

Women in Ice Candy Man: The Voice and Agency of the Trauma of Partition (1947)

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Abstract

Ice Candy Man is a book by a woman about the women who have suffered displacement and the trauma of the Partition of 1947. The paper looks into the manner in which the women characters in the novel are portrayed, how their silence and suffering becomes a voice of about one lakh women who suffered the physical abuse and violation; rejection and dislocation; the split between the conscious and the dissociated self, as the consequence of the partition because Sidhwa believes that 'victory is celebrated on a woman's body, vengeance is taken on a woman's body. That's very much the way things are...' While India awakened to its freedom, many women had lost theirs. Rape, violence, censure, abuse, atrocities, lynching, prostitution, brutality, are some of the epithets that only partially express the layered suffering written in the common fate of the women of different generations, different religions, different classes, different ethnicities. Bapsi Sidhwa allows a peep into the psyche of women right from a seven years old child to the old God Mother. Also, as Bapsi tells the story of partition we hear the narrative from the child, Bapsi had herself witnessed the partition as a child and the trauma became an integral part of her memory which she shared in the form of the novel.

The paper looks at the narrative as an embodiment of collective memories of the trauma of partition, the loss of innocence and experience of an excruciating pain that changed the course of life of many women and how Sidhwa lends a new perspective by making the women emerge as strong characters at the end of this traumatic experience. The response of women to this tragedy also rips apart the uselessness of patriarchal attitudes.

Keywords: Ice Candy Man, Partition and Women, Trauma, 1947 and Women.

I

Women are the worst sufferers during the times of conflict, as the male raised in a predominantly patriarchal system views woman as an object of possession; to be protected if she belongs to him and looted, desecrated and destroyed if she belongs to the enemy. One such dark chapter in the history of humankind was etched with blood on the land of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, when India was partitioned into two countries: India and Pakistan. Along with her freedom from the British India also suffered a mortal wound of partition. This abominable holocaust took millions of lives, impaired many and rendered a huge chunk of humanity homeless. The brutal killings, severing of body parts, unmindful orgies of hatred, communal riots, marked the time and space of the newly born country and the one that was partitioned. Power exchanged hands elsewhere in the country and people were massacred in Punjab, the people who did not even properly understand the meaning of the whole affair went berserk and exposed the most heinous aspect of human brutality and savagery. In these times marked with atrocities, brutal communal riots and vengeance, women like the homes in which they lives, were destroyed, violated,

annihilated and plundered, because their existence was akin to the land and objects that men had possessed. To attack women meant attacking the property of the other community. “The increasing incidents of abductions and attacks on the women during the 1946-47, undoubtedly, reflected the attempts to expose the most protected aspects of ‘other’s’ honour and self-identity.” (Talbot, p.43) As an entity, the woman has no independent existence, her opinion does not matter, and during any disturbance when fanatics are provoked and violence becomes the predominant passion whether it is sectarian, communal or political hostilities, the physique of the woman becomes the site for expression of that aggression. “ In a situation of civil war, where nearly every man is a soldier fighting for his homeland women come to be seen as a ‘territory’ to be occupied.” (Major, p.59)

Despite the fact that women are the victims their experience as the sufferer and survivor is primarily absent or obliquely present as only a slight mention in the regular accounts of history. Main interest of the historians is the political upheaval and change, their focus remains on the power clusters, which were again primarily dominated by men. The

history of partition of India in 1947 is full of accounts of general violence and mayhem that prevailed but impact of this major upheaval on women has not got much attention from scholars of history. The uncanny silence that envelops the issue of women during and after the partition speaks volumes about the marginalization of women. It is strange that although almost fifty percent of the dislocated, dismembered, killed, looted, and uprooted people were women, no one took into cognizance their plight. The burden of restoration and relocation also was borne by them, but their predicament has been recorded as merged with that of the men, whereas, women became the victims of sexual violence, extreme torture, forced suicides and prostitution. Recent feminist historiography emphasizes that “representative history can only be written if the experience and status of one half of the mankind is an integral part of the story”. (Menon and Bhasin, p. 10)

Sadly enough, the saga of passive sacrifice of women who bear the brunt of the decisions taken by men remains unsung in the face of valour of men who sacrifice ‘other’s’ women. During the partition, there was no valour but only a maddening massacre driven by communal rivalries, religious hatred and schismatic passions. In all this chaos the women were “singled out for especially humiliating treatment at the hands of the rival

community: molestation, rape, mutilation, abduction, forcible conversion, marriage and death”. (Major, p. 57)

