

# A Study Of Female Victimization In Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man*

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## **Abstract**

*In literature, a woman acts as a forceful vehicle for the author's viewpoint. She contributes significantly to a web of familial, social, and cultural traditions, sometimes acting quietly and other times defiantly. A more emancipated and forward-thinking woman has replaced the passive and servile feminine. Women's ideas change as a result of the emergence of feminist movements and female consciousness. This offers fresh perspectives and creative literary expression. Women have long been prominent characters in literature. One such author who has emerged as one of the most contemplative voices in contemporary English writing is Bapsi Sidhwa. The diasporic literature provides a wealth of knowledge on the thoughts of women. The female protagonists in Bapsi Sidhwa's works, in particular, experience uncontrollable anxiety and psychic suffering as a result of being involved in a cross-cultural clash. The female lead characters experience the agonising dislocation within the domestic context. We discover that the inner lives of the female characters in Bapsi Sidhwa's novels are made known. To better understand the female characters' inner lives, she probes their psychology in greater depth. Feminism, one of the main themes in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*, is the subject of the current essay. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa envisions a society devoid of hierarchy and power dynamics, one that is truly human and founded on the ideals of fairness and equality.*

**Keywords:** Discrimination, Feminist, Subjugation, Victimization, Patriarchal, Biases, Archetypal.

Women are seen as the core and most important component of human civilisation. Without the enthusiastic support and involvement of women, the entire planet would never experience an overall development. Throughout the beginning of time, women's spaces have varied according to age and society, but there is one universal truth: women have never been treated on an equal footing with men. They experience male dominance and are treated as a burden and a source of pleasure. The psychological perception of male dominated society is well exemplified by Arlene Swidler. She says, "Man is the principle and end of woman, as God is the principle and end of man . . . woman exists for man, and not man for the woman" (115). Man always looked upon her as weaker sex who is servile to him. This dogma has strengthened the concept of oppression and social control of men over women. Her sphere is restricted to familial roles and responsibilities. Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* writes, "Man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female –whenever she behaves as a human as a human being, she is said to imitate male." (949)

The *Ice-Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa serves as an illustration for how pervasive sectarian violence, acute disintegration, and public hysteria may all be seen in action. The events are described in Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* with such elegance that the tragedy comes to life. The passive tenderness with which Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* portrays the horrific event sets it apart. The novelist has depicted the mistreatment and exploitation of women in patriarchal society in a realistic manner. The third novel, *Ice-Candy-Man*, also referred to as *Cracking India* by Sidhwa's American publisher, exposes a number of layers of interpretation. It is her most serious political novel till date and is written on the theme of partition. Effectively using the persona of a child narrator, it critically presents the kaleidoscopically changing socio-political realities of the Indian subcontinent just before the partition.

The female characters in *Ice Candy Man* draw attention to the reality that women are often victimised and forced to live their lives in accordance with rigidly prescribed gender roles. Additionally, they reveal the patriarchal prejudices that permeate stereotypical societal beliefs. The female characters in *Ice Candy Man* are not just aware of their wishes but also excitedly outspoken about their independence to lead the life they want to live in a patriarchal system that is fundamentally biased towards women and prioritises conditioning them for life. On the other hand, masculine characters lack the will to alter and transcend the prevailing conditions, despite the fact that they start practically all of the novel's events. The pathos of women who were destined to shape themselves in accordance with the desires of men is highlighted in the novel *Ice Candy- Man*.

The work by Sidhwa is distinctive since it establishes the viewpoint of the girl kid. The history of the partition battle is placed in second place in this first-person, present tense narrative since it is told in the voice of a young girl named Lenny, who is eight years old at the beginning. Lenny, who describes the horrors of violence and her own observations

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and reactions, has told the entire story. As women are reduced to the position of sexual objects, she not only watches but also analyses the lustful and demeaning attentions that males pay to them. She also discusses the specific negative social and immoral effects that these actions have on women. The story of *Ice Candy-Man* chronicles the oppression and marginalisation of women. It depicts women's suffering and exploitation in patriarchal society truthfully. It reveals how guys use viciously assaulting women to establish their macho power and so satisfy their wants. On the other hand, it sensitively illustrates how women deal with the suffering and humiliation that is inflicted upon them.

The portrayal of women's victimisation in *Ice-Candy-Man* complements the broad depiction of women's collective experiences of victimisation in the communal riots. The victims are portrayed to be women. The tale emphasises how women's consciousness is impacted by political conflicts. It also draws attention to their unique traits and life experiences. Sidhwa has constructed a cosmos in which women are depicted as living things. Each woman character stands for a particular style of life. The main female characters in the book are Lenny, her mother, her godmother, Shanta, and the Ayah.

