



UNRAVELLING BAPSI SIDHWA'S *ICE-CANDY-MAN* AND AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE SHADOW LINES* WITH REFERENCE TO DECOLONIZATION

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Abstract:

The present research paper aims at analyzing Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* with reference to Decolonization. In the arena of Post-Colonial Studies, the article looks at Anti-Colonial theory as a counter-narrative. The paper illustrates how the selected texts interrogate the very notion of colonialism, develop consciousness among marginalized and subjugated individuals, and empower them to take radical actions in order to define their identities and resist colonial atrocities. *Ice-Candy-Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa's third and widely quoted novel is one of the most powerful narratives of recent time. *The Shadow Line* is a Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novel by Amitav Ghosh. It is a book that grabs the perspective of time and events, the lines that connect and divide individuals. The paper shall attempt to compare and evaluate the effects of colonialism and how those individuals tried to overcome imposed national identity interpellation through global cosmopolitan outreach.

Keywords: post-colonialism, decolonization, partition, communal riots, nationalism

To achieve Indigenous sovereignty, or the right and capacity of Indigenous people to practice self-determination over their territory, cultures, and political and economic systems, decolonization is about "cultural, psychological, and economic freedom" for Indigenous people. Decolonization was the biggest historical development of the 20th century. Writers from various continents are challenging European and American literature in those languages, and writers from Asian nations like India are accelerating decolonization primarily through their non-European languages. Newly independent nations were put under the direction of international organizations presided over by former colonial powers as they faced intense demands with helping their populations escape poverty.

Indian authors of today have abandoned the realistic European novel tradition. The stories are based on old Indian tales and legends. They make use of Indian stories, practices, and beliefs to make them seem exotic to Westerners, which makes them an object of interest. Decolonization does not imply a complete rejection of the West. Even among Western writers, there are many who have spoken out against colonialism and imperialism.

This paper shall discuss in this light *Ice-Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh.

Ice-Candy-Man is an acclaimed novel by Bapsi Sidhwa, a Pakistani novelist, born to Parsi Zoroastrian parents. In the novel, Sidhwa describes the socio-political conditions that existed in India and Pakistan before the partition of 1947. She has artistically addressed various socio-political topics in the novel.

The novel *Ice-Candy-Man* is considered to be less biased and true to life on the partitioned Sub-Continent. Sidhwa, who lived through the partition of 1947, has brilliantly combined the suffering of the individual with that of the entire society. The novel is a political work since it depicts the implications of political decisions. Sidhwa offers readers an accurate depiction of the political situation at the time nationalists were attempting to divide the nation into two parts. She also depicts the Parsi community's conflicted feelings on the change in political dominance in 1947. She portrays the Parsis as cultural fusions. According to Sidhwa,

she has made an effort to provide her Pakistani readers a voice through her works, as well as a sense of self-worth. Sidhwa's novel lends voice to people who have been silenced or overlooked; for example, anti-Pakistani writers failed to acknowledge Jinnah's political prowess. In the same way, the disruptive partition was attributed to negative Muslims. *Ice-Candy-Man* makes every effort to articulate the issues of partition and raise people's awareness of them. The reader understands about the 1947's partition scenario after reading the text. As a result of her dissatisfaction with earlier narratives of the subcontinent's partition, Sidhwa felt compelled to rewrite the history of the partition. She discusses this need in her interview with Montenegro, where she asserts that she is hopeful that her writing will serve as a source of empowerment for those who lack a voice:

At least, I think a lot of readers in Pakistan, especially with ICM feel that I've given them a voice, which they did not have before. They've always been portrayed in a very unfavorable light. It has been fashionable to kick Pakistan, and it's been done again and again by various writers living in the West and I feel, if there's one little thing I could do, it's to make the people realize: we are not worthless because we inhabit a poor country that is seen by Western eyes as a primitive, fundamentalist country only.