What the historians did not put down in writing, the fiction writers did. Short stories, novellas, and novels documented the trauma of violence and dislocation. The fiction writers also put to words the pain of the women who were essentially marginalized to negligible margins by the mainstream history writing. The literature is replete with the accounts of the time bearing testimony to the most savage behaviours of men when they are drunk on fanaticism and bigotry. The literature of partition resonates through decades with the silenced shrieks of women who were torn apart in the most brutish manner. Examination of the partition literature provides a keen insight into the vacillating individual experiences that were at once intense and ephemeral in the background of national histories. While historians were quick to chronicle the formation of new nations, creative fiction writers exposed the gory, scary, blood dimmed side of the independence. They brought into the light the dark tales of abject human suffering and the tales gruesome and horrific enough to send shudders down the spine. In the euphoria of freedom, the nations forgot the appalling and horrendous details of carnage and butchery that danced naked on the blood filled streets

of Punjab. Rape, abduction, forced conversion, prostitution, dislocation, savage bloodshed blotted lives of many women. Many writers like Manto, Khushwant Singh, Amrita Pritam, Chaman Nihal, Ismat Chughtai, Krishna Baldev Vaid, Rita Kothari and Bhisham Sahni have tried to document this shame and pain. Bapsi Sidhwa was the first woman to write an account of partition. She not only gave a point of view on partition, but also focused on the impact of partition on the marginalized people like the women, workers and people from other community. Her narrator is a seven years old Parsi girl. Bapsi Sidhwa had witnessed the partition as a child, and in the novel, *The Ice Candy Man*, she has captured with utmost poignancy the turmoil of the times, bringing together the pain of the individuals growing up in those difficult times and the anguish of newly independent but divided country on one hand and the birth of a new country written with bloodshed. Sidhwa reveals with the dexterity of a psychologist that how during the times ruled by bigotry and communal conflicts, sanity, humanity and social ties and loving relationships undergo a surprising change. How within a matter of few days, loyalties change, ideologies change and a sense of cultural and religious exclusivity pervades everything and the very sites of cultural mutuality become the breeding ground for communal violence. The

religious fundamentalism spread its tentacles and eschewed all that was rational rendering women most vulnerable to the newly developed passions of reprisal and vengeance. Nothing is visible to the eyes blurred with communal frenzy. Lovers turn hostile, friends become foes and a strange madness takes over. The novel presents layers of relationships that get defiled by this senseless hatred. Beginning in the pre-independence times and going through the partition, the novel ends at the newly built nations. The narrator is a Parsi, the third community that bore witness to the violent times, gives one a fair reason to believe the unbiased nature of the narrative and more so, when the narrator is a naïve child of seven. The novel brings to light various aspects of partition, from political to social; from communal to individual; from national to local. The novel is multilayered but this paper mainly focuses on the portrayal of plight of women during the partition. Lenny, Ayah, Electric Aunt, God Mother and the mother, almost all the female characters are introduced to us in the first few pages of the novel.

II

The Narrator: My world is compressed

Narrator is an eight years old little girl. The novel begins with the couplet of Iqbal and the

first line uttered by the narrator is “ my world is compressed” signifying the compressed world of all the women characters in the novel. The marginalization of women in this world, make their world compressed. Although in case of Lenny it holds a reference to her physical state of being polio ridden. Later in the novel, when Lenny visits the doctor with her mother, Col. Bharucha tells them that the English brought polio to India. Thus polio becomes a disease like partition, inflicted by the British on India. Partitions, more or less a twentieth-century political innovation, once were perceived as being exemplary of judicious diplomacy based on the “inevitable” nature of ethnic or religious strife and thus have been the internationally recognized goal of various political movements of the postcolonial period.

Her two nightmares, the dream of a Nazi soldier trying to get her and the men in uniform slicing her arms and legs is symbolic of the fear psychosis that lies buried. The dreams are almost a premonition of the impending disaster, when men and women will be ‘dismembered’ and the humanity in ‘general abysmal sense of loss.’ The violent scenes of Pir Pindo village and two subsequent visits and the changes that come by in the wake of the news of partition takes into account the violence against women. How men gather in the village community

hall and decide that their women will commit mass suicide and how women are gang raped and men massacred. All these gory scenes of violence repeatedly refer to the plight of women. Sidhwa is able to present a counter history by continuously shifting the narrative from personal lives of Shanta, Lenny, Ice Candy Man, God Mother, and Electric Aunt, to the background. She constantly tells us what was happening in the background, and in doing so, she is constantly rewriting history.

