



Diasporic Writer's Penetration of Archetypal Journey of Disabled from Innocence to Experience (With reference Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man)

*Dr Vipin Kumar Pandey &

**Dr Punam Pandey

* Associate Professor, Dept of English and Other Foreign Languages, DSMNRU Lucknow

**Assistant Professor, English, Dept. of Basic and Social Sciences, BUAT Banda, UP

Bapsi Sidhwa recipient of many prestigious national and international awards is a woman author of great renown in the Asia. Through her novel *Ice Candy Man* she tries to portray the life with her artistic neutrality during the period of partition of Indian in 1947. Bapsi Sidhwa through her female protagonist Lenny Sethi, disabled four years girl attempts to change the impression of disability in society describing the adventurous four years journey of the protagonist in the present novel showing her concern on pitiable condition of women in the days of the partition along as well as socio-political issues too. When we go back to have a look on the disabled characters portrayed in the works of Indian English or Hindi writers, it reflects the negative portrayal of characters with zero contribution in making society integrated. But in *Ice Candy Man* the novelist projects the observation and speculation of a disabled girl who belongs to Parsee community in Lahore and does not make any discrimination among people on the basis of caste, creed, religion, community etc. Above all she keeps the religion of humanism on top. Lenny Sethi is Parsee (minority community) but lives with her Ayah Shanta, Hindu Girls and Imamdin, her cook (Muslin) happily. She shows there was communal harmony before the Partition days but communal riots make the people change. Now love and trust disappeared leaving the place to hatred jealousy and vengeance which give birth to a new society replete with atrocities on the women, abductions, mutilations, and rapes on innocent women and girls which brings disaster in lives of Indian. Even in such horrible situation Lenny Sethi is seen seeking the way to get out of Hira Mandi of Pakistan. While Lenny Sethi herself is confined to place and depend on other for her needs, she still thinks about people and successfully attempts to save the life of Shanta with the help of her godmother. Her neutral outlook and vision towards life make us realize disability is not to be segregated from society but should be assimilated to. Disability is not disqualification it is just show the lack of work capacity of a particular organ. This way disability should be treated.

Hence, the present paper is an endeavour to highlight the journey of Lenny Sethi, who is saviour of her Ayah Shanta and helps her to regain her life. The entire novel is an observation of a four years disabled girl. Whatever she comes across in society during the partition period is delineated in realistic manner which shows no matter disabled one

cannot move freely but his/her speculation cannot ignored. Even their voice can bring change in society and make us rethink to build new perception required.

Keywords: Disability, Individualism, artistic neutrality, migration.

Bapsi Sidhwa recipient of many national and international awards is a renowned Pakistani Parsee female writer. She is known for her lucid expression and racy style and due to her style of the fiction writing, is compared to VS Naipual and RK Narayan. Ethnicity too is perceptible in *The Ice Candy Man*. It can be said to be an “emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders” (Cooper 75). *The Ice Candy Man* is her third novel which penetrates the real condition of the partition days through her favourite character Lenny Sethi, a disable four years’ girl. Sidhwa has projected herself in this character. The novel revolves around the observation of the four year’s girl in next four years. Throughout her childhood years, the novelist was suffered from a deadly ailment of Polio and she was instructed at home by an Anglo-Indian lady teacher. She shows one can change her adverse condition by own determination to contribute in society in the certain ways. Curse can be changed into boon by new approach to life. She confirms that her inventiveness and creativity could come out from lonely moments of her life. She was influenced by script styles and the philosophies of great novelists like Charles Dickens, V. S. Naipaul and Leo Tolstoy. The present novel *Ice Candy Man* has a theme of politics and she has presented the political and a narrative thread of her writing. Lenny Sethi is unable to visit various places because of her disability but is keen observer in all walks of life. The novel presents the turbulent upheavals of the partition from her free view point and describes the political incidents in the Indo-Pak political world. Bapsi Sidhwa presented all the narrative from the viewpoint of Lenny, a handicapped girl. She has stressed the weaknesses of human lives and maintains a fine balance between enjoyment and anguish. This novel presents various shades and complexities related with a decision of political practicality through Sethi. Lenny, a child narrator looks at each characters belong to different community through the prism of her own Parsee sensitivity. While she herself is a dependent, but her speculation provokes her to see the reality which has changed the life of denizens of Lahore during the partition period. She delineates the horrific details of barbarism, human loss, cruelty, brutality and displacement but with her artistic skills she makes readers realize how communal harmony was disturbed by communal riots. Her concern can be felt by her journey to rescue her Ayah Shanta a Hindu woman. She does not accept the cruelty of nature to herself as a curse she utilizes her time in her own way which projects her not only as a sensitive and kind hearted creature but also saviour. It shows her love for humanism.

Bapsi Sidhwa has examined the situation of the partition days from her own point of view through the female narrator Lenny. She tries to keep herself far away from partiality but is alleged to describe the things from a Pakistani muslim woman. But it does not matter what the critics alleged her. Matter is this that whatever is described in *Ice Candy Man* is observation of an innocent four years’ disable girl who does not confine herself in the precinct of narrow consensus but tries to show readers severe imprint of communal riots resulted in communal disharmony upon the

mind of a little girl. In the name of disability she does not feel like stopping in her life, instead she determines to bring change in the approach of people towards disability.

