

Analysis of Novel Ice-Candy-Man (Why women always used as weapons?)

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Abstract:

In this research article I explained about how women were used as a weapon when cracking India. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa explores the issue of women's harassment through the lens of Lenny during Partition, emphasizing how women's bodies are often controlled and abused in times of social and political crisis. The novel is not just about a historical account of Partition but a poignant critique of the gendered violence that continues to affect women throughout history. Sidhwa's portrayal of women as victims of systemic oppression, while also highlighting their survival and resistance, makes a powerful statement about the continuous struggle for women's rights, autonomy, and dignity.

Keyword: Women, Harassment, Partition, Violence, Cracking India, abuse, religion, gender.

Introduction:

Ice-Candy-Man (1988), a novel written by Bapsi Sidhwa, is set against the backdrop of the Partition of India in 1947. The narrative revolves around the complexities of human relations during the time of partition of India and Pakistan on the basis of political, religious, and social upheaval. The novel explores the partition of India and Pakistan as a major theme. A sub theme of the novel is portrayed in both the novel and the movie *Earth*. Women in the novel are often depicted as victims of systemic abuse and societal misogyny, caught between the intersections of religion, politics, and gender.

The novel's central protagonist, Lenny, narrates her experiences as a young girl in Lahore, and through her lens, the readers witness how the social fabric of her community is torn apart. The harrowing depiction of women's victimization, especially during the chaos of Partition, is not just a consequence of the political events but also a reflection of deep-seated gender inequalities that women endure both in times of peace and war. The novel presents a poignant and unflinching look at the ways in which women are objectified, commodified, and brutalized by societal structures and historical events.

Shattered Innocence during Partition (Why women always used as weapons?):

1. **Historical Context:** The partition of India was a tragic event that led on not only mass migration, violence but also partition of family minds, friends and love. It created a disastrous environment in which women were symbols of honour in our Indian culture. Women in the novel caught between the intersections of religion, politics and gender. In this novel Lenny a young girl narrates her experience in Lahore through her perspective. Lenny, an eight-year-old Parsi girl, serves as an unconventional narrator who witnesses the transformation of Lahore from a diverse and peaceful city into a battleground of communal hatred. Her position as a Parsi—belonging to a neutral, non-partisan community—allows her to observe the suffering of both Hindus and Muslims without direct involvement. This narrative choice enables the reader to engage with the horrors of Partition without a singular ideological bias. Sidhwa uses Lenny's gradual loss of innocence as a metaphor for the nation's descent into violence. Initially, Lenny's world is filled with affection from her caretakers, including Ayah, the beautiful Hindu woman who symbolizes pre-Partition

harmony. However, as communal tensions rise, Lenny becomes a silent witness to betrayal and brutality, especially when Ayah is abducted by a mob led by the Ice-Candy Man, a character emblematic of shifting political and personal allegiances. Partition is a political event but it's a deep reflection on gender inequalities that women always suffer. It was also marked by extreme communal violence; women became primary victims, facing abductions, rapes, forced conversion and honour killings.

In *Ice-Candy Man*, Bapsi Sidwa uses this historical Backdrop to examine how the social and political disorders at the time of partition. The novel captures this transformation through Lenny's innocent perspective, showing how once friendly neighbours became enemies overnight. Instability in society during this period meant that women's autonomy was diminished, and bodies of women became battlegrounds for the declaration of power by men. In the novel, Ayah represents the countless who were abducted, assaulted, & forcibly converted during Partition. Her fate reflects the gendered violence of 1947, where women's bodies became battleground for religious & political Conflicts Her abduction by mob, led by the Ice-Candy Man, symbolizes the betrayal & suffering endured by many during this turbulent period. The harassment of women is not new, then the question arises – “Why they are used as weapons and Why no one thinks to give protection to them?”

2. The Sexual Violence and Objectification of Women: One of the most disturbing and central motifs in *Ice-Candy-Man* is the widespread sexual violence inflicted on women. The character of Lenny, a young girl, provides an innocent yet insightful perspective on the brutal reality that women face. The women in the novel, particularly those from the Hindu and Sikh communities, are subjected to abduction, forced marriages, and rape as a consequence of the religious and political tensions of Partition. During the Holi festival in *Ice-Candy Man*, a joyful celebration turns tense, reflecting communal tensions. The playful throwing of colours becomes aggressive, symbolizing the deepening religious divide and foreshadowing the violence of partition. This scene highlights the loss of innocence and the breakdown of once harmonious relationships. Before partition, Ice Candy Man loves Shanta's company but after partition he changed his mind. Bapsi Sidwa shows here upheaval, sanity, human feelings and past friendly relations are forgotten. The sexual violence & objectification of women Are among the in *Ice-Candy Man* Violence most disturbing & central motifs the widespread sexual inflicted upon women. The title engaging Ice Candy Man, who is initially portrayed as a charming and engaging Figure. Eventually, reveals his role in these acts of violence. His transformation into harasser reflects his changing motives and moral decline, particularly men who were used women as a weapon. Eventually, this shows that the patriarchy is thereby leading to the violent nationalism, communalism exploitation, harassment and abuse of women. The repeated instances of rape, abduction, and forced conversion in the novel highlight that sexual violence is used as a tool of power in order to control women. The men in the novel, in the absence of law and order during the Partition, see women as property to be taken, used, and discarded. The harassment of women is not an isolated event but a systemic issue, deeply tied to cultural, religious, and political ideologies.

3. Patriarchy and Gendered Violence: The harassment of women in *Ice-Candy-Man* is also a commentary on the deeply entrenched patriarchy within South Asian society. While the Partition exacerbates the violence, the systematic oppression of women is not new. Women have historically been marginalized, and their roles have often been confined to the domestic sphere. Ayah's tragic

fate exemplifies this reality, as she is kidnapped and eventually forced into marriage with her abductor.

The harsh reality for these women is that even when they face the social, political, and personal devastation of Partition, they are also still treated as inhuman.

The novel critiques the patriarchal concept of women's purity and honour, suggesting that women are often seen as the property of men—whether as daughters, wives, or mothers. Their experiences of harassment and abuse are seen as lesser concerns compared to the social and political needs of men. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa critiques this by showing how women are reduced to pawns in the larger political game of Partition, where their pain and suffering are often overlooked or justified by the surrounding community.

4. Women as Victims and Survivors: Despite the overwhelming abuse that women face in *Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa also shows the resilience and survival instinct of these women. Many of the female characters in the novel, despite the hardships they face, continue to struggle and fight for their own sense of dignity and agency. Lenny's mother, for instance, is a strong figure who attempts to protect her daughter from the horrors of the outside world. The novel suggests that while women are often victimized by the structural inequalities and political upheaval around them, they are also capable of resistance and survival.

However, the novel raises a critical question: Why does this cycle of violence, particularly sexual violence, continue to affect women so pervasively? The answer lies in the patriarchal structures that continue to dehumanize women and treat them as commodities. The exploitation of women during Partition is only one instance of a larger, ongoing societal issue—one that requires a fundamental shift in how women are perceived and treated across all levels of society. The novel suggests that communalism is not an inherent trait but a response to political manipulation and social pressures. The *Ice-Candy Man's* transformation from a charming storyteller to a ruthless opportunist mirrors the larger ideological shifts occurring in the subcontinent. His character embodies both the allure and danger of charismatic populism, which can incite both love and destruction.

This paper focuses on how the harassment of women in *Cracking India* is not just a result of political upheaval but rather a manifestation of larger, deeply embedded social issues.

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