It is a strategic maneuver by the writer, because an eight year old can wander about in adult world, only if she is dependent upon them and must cling to them. Lenny is naïve , her religion is Parsee, her account of history which she is going to witness can only be impassioned and most objective. Under the protection of her religious background and her parent’s status, she is not directly affected by the tumultuous situation of partition in terms of dislocation but she bears witness to the ugliness of changing colours of relationships. Her innocent questions often leave us wondering and reveal a new perspective. She participates in the whole turmoil not only as a witness but also as someone on whose psyche these scenes from the drama of violence, betrayal and brutality would be etched for all times to come. She is someone who has lost her innocence too soon.

Her perception of men ogling the Ayah bespeaks the position that a woman holds in that society, she understands that the Ayah is only an object to be ogled at.

“The covetous glances Ayah draws educate me. Up and down, they look at her. Stub-handed twisted beggars and dusty old beggars on 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 unconcern of a Hindu Goddess she worships.” (Sidhwa, p 232)

The seed of rape, abduction and all the brutality is embedded deep in the psyche of these men, who will only need a trigger to show their most heinous passions in the wake of communal riots. The child has already seen this extreme objectification of the Ayah. The riots only brought to surface the innermost primitive dark fantasies of physical violence and violation of human bodies. The sadistic fury directed against female breasts which were hit repeatedly by iron rods, stabbed with knives, lopped off by scythes and swords. (Kakkar, p.37-38) The extensive disintegration of law and order in 1947 also saw crumbling down of moral values, and in some cases an exaggerated expression of normal, immoral behaviour, hence a huge number of men lost

their sense of morality and integrity and consciously trampled the virtues of women whose only apparent crime was that they were from another rival religious community. “Thus, one of the signatures of the violence of 1947 was the large scale abduction and rape of women.” (Das, p. 67).

Women’s bodies which the mendicants and the beggars, rich and the poor, the powerful and the street urchins had ogled at lustfully became the surfaces on which the texts of the new nations were imprinted.

However, Lenny does not remain naïve till the end and gradually the wisdom dawns upon her, though the harder way. The attack by the Muslim mob, lead by Ice Candy Man, is the point of break from her naïve self. She betrays Ayah and becomes the reason of her misery. Imam Din goes to the extent of blasphemy and takes a false oath telling the mob that Ayah has left, but Lenny thinks that she cannot betray the Ice Candy Man, and perhaps in her earlier moments she has witnessed the ‘love’ between Ayah and the Ice Candy Man. Sidhwa deliberately leaves the intentions of Lenny unexplained, perhaps as a strategy, she wanted to portray the goodness of Imam Din, a good man amidst the bad ones who kept humanity above his religious faith to save Ayah; perhaps she wanted to show how growth is painful, because Lenny tastes guilt, and tries to clean her tongue after the mob has

mercilessly dragged Ayah out of the premises; perhaps Sidhwa sees no space for innocence and love in the times of such senseless violence. Such times spare none. The most intriguing character of the novel, Ice Candy Man, undergoes transformation for number of times. He changes from a poet, to a fanatic nationalist, to a rioter to a mad man seeking love. Lenny witnesses all these facets of his personality. Along with him, she too grows as a narrator, as a girl. Many critics have tried to present Lenny as a non gendered narrator as she is just a child, but, Lenny has been aware of her gender right from the beginning and nowhere in the novel do we find her awareness of gender melting down. It is imperative to see Lenny as a girl, for every shackle begins to tighten its noose from the childhood only and by the time we reach the end of the novel, the adolescent Lenny has formed her own perception of the Ice Candy Man. Her narrative, centers around Ayah, and Ice Candy Man and both the characters become pivotal for her in bringing about her awareness of the world around her. Lenny is growing up in tumultuous times full of hostility and malevolence which shapes her being and her thought process, and almost like a disillusioned adult she says, “The confrontation between Ice Candy Man and God Mother opened my eyes to the righteous indignation over compassion.” (Sidhwa, p.232)

If Sidhwa shows the helplessness of Ayah in face of the riots, if she shows the brutality and power of Ice Candy Man, she denies that power to him, after the partition has taken place and the things are on the verge of settling down. She does not discount upon the power of woman, by allowing God Mother to interfere in life of Ayah and redeeming Ayah forever from the clutches of Ice Candy Man. In the wake of turmoil, he might have exercised his vicious power on her and tried to break her by throwing her to rapists, forcing her into prostitution but when at the behest of Lenny God mother saves Ayah, he is reduced to a mere follower who can only sing poetry outside the woman’s refugee camp.

