

Bapsi Sidhwa: A Chronicle Of The Past Traumatic Memories

¹Archana Katariya, ²Priyanka Chaudhary

ABSTRACT:

*“Much has been written about the holocaust that followed the Partition of India in 1947, but seldom has that story been told as touchingly view of Indian life can only be compared to V. S. Naipaul’s.”-
Bloomsbury Review*

*Literature plays a major role in the improvement of society. Society follows a specific path, and literature is always helpful in exposing all aspects of society in its replication. For all readers to understand, colonial literature has been written on a scorching theme, reflecting the truly connected conditions of history. The partition of India and the powerful exodus of citizens are both frightening and memorable events of history. Many authors emphasized the current state of colonial literature in their works. One of the most renowned authors, Bapsi Sidhwa was an eyewitness of the both colonized and post-colonized era. Her novels have a myriad of interpretations to identify the feminine point of view, several societal hitches and innumerable unseen and unheard stories. Being a Persian, she is impartial in the interpretation of the historical events, and besides inferring episodes as an observer. Her writings *Cracking India* and *Pakistani Bride* illustrates the frightening and the critical circumstances of the post-colonial period.*

Keywords: *Bapsi Sidhwa, Changing Society, Cracking India, Pakistani Bride, Partition, Traumatic memory*

I. Introduction:

“I feel if there’s one little thing I could do, it’s to make people realize: We are not worthless because we inhabit a country which is seen by Western eyes as a primitive, fundamentalist country only...I mean, we are a rich mixture of all sorts of forces as well, and our lives are very much worth living.”-Interview with Bapsi Sidhwa in Massachusetts Review, 1990

Bapsi Sidhwa, a renowned author, is an internationally acclaimed author. She emblazoned worldwide much-admired novels: *The Crow Eater* (1978), *The Pakistani Bride* (1982), *Ice Candy-Man* (1989), and *An American Brat* (1993), *Water* (1993). Her novel *Ice-Candy Man* is filmed by Deepa Mehta entitled *Earth*. The film *Earth* released in the USA in September (1999) and now in all the major cities of the world. Although she was born, brought-up and educated in a non-English atmosphere, she practised the English language to render

¹ PhD. Scholar, Department of Languages, Manipal University Jaipur, (Rajasthan), India

² Associate Professor, Department of Languages, Manipal University Jaipur, (Rajasthan), India

her inherent customs and manners. Irony, customs, culture and sensational themes are her literature device and a weapon to uncover the orthodoxy, hypocrisy, the follies and the foibles of the society. She blends humour with some sensational themes of love and sex to make her interests. She practices a very simple and limpid English for her works. We compare her writing style most likely to Charles Dickens.

Alike Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, she is also representing the socio-political state of affairs of India before and during partition in her novels. Her novel *Pakistani Bride* (1982) is a fascinating and absorbing story of a tribal girl (Zaitoon) who lost her family in communal vehemence erupted through the partition of India and adopted by Qasim who also lost his family because of epidemic disease: smallpox and Typhoid. She belongs to the plain area Punjab but she is married to a tribal man (Qasim) belongs to the Karakoram Hills. He brought up her like his daughter. This novel is based on the real story of Karakoram hills when Bapsi Sidhwa was holidaying with her husband. She heard the story and went to see the spot where she was killed by the villagers at the Indus. But she was so upset with that incident, she decided to write a novel constructed on this story and choose that she will not let her heroine die.

Bapsi Sidhwa brings out various realities because pragmatism is a major weapon for her to uncover society. She describes how the people of Pakistan were dying of epidemic diseases such as typhoid and smallpox. In *Cracking India*, he depicts the entire novel based on his real-life experience. She grew up listening to the noise of the crowd and seeing the chaos and longings around her. He presents the cultural connection between Hindus and Muslims (who never believe in Hindu Gods and Goddesses), highlighting the belief in the Goddess Goddess who was believed to be responsible for these diseases. She presents the communal tension that existed during the Partition period. She forever draws our attention to photographs of people who vacate their land, property of animals and national identity. She depicts some anti-social activities and shows how people were slaughtering people of their own community under the guise of rioters. It also confers perceptions such as 'collective memory' and 'collective identity' and demonstrates how stories of partition are Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* and *The Pakistani Bride* reinterpreted in a restricted sense.

The Traumatic Memories' In The Work Of Bapsi Sidhwa

Steven D. Brown in his article "The Quotation Marks Have a Certain Importance: Prospects for a Memory Studies" points out that Ann Rigney's (2008) 'collective memory is not a matter of collecting, but of continuously performing. It is constantly in process, involving both recollection and forgetting in the light of changing patterns of relevance and shifting social frameworks' (p 266)

Steven D. Brown (2008) in his article "The Quotation Marks Have a Certain Importance: Prospects for a Memory Studies" further argues, "Psychologists often make recourse, for example, to a 'forensic view of self', where identity is taken to be founded on the ability to reconstruct and take ownership of one's own past (see Middleton and Brown, 2005). The concept of 'autobiographical memory', which lays particular stress on the selective recall of identity-relevant contextual information, is one recent version of this (see Fivush, 2008; Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). This concept implies that there is a thing called 'self' that is involved in this process of recollection. Self is presumed to be more or less continuous over time, albeit subject to development and revision. In the early 20th century, the French philosopher Henri Bergson took issue with this basic psychological grammar." (p 267)

The two books contain a few personal shreds of evidence. As Sidhwa herself uncovered in a meeting to Jugnu Mohsin in *The Friday Times* on July 20–26, 1989, “I had polio as a child. I had to have extensive treatment; my parents were advised not to send me to school. I was tutored at home by an Anglo- Indian lady who taught me to read and write.” Her youth, dejection and separation have impacted their characters, particularly the female character including Zaitoon and Lenny. Her depression is her principle wellspring of motivation which causes her to mull over her own life to engage her in her current life.

