa talks about feminism.

Another important thing that to be noted is that a female cannot be subjugated by any maltreatment. Papoo is on excellent for this. Often she was severely beaten by her mother but Papoo never submits herself to her mother. To submissive her struggle she was given opium during her marriage. This shows the crooked attitude of Maccho. She feels that marriage is the solution for everything. In a same text Sidhwa portrays two different mother characters and their relation with their daughter. There is a vast difference between these two mothers. Lenny's mother treats Lenny as a good friend and gives her more space and shares even the heavy matter in such a way that she can understand. Lenny's mother explanation on the misconception of Lenny about the petrol smuggling serves as a good example for the friend attitude.

On contrast, Muccho maltreats her daughter; she thinks that marriage is the only duty of the parents so she arranged marriage for her eleven years old daughter with a middle aged man. Lenny comments, "He is no boy! He is a dark, middle aged man with a pockmark-pitted face and small, brash, kohl-blackened eyes". (p.187) thus she exposes a twofold treatment of feminism in the same novel. This exhibits the art of mastery in her. Similar style and the treatment of feminism can be seen in Arudhati Roy's *'The God of Small Things'*. The character of Ayah and Ammu are very similar as they cannot be easily subjugated. Both the characters are in the same view that there much more in the world to see, to learn and to enjoy beyond the physical mutilation. The deny taking it as a defeat.

For Ayah and Ammu 'self-respect' and 'self-worth' are very important. When it is hurt, they act upon their own decision without bothering others the love of Ayah towards Masseur and Ammu's love toward Velutha and very true and pure. They refuse to accept the love which is conditioning and demanding. Ammu leaves her husband when he plans to corrupt her dignity for achieving his aim, he acts selfishly. And Ayah too leaves Ice Candy Man for she can never forget the past that happened to her because of him. Thus the two characters, Ayah and Ammu are very stubborn and they represent feminism. The characters in both the novels are very unpredictable, natural and very real. Both Bapsi Sidhwa and Arundhati Roy pictured the character men and women in their true colors. One can find the different shades of human thoughts, feelings and behavior surely depicted in their works. They talk about mankind's culture and the refinement. And both the novel carries the elements of autobiography.

Thus *Ice Candy Man* recommends a significant treatment of feminism. It shows the real position and the experience of feminine psyche with an exclusive approach. The women characters in the novel are conscious and certain of their independence and personality who

cannot be easily suppressed and concealed. Bapsi Sidhwa's civilization of female characters shows realism and the current status of women in the world. Her skillful handlings of the female character glitter marvelously than the male characters. Her minute and vivid description of her characters serves as a pedestal for feminism.

"Sidhwa is the kind of writer who catches you by surprise. In the subtlest of ways, she teaches and edifies as she educates". (Raddiffe Quarterly) Though it is based on the theme of partition, her unique style in treating the female protagonist high lighters the awareness of feminism. Bapsi Sidhwa's treatment of feminism is very dynamic, vigorous and too shrewd, both accepted and applaud able.

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