AYah still holds power by declining love to him, his love remains unrequited. Through Lenny’s inquisitiveness, Sidhwa also explores the cultural legitimacy of Kothas, and looks at the ambivalent nature of poetry and music, whereas, these two art forms are known to be the highest art forms but they are being perpetuated in the intriguing Kothas, the sites for exploitation of human life both in terms of corroded bodies, eroded values and lynched souls.

In abject poverty of moral values, spiritual faith and physical wellness the art of poetry and song survives. Lenny’s inability to forgive the Ice Candy Man and her feelings of

pity for him further reduce his power over the woman, he is finally reduced to a maimed man, singing poetry, sitting by the road and finally disappearing across Wagah border into India, thus neither upholding the nationalism that drove him mad nor getting the woman he proclaimed he loved.

Ayah: I'm not so simple

Ayah, Shanta's character is the most complex character in the novel. She is not the one who acts, but is acted upon. She becomes a site for all the gendered attitudes. It is through her character that Sidhwa reveals the unsavory side of male characters in the novel. She is a dusky beauty, with a reasonably voluptuous figure that attracts all male attention. She belongs to the worker class, is Hindu and young and beautiful. She has a trail of admirers. The complexity in her character arises from her being subjected to many decisions by others. She comes across as a happy person, who loves Lenny and is proud of having a respectable job. She exercises her natural charms and enjoys the admiration of men around her. But as the events take turn, she becomes a passive receiver of atrocities, violence, and brutality and is reduced to a body without a soul. She is the character in the story who reveals the characters of people around her. She becomes a cause of so many events in the novel. She bears the brunt of rising passions between warring communities.

The man who professed love for her is the one who dragged her out of Lenny's house and subjected her to the nightmarish brutality of rape, violence and prostitution. Lenny, whom she had served all her life, becomes her betrayer. Lenny does not betray her consciously or callously, but she just can't tell lies to Ice candy Man, and the result of this confusion is borne by the Ayah. From a vibrant, lively, beautiful young woman she becomes a lifeless, soulless body. This transformation speaks volumes about her suffering. The normal daily chores of the households were unexpectedly disrupted, women who had found shelter and were confined to their respective homes were dragged into a space essentially owned by men, and in that space women were ruthlessly degraded and treated with utmost violence that left them either dead or turned them into merely breathing bodies. Ayah, who was washing clothes in Lenny's house was dragged out by a mindless mob that only wanted to violate her in every possible manner. Sidhwa uses the character of Ayah to defamiliarize the scenes of brutish violence that could be witnessed in every nook and corner of the flaming city. "They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet that want to move backwards are forced forward instead. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth

like the dead child's scream less mouth. Her violet sari slips off her shoulders, and her breasts strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that white stitching at the seams shows. A sleeve tears under her arm. The men drag her in grotesque strides to the cart and their harsh hands, supporting her with careless intimacy, left her into it. Four men stand pressed against her, propping her body upright, their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces".(Sidhwa, p. 185)

From this point onwards, Ayah sinks into total passivity. By taking her 'voice' away, Sidhwa has in a way very poignantly told the story of all the women who were subjected to this sort of senseless violence. Ayah becomes representative of all the women, 'her stretched arms and twisted face' is representative of her defenselessness in the face of the sudden attack on her being, 'her resisting mouth, the mouth of a dead child' becomes a symbol of death engulfing the innocent victims, the manner in which she is 'dragged' objectifies her further, as if she is a thing that can be dragged and pulled and pushed. Her body becomes a site of all the violence that women suffered during partition. The numbness that follows this incident is more eloquent than the shrieks and volumes of words, the numbness that took over the women who suffered at the hands of those mindless men. After searching the entire city for Ayah, Lenny's God Mother