The writer's intentions for the creation of the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* are reflected in the abovelines. The novel serves as an anticolonial text since it challenges works by colonial authors that present distorted accounts of the partition event. Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* is a source of empowerment for Pakistani citizens. *Ice-Candy-Man* empowers its reader and defines his/her identity. The history of partition and politics are forthrightly referred to in the title of the novel, *Cracking India*. The novel has an important argument and covers many different histories - those of people, communities, and nations. Regional identities were established through the drawing of borders as a result of political turmoil caused by the tragic event of partition in the Sub-Continent during the British region. By confronting the British conceptions of history that were imposed on the sub-continent, Sidhwa uses first-person narration as a literary device to rewrite the history of the sub-continent. The earlier version of the history of partition proclaimed by British Colonial Power has been rejected by her. The novel focuses on the historical partition of the Sub-Continent in 1947, which resulted in the splitting of the continent into two halves: India, a homeland controlled by Hindus, and Pakistan, a homeland controlled by Muslims.

Throughout the course of human history, colonization has been an ongoing phenomena. Both the colonial

practices and the idea of decolonization have been prevalent throughout Islamic history. African and South Asian Muslim nations, in particular, have frequently experienced colonial practices. Where there is power, there is also opposition, and in this scenario, certain Islamic movements, mainly in West Africa and Southeast Asia, started out as anti-imperial campaigns. Rather than being considered as an era of piety and religious dominance, the fall of the European Empires and the rise of post-colonial governments are seen as periods of secularism and Western ideas, ranging from nationalism to socialism.

Since Sidhwa is rewriting history from both the Parsi and Pakistani points of view, her reconstruction of history is much more complicated than it apparently appears to be. She goes back thirteen hundred years to the major event in Parsi history when they “were kicked out of Persia by the Arabs” and “sailed to India” (37). The Gran Vazir met them after they had waited on the Indian shore for four days, with a glass of milk that was nearly full, signifying that his land was plenty and rich and did not want “outsiders with a different religion and alien ways to disturb the harmony” (38). Whereas the intelligent Parsi progenitors “stirred a teaspoon of sugar into the milk and sent it back” (39), symbolizing that the Parsis “would get absorbed into his country like sugar in the milk...” (39). Bapsi Sidhwa, however, emphasizes the conundrum the Parsis have faced throughout the ages in her fictitious narrative, namely the choice between risking losing their individuality and assimilation into an alien culture.

The novel's depiction of the country's approaching Partition may show that the Parsis' efforts to blend into Indian society throughout the years were in vain because, after the Partition, the community was suddenly in danger of extinction. The Parsis attempted to embrace the diversity of Indian culture thirteen centuries ago, but at the time of Partition, they might have felt compelled to align themselves with one of India's three largest religious groups—Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs. Sidhwa, thus, contradicts the conventional historical narrative that the Parsis were wholly unconcerned with the nation's division. The main-hall meeting at the Fire Temple revealed that the Parsis had a complex stance on Partition as opposed to being indifferent to it. The Parsis will have to take a stand if they choose to not become engaged. "Our neighbors will think that we are betraying them and siding with the English" (p.37). But this causes even another issue, as expressed by a fellow Parsi who asks, "Which of your neighbors are you going to betray? . . . Hindu? Muslim? Sikhs!" (p.37). This statement highlights the tragic reality that the Parsis still felt excluded on the subcontinent after thirteen centuries. They were finally compelled to comply with "whoever rules Lahore" (p. 34) due to their

estrangement from all of India's major communities. Col. Bharucha says, "Let whoever wishes to rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. We will abide by the rules of the land" (p.39).

Furthermore, Sidhwa illustrates that the Parsi community's ambivalent attitude toward the freedom struggle did not prevent them from contributing to the advancements in any way they could. By demonstrating the "silent but positive role played by Lenny's parents in helping both the Hindus and the Muslims" (Magic Writings... 102) and implying that "the Parsis too were involved in the events of the time and that they were not just indifferent and passive onlookers to the human tragedy," M.F. Salat claims that Sidhwa contradicts the received discourses. When Lenny's mother reveals the purpose of her excursions, Salat notes that it is a revelation intended not only for Lenny but also for everyone who is unaware of the Parsi involvement in the Partition. "I wish I'd told you," she says, "that we were merely smuggling the rationed petrol to help our Hindu and Sikh friends flee. Also, the convoys were used to transport abducted women like our Ayah to their family on the other side of the border" (*Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 242). As mentioned earlier, Sidhwa rewrites history from both the Pakistani and Parsi points of view. She expresses this aim in an interview with David Montenegro in no uncertain terms:

The main motivation grew out of my reading of a good deal of literature on the Partition of India and Pakistan . . . what has been written has been written by the British and Indians. Naturally they reflect their bias. And they have I felt after I'd researched the book, been unfair to the Pakistanis. As a writer as a human being, one just does not tolerate injustice. I felt whatever little I could do to correct an injustice I would like to do. I have just let facts speak for themselves, and through my research I found out what the facts were. (*Points of Departure*, p.36)

Despite her attempts to portray the horrors committed by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs without bias, Pakistani author Sidhwa makes it clear that she has an affinity for the Muslim victims. In addition to being eloquently depicted, the Sikh onslaught on Muslim villages in Punjab is also viewed through the eyes of the Muslim girl Ranna, which causes the reader to feel more sympathy for the Muslims. Sidhwa says in an interview, "The Sikhs perpetrated the much greater brutality -- they wanted Punjab to be divided. A peasant is rooted in his soil. The only way to uproot him was to kill him or scare him out of his wits" (Montenegro 50-1). Thus, it is clear that Sidhwa emphasizes the brutality the Sikhs inflicted upon the Muslims in order to shift accountability for the Partition from the Indian authorities to the Muslim victims of the Partition.

Thus, it is clear that Bapsi Sidhwa, through the *Ice-Candy-Man*, not only succeeded in challenging the British and Indian narratives of the history of the subcontinent but also offered a different account based on the dominant Pakistani perspective. She has effectively modified English to serve her needs. Furthermore, she has given readers who are Pakistanis as well as those from the marginalized Parsi group a voice.

The tragic history of India's division into Pakistan and India served as the inspiration for the story of Ice Candy Man. The novel is well-known for depicting both the partition of India and the impact of colonialism after India gained its independence. It illustrates and depicts several instances of gruesome murder, killing, migration of people, terrible rapes of women, arson, and riots between Muslims and Hindus or Sikhs. The pleasant lives of Lenny, Imam Dinn, Aaya, Ice Candy Man, Masseur, Hamida, Mini Aunt, and Muchho are depicted in the first parts of the book. The use of a young narrator named Lenny is a key element of the narrative that sets it apart from other postcolonial novels. Utilizing a young child as the narrator allows the author to describe the actual events of the partition without bias or the author's own personal viewpoint. History unquestionably shows that British tyrants consistently employed the divide-and-rule strategy to rule a nation with a Hindu majority.

There are well-known tales of Muslim and Hindu communities' close ties and friendship throughout Indian history. But by their cunning methods, British rulers partially tore up this strong solidarity between Hindus and Muslims. The relationship between the Ice Candy Man, Masseur, and Aaya allows us to examine the dreadful incident in the *Ice-Candy-Man*. Masseur and Aaya are Hindus, whereas Ice Candy Man is a member of the Muslim community. The character Ice Candy Man admits in the book:

“I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train. That night I went mad, I tell you! I lobbed grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs... I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women... The penises!” (Sidhwa 156).

In the beginning of the text, there is no place for animosity between Hindus and Muslims, but as time goes on, this cordial situation entirely changes, and they start killing one another. Ice Candy Man kills Masseur, who has promised to marry Aaya, in order to exact revenge for the murder of his sisters, who were raped and killed during Hindu and Muslim riots. Furthermore, he engages in additional violent behaviors. The

narrative makes it abundantly evident that the British rulers' approach of divide and rule is what led to the reversal of events rather than any specific incidents. Hindus and Muslims can coexist peacefully and safely in this environment for a very long time. Muslims and Hindus begin to hate one another because of this. Thousands of innocent people, including women, children, and elderly people, are being brutally murdered in this circumstance by Muslims and Hindus without anyone stopping to consider who is actually culpable.