An important example of a geocentric perspective on reality is *Ice-Candy-Man*, which presents the female psyche and experiences with a singular sense of newness. While most of the male characters in this book choose to be violent or passive, Sidhwa makes the female protagonists the moral heart of the story. The most important female character in this book is Lenny when she is a young girl. As a female child, she addresses themes like child marriages that are forced to old, morally corrupt men and the gender bias that girl children experience even from their own families.

Sidhwa describes how women are made into just sexual objects and the specific negative societal and evil effects that result from this. A story of female oppression and marginalisation is found in *Ice-Candy-Man*. It depicts women's suffering and exploitation in patriarchal society truthfully. It reveals how guys use viciously assaulting women to establish their macho power and so satisfy their wants. On the other hand, it sensitively illustrates how women deal with the suffering and humiliation that is inflicted upon them. "My world is compressed" (1). Sidhwa takes advantage of this self-imposed restriction by immersing the spoilt and privileged Lenny in an adult world, which she perceives and recounts in an innocent way.

Mother India's flesh splits into Modern India and Pakistan; after decolonization, religious and ethnic carnage breaks out; and racial peace becomes race murder. Women are mutilated, villages are burned and pillaged on both sides. The *Ice-Candy Man* takes advantage of the partition riot's outbreak to denigrate the Ayah by leading a Muslim mob to Lenny's home. The Ayah is kept hidden by the Parsi family and its Muslim slaves, until Lenny unintentionally reveals her. Ayah is dragged away by the mob and raped. After her degradation, the Ice-candy-man sets her up in a house in the prostitute's quarters in Lahore. He now claims to be madly in love with her and wants to marry her after demonstrating his dominance over her. She won't accept him because he betrayed her and the mob physically assaulted her. She is eventually saved by the women from Lenny's family, and she is then a candidate for rehabilitation.

Lenny thus bears witness to the various ways in which women were mistreated during the partition of India. Sidhwa portrays the circumstances leading up to the partition as being blatantly brutal and ruthless. With its thirty-two chapters, *Ice-Candy-Man* provides us a picture of the upheaval that accompanied the dissolution of the Indian subcontinent. The novel's setting is merely based on historical reality. Through the character of Lenny, Sidhwa explores a female universe hemmed by the restriction and reductive force of patriarchy and blind customs. Lenny is the one who introduces us to the plot of the book and the gravity of the narration. In order to keep the reader on their toes and provide the idea that the youngster is recalling memories, an adult uses the child's memory to speak. The reader is also shown how the young heroine transitions into the adult world. The lens through which one sees these divisions is provided by the narrator Lenny. She initially strolls around the city with her Hindu Ayah in tow, paying particular attention to the park where she used to sit in the shade of the Queen Victoria Monument. All of Lenny's female characters revolve around Ayah. Ayah's amorous adventures become central to Lenny's perceptions. Initially her world is made secure by strong, courageous and loving women like Rodabai and the young Ayah. Sidhwa very clearly establishes in the narrative that Parsi women are quite strong and their strength is revealed in moments of crisis.

The narrator Lenny acts as a mirror through which one might view these divisions. She first takes her Hindu Ayah on a tour around the city, paying close attention to the park where she used to sit beneath the Queen Victoria Monument. Lenny's female characters are all centred on Ayah. Lenny's perceptions get heavily influenced by Ayah's romantic exploits. Strong, brave, and loving women like Rodabai and the little Ayah initially give her world security. Sidhwa makes it abundantly evident throughout the story that Parsi women are quite strong, and that their strength comes to light during times of adversity.

Lenny sees growing up as a process of trying to make sense of the senseless violence, as well as the challenges and rewards of the adult world. Lenny, at least in part, emulates Sidhwa, and the most of the situations did actually occur in her own life; she just fictionalised them. The kidnapping and rape of Ayah, the figure who served as Lenny's childhood protector, brought together the public and private aspects of this evolution.

Sidhwa gives Lenny a unique perspective on adult behaviour, enabling her to witness it without becoming involved in its upheaval. Despite having violated Ayah's chastity, Ice-Candy Man later apologises and marries her. Her name has

even been altered to Mumtaz. Sidhwa demonstrates how the patriarchy's focus on tradition purposefully robbed women of their freedom, ultimately leading to an identity problem. The new identity that her marriage gives, however, is rejected by Ayah. Lenny can relate to Ayah's suffering because she is the one who causes it, albeit unintentionally. The inexperienced Lenny ought to have retained these modifications. In Lenny's world, the Ayah is a flame of sensuality and female utility that the moths constantly circle around and want for her sexual warmth. She behaves as though she is in charge of her male admirers' thoughts and feelings. She is fully aware of who she is as a person, who cannot be used, even when she is surrounded by her fans. At the same time, she is fiercely loyal to the interests of the family; she serves and is exceedingly protective of Lenny. She suffers when she is kidnapped by the Ice-candy Man's henchmen during the riots. It is Lenny's probity which brings about the ultimate catastrophe-the abduction of Ayah by a