traces Ayah and finds her living in a totally unrecognizably transformed state in the backstreets of Hira Mandi of Lahore, the ignoble place occupied by the prostitutes. On meeting Ayah Lenny and Godmother are shocked to find a woman with 'vacant eyes' and 'hoarse voice' as if someone had 'mutilated her vocal chords'. She had been subjected to multiple rapes and forced into prostitution by her husband, the Ice Candy Man. Bapsi Sidhwa. Ayah requests Godmother to take her along as she cannot bear the sight of Ice Candy Man anymore. She finds him too disgusting to be lived with and he becomes an agency of memory of the most ugly time of her life, his presence is a constant reminder to her. The abduction, conversion, prostitution, and all the events that changed the course of her life are refreshed in her mind. She finally says to God mother 'I will not live with him' she is aching to go back to her own people irrespective of the fact whether they want her back or not. This dilemma of being accepted or rejected by one's own has forced many women to continue their miserable lives in the exploitative world. Women's bodies were the site for venting the wrath or celebration of victories. The ravished and the ravaged bodies became messages of one community to another thus instigating and further propelling the violence. The Ice Candy man had desperately waited for his sisters to arrive on

the railway station, but what had arrived had changed him forever, the sisters never came back, but bodies and mutilated body parts of women tied in sacks arrived. “Murders, looting, abductions and sexual assault appear to have been frighteningly common place occurrences as displaced individuals and communities responded with violence to the threat to their lives, security of their property and cultural continuity.” (Didur, p. 51) On both sides, women were the worst affected. “During the 1947 partition of India, an estimated 75,000 to 100,000 women were abducted by the members of other religious communities to be raped and murdered, sold into prostitution, or forced into marriage.” (Scott, p 35) The young women were bartered and sold like a cheap chattel. Murders, abductions, rapes and conversions became a common scare. No community lagged behind and criminalization of human instinct assumed the prominence. (Jasbir, p. 64)

God Mother: I can have you lashed you know?

God mother is anchor of Lenny’s otherwise scattered life. Lenny finds her ultimate peace in the warmth of God Mother’s love. God Mother appears as the powerful matriarch who has a voice in the patriarchal society. But then, God Mother has flattened her breasts, the symbol of the female body and thus

appropriated her gender. She is exactly the opposite of Ayah, old, powerful and vociferously vocal. Her name is Rodabai, introduced by Lenny as a fountainhead of love and compassion. Lenny finds herself closer to the God Mother than mother. In the fervor of partition, God Mother appears to be the saner voice that exercises her power on those who have gone astray. She finds Ayah out and helps her to get away from Ice candy Man. She helps her to get out of the abysmal depth of her pain and show some spirit. On one hand she boosts up Ayah and on the other hand she shakes the Ice Candy Man: “Affected atleast by Grandmother’s stony silence, Ice-Candy Man lowers his eyes. His voice divested to oratory, he says, ‘I am her slave, Baijee. I worship her. She can come to no harm with me’, ‘No harm?’ God mother asks in a deceptively cool voice and arching her back like a scorpion its tail. She closes in for kill. ‘You permitted her to be raped by butchers, dunks and goondas and say she has come to no harm?’ ‘Is that why you had lifted her off - let hundred of eyes probe her so that you could marry her?’ ... ‘You have permitted your wife to be disgraced! Destroyed her modesty! Lived off her women-hood? ‘I-saved her’. He stammers. They would have killed her... I married her”. (Sidhwa, p. 248-49)

This dialogue between the Ice Candy man and the God mother turned the tables. From a victim, Ayah suddenly emerges as a strong woman who takes the decision of leaving the Ice Candy Man, and from perpetrator of all violence towards Ayah, the Ice Candy Man is reduced to a powerless pimp who is being fed by the woman he turned into a prostitute. All the men who subjected women to violence in history lose their masculine power by this single reproach of the God Mother, who held the god like power over the erring man and mother like affection for the suffering woman. Through her character, Sidhwa has very strongly rejected the patriarchal power that men used to subjugate women. If Ice Candy man is representative of the slighted men turning into devils and going on a rampage indiscriminately destroying women, then God Mother is representative of the matriarch who exercised her power, emboldened the women and appropriated history by telling men clearly enough that by raping women, abducting them, forcing them into prostitution the men have only degraded themselves. God Mother becomes the voice of a strong woman, who helps ayah to find her identity and stand up even in the face of utmost adversity.