Sidhwa occasionally finds herself unable to identify the source of the women's cries: "The mystery of the women in the courtyard deepens. At night we hear them wailing, their cries verging on the inhuman. Sometimes I can't tell where the cries are coming from. From the women or from the house next door infiltrated by our invisible neighbors" (Sidhwa 212). The sisters of Ice Candy Man and the character Aaya are more than simply fictional characters; they stand in for the innocent people who were hurt by the British-planned partition of India.

It is apparent through the plot of the novel that the British government, which has no personal stake in India's economic progress, has hidden and vested interests. They intentionally enacted laws and regulations that may serve their own interests. Even while the novel does not explicitly address this aspect of development, a close reading of the text reveals that the British Government adopted such policies and took such measures to build and improve India's battered economy. There isn't a single individual in the text who can be described as prosperous and powerful financially. They all come from families with low incomes and don't have secure employment. The scenario is best illustrated by Ice Candy Man. Ice Candy Man never has a stable profession; he always changes it. There is no intention to give everyone jobs. The British government transports every resource into England.

Similar to Chinua Achebe's story in *Things Falls Apart*, Bapsi Sidhwa uses native terms to express her anticolonial sentiment throughout the text. The combination of English language and native terms demonstrates her delight in writing the story in English while still recognizing the importance of the native words. These native words highlight the significance of words whose meanings cannot be captured in the words from other languages. She employs Indian diction such as "*pahailwan*," "*choorail*," "*shabash*," "*ghar ki murgi dal brabar*," "*kotha*," etc., while also writing the work in English. She intends to depict Indian culture by utilizing these words. When Iqbal's poem "Complaint to God" is read, Bapsi Sidhwa's anticolonial perspective is evident.

The novel *The Shadow Lines* is a Sahitya Akademi Award-Winning novel by Indian writer Amitav Ghosh. The novel is divided into two parts- "Going Away " and "Coming Home". The book majorly focuses on nationalism, decolonization, and silence kept by the countries when riots were taking place. The narrator here is unnamed, a person from a middle-class family. He is very fascinated by his uncle Tridib. It revolves around many characters like Ila, Th'amma, May, Nick, Shaheb, Mayadebi, Jethamoshai, and Mrs. Price.

Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* has given the decolonizing structured India in a broader aspect. After the Britishers went back to their homes, Indians and neighboring countries had a hard time coping with the economy and mentally as well. In this novel, three Bengali families were settled in three different countries as a result of historical alterations. The text also focuses on memories, love, and class.

Nationalism is a historical movement that stresses the importance of the nation-state in achieving people's social, economic, and cultural goals. A sense of belonging among a people based on shared ancestry, language, and religion, lies at the heart of nationalism. The references to cross-cultural interactions and violent scenarios are expressed through the character of Tridib. He views all people, regardless of ethnicity or culture, as living in "a global village" and should be seeking to reach out to one another. He did not carouse when he was in India, but through his imagination, he is in all parts of the world. At the beginning of this, he did not idealize the country he stayed in, that is, India. But in the further parts of the novel, when he goes to find his uncle in Dhaka with May and makes an attempt to save her, he inadvertently proves that India is more visionary than the English culture. It is Tridib who gives perceptions of the world to the narrator.

The stubbornness of Th'amma, associated with her roots, is portrayed in how she feels about the idea that only her opinions would be taken into account. This shows that people before decolonization had the ideology, whether male or female, that whatever their decision is should be considered and followed by all. The narrator grew up with this ideology, and in the further novel, when the narrator goes to London, he sees that people are living freely with no ideology bound. Especially Ila, with all her family wealth and her freedom, her thinking is very different from the narrator's because she was raised that way.

A country's partition can affect a person's mind in many ways. The narrator was very suppressed by his grandmother's ideology; this is related to many people who were affected by the partition that happened in

Dhaka. Th'amma, on the other hand, also had to accept that India would be her home, which is very difficult for people who have been raised in some other country. If she had been given a choice, she would have chosen Dhaka. Just because she was a Hindu, she had to come to India. Even if she wanted to return to Dhaka, her home, she could not go.