Generally it is seen that disability brings shame and is considered flaw in self. The disabled are segregated to other family members and even to society. This creates a huge vacuum in the life of such people. They keep themselves isolated from each and everyone. But in case of narrator it does not happen. She is self-reliant and tries to correct the things around her. She does not show her resentment in words instead attempts to be part main stream. Bapsi Sidhwa never took her disability as inability. She immersed as a voice which is heard not only in India but abroad also. Through narrator she places on record her concerns on various issues. One of her prime concerns was the plight of women who are meshed in the fires of violence. The novelist not only captures the happenings at Pir Pindo, but she also

projects the city of Lahore that was messed up completely during the partition days because of riots. The entire city was wrecked by the hellish fires that never seemed to end. When Lahore was burning most of the Hindus and Sikh families left to India. They left behind their belongings which were rampantly looted. Their houses were ransacked and set on blaze. Hundreds of homes were turned empty and desolate. People, who escaped from such hell, meet more hellish condition. Women were not safe; they are used to satiate lust of opponent community. By insulting, humiliating, abducting and mutilating they satisfy their masculine ego and take their revenge. In such ways their resentment reflected. Shanta is not left untouched from this atrocity. Lenny remarks clear much about her:

The covetous glances Ayah draws educate me. Up and down, they look at her. Stub handed twisted beggars and dusty old beggars in crutches drop their poses and stare at her with hard, alert eyes. Holy men, masked in piety, shove aside their pretences to ogle her with lust. Hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes, pushing my pram with the unconcern of the Hindu goddess she worships. (ICM 12)

Her admirers are from different communities which was secular in the initial stage. But the tenuous change in Lahore on the eve of partition brings massive change, the mood and tenor of Ayah's admirers changes from its harmonious state to disgust and hatred towards each other. Being lady she does not show her resentment and tries to maintain balance with these men and avoids misunderstanding in the name of religion. Masseur and ice candy man were her most favoured suitors, both belong to the Muslim community. Masseur is killed in riot and ice candy man pushes her in hellish life of prostitution in Hira Mandi of Pakistan in name of revenge with Hindu. Pakistan posits itself as a land of conflicting perceptions. Ian Talbot in Pakistan: A Modern History observes that Pakistan still faces the question "whether it is a land for Muslims or a nation of Muslims moving towards its destiny as an Islamic state..." (Talbot,1). Religion can be seen as an important identity marker for immigrants from Pakistan.

The ferocity of Hindu-Muslim tension can be seen in the scene when the Muslim mob on the door step of Lenny's house comes in search for Hindus and Sikhs present in the house. Hari, the gardener, was a Hindu, is spared due to the conversion to Islam. He changes his name from Hari to Himat Ali. Hari had obviously changed to escape the violence. This conversion shows identity loss of individual. Lenny Sethi was aware of her ayah's attachment to ice candy man. So on being asked by that man about Shanta she gives clue to him about her presence in house. Knowing that Ayah is hiding inside the house, the mob enters the house and drags Ayah out. Ice-Candy-Man's abduction and defilement of Ayah is a clear gesture of contempt against India, Hindu men, and Hindu property. Menon and Bhasin suggest:

The most predictable form of violence experienced by women, as women, is when the women of one community are sexually assaulted by the men of the other, in an overt assertion of their identity and a simultaneous humiliation of the 'other' by "dishonouring" their women. In this respect, the rape and molestation of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim women before and after Partition probably followed the familiar pattern of sexual violence, and of attack, retaliation and reprisal. (1998, 41)

By dishonouring another's wife, daughter, or sister, one ridicules his religion, cultural, and personal honour.

Lenny and her relatives soon find ayah's location. Lenny's Godmother comes to her rescue when she came to know about her presence in Hira Mandi famous place of prostitution in Pakistan and her torture by ice candy man. She confronts Shanta and consoles her. From there she sends Shanta to recovered women's camp. Lenny must find the strength to persevere and save her ayah, thus highlighting that her naiveté has grown into genuine concern, and a more comprehensive knowledge of others and their wellbeing. Ice candy man tries to meet Shanta there also, but he is thrashed away by the Sikh guard. After few days Ayah is taken to her family in Amritsar. Ice candy man becomes a mad fakir in her love and follows her across the Wagha border.

This paper is a moderate endeavour to examine the journey of a disabled little girl from victim to savior. Bapsi sidhwa's perceptive observations of region, community, human conduct, society etc. are accommodated in the novel Ice Candy Man. She has tried her best to be impartial in her delineation of situation and incident of the Partition days. Lenny's character, including her trials and triumphs, reveals that the human desire for love, growth and compassion can far outweigh the effects of war and hate. The narrative also shows just how important community is, especially during tumultuous times. Lenny looks at her immediate family, extended family and family of servants, and in each of them, finds points of connection. These relationships help to inform her worldview, and allow her to make informed decisions based on newfound love and compassion

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