Mother and other women characters

Lenny's mother is shown as a compassionate woman, who helps Ayah, and other women to escape and reach their own people. The first

instance of her this attribute comes to light when she rushes to help Papoo, the Christian convert who is later married off to an ugly elderly man by her mother. God Mother also tells Lenny that her mother has been helping the destitute women. Many women were rejected by their families and were forced to live in destitute homes or brothels. "Abducted women were recovered and restored despite their reluctance in certain cases." (Tondon, p. 250)

Bijli, the electric aunt and Slave sister are two other women who serve God Mother . Slave Sister plays an important role in the first place she helps the reader in grounding God mother because the treatment that God mother metes out to her leaves one in a state of surprise and that does take a bit of glory away from the God mother. Secondly, in the light of Partition, she does not represent those women, who were sufferers nor did they help anyone. They accepted everything as part of fate and continued their life in the routine manner.

III

Bapsi Sidhwa has written in the book Ice Candy Man a counter history of the partition of India from the perspective of a naïve eight year old, which is an interesting amalgamation of pun and pathos, humor and tragedy, innocence and wisdom. She has

woven into the tale not only the tale of partition but also a perspective. If Ayah represents the women who suffered at the hands of the maddened mobs driven by fanatic fervor, bigotry and surging rage of patriarchal sentiments, God mother presents a sane perspective to that horrid past of the women of two countries and puts to shame those passions that had the audacity of defiling women with their dirty hands and designs. Lenny unfolds the trauma of Partition with a sprinkling of humour, irony and satire; surrealistic depiction of her dreams; juxtaposing love and hatred, guilt and redemption, forgiveness and pity. The women represented in the novel are also shown to be dotting on Gandhi and how he had tremendous influence on them. Bapsi has presented a tongue in cheek caricature of the man who influenced the history in a big way, thus highlighting in her own manner the contribution of women in the struggle for independence. Lenny is amused at the advice given by Gandhi. He talks about diet and enema. And he says 'I am like a mother' to these girls. Lenny wonders why is Gandhi so popular with people. Bapsi has made her point, by stating that he had feminine qualities, he was soft spoken, and so frail. Someone, who held tremendous power over the people at that time, is shown exactly the opposite of the frantic mobs who display their masculinity in dragging helpless women on

streets, raping them, shredding them, abducting them, and discarding them to brothels.

Though at the center is the Ice Candy Man, yet in his periphery is a host of women characters whose life is depicted in detail. Sidhwa has highlighted violence that became the subject, the instrument and the object of all action. The damaged bodies and scarred psyche of women who become the site for this violence serve as a living testimonial to the most heinous chapter in the history of humankind. The trauma of rape, abduction, molestation was so grave that women of Pir Pindo village decide to go to Chaudhary's Haveli, douse kerosene oil and put themselves on fire. They are gang raped and their bodies are mutilated. In the novel Bapsi Sidhwa tries to present a different perspective on the 'dishonoured' women. The women subvert patriarchy in their own subtle manner and help each other to break the shackles. Sidhwa not only critically reviews the dehumanizing patriarchal setup that leads to a general social degeneration at times of peace and extreme discrimination and violent torture of women in the times of conflict, but she also delves deep into resolving this trauma by placing them in a position to retaliate and exert self-will to struggle to break free from this trauma. Her characters do not give in to the situation but stand up and fight.

By presenting her female characters in the way that she has done, she is trying to question the common beliefs and attitudes pertaining to women. As is seen, in the times of crisis of ethnic, and communal identity, it's the women who are targeted and sexually assaulted. Bapsi, tries to change this though only in retrospective view, she tries to create a legitimate space for the wronged and the fallen, the likes of Ayah, who became the victims not only of the attackers but also of their won people who rejected them.

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel is relevant in the present times as well, because it gives a whole new perspective to the trauma of partition. The women who were violated are redeemed of their desecration by providing them the self will to fight against the trauma. The breaking of silence of Ayah and her statement that she does not wish to stay any longer with the Ice Candy Man, in a way is redemption of the woman from the patriarchal set up, if not in reality at least in fiction. By abusing Ice Candy Man, the author has abused all the men who come in mobs to defile a woman. How powerless they have been rendered! It is important to read the history of partition with this perspective as well. At the end of the novel the helplessness of the Ice Candy Man and the strength of Ayah mock patriarchal values and attitudes that destroyed so many lives.

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