Ghosh, on the other hand, emphasizes a theme like freedom. People were freed irrespective of who they were, but mental freedom was still not granted in many areas. The freedom of the individual was a big question. The dilemma of the women characters in the novel is shown. They all belong to different cultures and how they cope with everything. Freedom does not only mean you are not in clutches physically, but one ought to be free mentally first. If they do not feel free, there is no point in freedom. Depending on what role they have played in the recent history of India, freedom implies different things to each character. Political freedom is what is discussed here. People were released, but they were not free.

If there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there's no difference both sides will be the same, it will be just like it used to be before 1947. What was it all for then —partition and all the killing and everything — if there isn't something in between? (151)

In the novel, decolonization is portrayed as the significant period in the history of the nation. One of the instances when Th'amma is constantly trying to save her grandson from Ila, as she thinks Ila is spoiling her grandson from the Western culture, which she loves in all the wrong ways. Ila loves Western culture because she believes she can have all the freedom there. One of her freedom-related activities includes drinking alcohol in the bar. Her upbringing plays a major role in this situation. She is kind. She is independent, lives her own life, and is loyal. But she is very influenced by Western culture.

Grandmother feels that India should attain cultural nationalism that should lead to national uniformity. One case where her nationalism is outwardly shown is when, as the headmistress of her school, she encourages her students to prepare food from many Indian states to help them understand the diversity and oneness of Indian culture. On the other hand, she is the reason why Tridib died. She precisely forced him to go to Dhaka and bring back Jethamoshai.

With all the complications and traumas brought on by the lengthy colonial rule, the decolonized people will never be able to interact with the colonizer on an equal footing; this can also be known as generational

trauma. To boost their egos and strive to fit into their world, which to them is not only glamorous but also elevates them above the average locals, the colonized people attempt to mingle with the former colonizers; this perfectly fits in the novel as an example of Ila, when she marries Nick, not for love but for the citizenship of London.

Colonization has a propensity to forget its colonial origins once new nation-states have emerged. Throughout the Empire's rule, they make an effort to steer clear of any mention of the intimidation and betrayal of the colonizer. In the post-colonial age, the desire to forget the past is a sign that the colonized people want to start over and forget the traumatic memories of colonial subjection. Many post-colonial writers like Fanon and Achebe said that the world is influenced by European culture and they believe that they symbolize universal truths.

The concept of a new world has reorganized the social relationship in the nations, which are taken for granted as the constructional unit of political organization. The new generation relatively believes in internationalism, as Ila and Tridib's matter has already been discussed in the previous paragraphs. Ghosh demonstrates how boundaries drawn on the earth's surface are merely so-called boundaries that cannot separate one's mind, imagination, or perception of nativity and origin. The boundaries between India and Pakistan were drawn by officials who believed in "the enchantment of lines, hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders on the map, the two fragments of territory would move away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of the prehistoric Gondwanaland."

In a nutshell it can be argued without a doubt that Sidhwa is a master at depicting the postcolonial characteristics in her well-known novel *Ice-Candy-Man*. The novel does not merely concentrate on one aspect of post-colonialism; it also discusses issues like women being physically and mentally exploited, the British government's "divide and rule" policy, riots between Hindus and Muslims over communal and religious issues, and how the British used India's resources for their own benefit. Readers of the book have the impression that they are observing and experiencing the incidents described in the narrative, rather than simply reading about them. One could consider *Ice-Candy Man* to be an outstanding work of postcolonial literature.

Therefore, Bapsi Sidhwa has succeeded in challenging both the British and Indian narratives of the history of the subcontinent through the *Ice-Candy-Man* and has also offered an alternate interpretation of history based on the predominant socio-cultural environment.

The Shadow Lines illustrates two distinct postcolonial perspectives to sum up. One is that of the more affluent social classes, such as Mayadebi and the Shaheb, while the other is that of individuals like Ila, who continue to maintain close ties to the West. They have no roots in their native nation and aspire to live in the colonizer's society. Such characters are content to imitate the West and have no desire even to consider the colonized globe. For instance, Ila's mother sits like "Queen Victoria." The grandmother, however, demonstrates the opposing perspective of postcolonial comprehension. She is enlightened, independent, and fiercely proud to be Indian. She desires that India have her own identity. Despite her admiration for the English's nationalism and patriotism, she believes it is time for Indians to act and establish their own identity rather than wasting time imitating the West.

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