### **Muslim mob led by Ice-candy-man.**

Lenny was raised with a strong commitment to the truth, and it is her candour that brings Ayah's downfall. Her final deed as a child was to betray Ayah. She strives with her family to save Ayah from the Ice-Candy Man's control and sexual exploitation. Although submitting to Lenny's embrace, Ayah is compelled to tell her that her old Ayah has passed away when Lenny finally gets to see her again. Lenny's Ayah Shanta is the serious subject of attention. Hindu girl of 18 years old, Ayah is portrayed by Sidhwa through Lenny. Sidhwa writes, "Ayah is chocolate-brown and short. Everything about her is eighteen years old and round and plump. Even her face. Full-blown cheeks, Pouting mouth and smooth forehead curve to form a circle with her head. Her hair is pulled back in a tight knot." (3). Sidhwa's portrayal also represents the male exploitation of female sexuality. Though she is employed by considerate masters, her condition is that of an unprotected girl whom everybody treats only as a sex object.

Ayah's life after marriage is miserable. Her name was Shanta before she was kidnapped; it is now Mumtaz. After serving as the Ice-candy-mistress man's for a few months, she is compelled to wed him. Even after her marriage, she continues to live at Kotha. Yet when an opportunity arises, she takes it to use her freedom to leave the man she doesn't love. She fiercely disagrees with the outdated tradition of a woman remaining devoted to her husband and marries instead. She is unwavering and determined. She tells her Godmother:

"I want to go to my family..... I will not live with him" (261). She weeps, and pleads humbly with the Godmother to let her remain single. Without male's company, Ayah's amorous adventures become central to Lenny's perceptions. She spent her childhood under the care of her loving Godmother and the young Ayah, "They have shamed her, Not those men in the carts-they were strangers. but I'm certain of her humiliation" (102).

As a result, Sidhwa successfully illustrates how religious fanaticism and its foul tradition affected the two countries as a whole and women in particular. Women are frequently the victims, according to Sidhwa, as seen in the instance of Ayah, a survivor of a rape who is housed in the recapitulation rooms next to Lenny's home. Lenny, Sidhwa's daughter in *Ice-Candy-Man*, is a bit unique because a woman writer created her. Lenny, the young girl is a wounded being in her own right. She has polio-related disabilities, making it challenging for her to overcome the biological challenges of being a female disabled person in a patriarchal society.

Lenny connects on a woman-to-woman level with her strong female role models. She has a close relationship with both her godmother Rodabai and her niece Ayah. Little Lenny gradually learns more about the wider world. By using Lenny as the book's narrator, the author gives the female viewpoint on the area's local reality weight and legitimacy. There are numerous additional impoverished female characters in Lenny's realm. Although Lenny's betrayal of Ayah was the final act of her youth, she still worked with her family to free Ayah from the Ice-candy-captivity man's and sexual exploitation. Kate Millet considers this system of domination as, "...tends moreover to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring. However muted its present appearance may be, sexual dominion obtains nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides most fundamental concept of power. (25)

Under a variety of circumstances, Lenny manages to maintain her independence. The novel's young narrator Lenny observes the heinous mistreatment of women during the time of the division. The treatment of women as victims appears as the novel's recurrent theme or note. The female characters in *Ice-Candy-Man* call attention to the reality that women are oppressed and forced to conduct their lives in accordance with set gender roles. Lenny, the narrator, describes the numerous traumas women experienced during the terrifying and tragic days of division. All the protagonists act as an ideal woman and perform all jobs because of their feminine nature. The major characteristic of feminine psyche are emotional dependence of other sex, self -sacrificing nature, absorption in love, respect towards the bond of marriage and the fear of losing of identity. Robert A. Johnson observes that:

The feminine aspect of the human psyche has been described as unfocused consciousness. The feminine nature is flooded with the rich vastness of possibilities in life and is drawn to all of them, usually all at once. But this is impossible; one cannot do or be so many things at once. Many of the possibilities open to us oppose each other and one must choose among them. (62)

In order to get across the idea that humanism is more significant than communalism, Bapsi Sidhwa has created a video. Women may practise any faith, but they are also people, thus there is no reason why they should suffer silently from all the abuse. According to its name, *Ice-Candy-Man* makes an effort to make the misery of the female protagonists the main focus of the story. All the female characters in the work are victims of the society that has been rendered blind

by fanaticism and fundamentalism, in the male-chauvinistic culture, and the novelist provides them identities via her realistic presentation.

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