In his article "Traumatic Pasts, Literary Afterlives, and Transcultural Memory: New Directions of Literary and Media Memory Studies," Astrid Erll claims that the portrayal in memory of literature, the afterlives of literature, and transnational and transcultural memory are currently the most frequently debated topics of interdisciplinary memory studies. The portrayal of 'traumatic past' experiences in the literature concerns Holocaust studies and the cultural context of war and abuse. In various ways around the world, traumatic memories of the Holocaust are portrayed. We have war films, plays, dramas and magazines, poetry from World War I and Second, colonial wars and slavery wars etc. Historical human rights and inequality. Memory research is about the meaning of human and cultural trauma, narrative and other ways used for representing memory concerning trauma. (Erll 01)

There are several examples of the traumatized memories of Bapsi Sidhwa reflects in her works. Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* and somewhat *The Pakistani Bride* manage annihilation from a controlled perspective. In both the books, we experience the dissimilarity between described memory and recorded history. About this assassination of Muslims at the hour of the parcel, we have various forms of past or recollections of homicide. Sidhwa presents the Pakistani form of a segment and depicts how many blameless Muslim ladies, men and youngsters were slaughtered by Hindus and Sikhs.

Once in “*Cracking India*” visualizing the arson, the child protagonist Lenny says: “The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot, I think my flesh and cloths will catch fire. I start screaming: hysterically sobbing how long does Lahore burn? Weeks? Months?” (137-138).

Taboo talks and feminism, a daring act for a woman writer, are reflected in her statement. She always raises her voice against the atrocities on women. Their apprehension for the exploitation of women and the question of the double standards of society which on the one hand make 'vail' for women and 'prostitution' suitable for them on the other. She posits socio-cultural boundaries that force women to do what they need to do. The use of taboo talk is only associated with men's areas. She draws readers' attention to women's restricted rights: not to choose her spouse, not to live an independent life, nor to pose a question before the male-dominated set-up. In another of his novels, the *Pakistani bride*, Zaitoon marries Sakhi, a tribal man who strictly treats her on the first night after their wedding. He beats her only for provocative reasons as she waved her hands to the army jawan to see them. Her husbands' atrocities enforced her to leave the village and seek a suitable place to seek refuge.

Highlighting the minor situation of the Zaitoon, Bapsi also questioned the question of female child education. Mariam in *Pakistani bride*, the wife of Nikka Singh wrestler, forbids her to continue school as she feels education is not compulsory for girls and Zaitoon should eventually marry a man and build a new home.

AhnHakyoun(2019)argues that it can be useful here to go back to George's (2007) factor that the violence against ladies all through Partition needs to be contextualized as a magnification of that which girls suffer each day inside a patriarchal society, rather than as an "exceptional" moment of madness. In Gyanendra Pandey's (2006) definition, modern-day violence is composed not best of the most spectacular but also the "tons more standard and continuous" forms that are systemically routinized into a modern political minority's situation of being (5). Violence, on this sense, is a situation of cutting-edge life, a "total social phenomenon"(Pandey 2006, 7) in place of a transitional, occasional, or atypical one; it's miles manifested in the "creation and naturalization of unique classes of thought" as properly as in the "mundane, banal, normal workout of power" (15). For the women of *cracking India*, violence is each routinized and gendered, and exists previous to the events of Partition. It is thus feasible to make bigger upon the perception of Ayah as the "sole representative discerns of woman violation" in *Cracking India*, as Hai (2000, 390) puts it, and expand this situation to the lives of the upper-middle-class ladies.

Highlighting a place called Hira Mandi, she shows the mistreatment of women as a prostitute and dancing girls where Nikka Singh and Qasim used to go. BapsiSidhwaspeaks:

"TheSauvéPakistaniheldoutaten-rupeenoteasamoretangible signof appreciation. The girl stood up and without discontinuing her song, collected the money. The American held a note between his teeth and kissed Shahnaz's fingers as she plucked it. Qasim stuck a note on his turban and blushed unbearably when Nikka shouted, "Tweak his hair! Pinch his cheeks!" (P.74).

In *Cracking India*, she also uses the description of HiraMandi, where Ayah was sent to entertain wealthy people. And Lenny was also suggested not to study by his physician. Her doctor reports that the girls are for marriage, to have children and to manage their husband's home. She renders the 'other' side of 'Kotha'. Shesays:

"TheKothaistheculturalpulseofthecity.Itiswherepoetsareinspired,wheretheirsongsaresungandmade famous by the girls, and singing-boys. It is also a stepping stone to film stardom for the nautch-girls. The girls are taught to sing and dance and talk elegantly and look pretty and be attractive to men." (p.267)

AsKumarP(2013)states that she applauded the "pimps" and tells about them that they are the male ayah and they look after the girls in habitin 'Kotha'. The pimps look after the girls from the drunken and protect their money earned by them. Hence, the Pimps are a type of "adult and mercenary cupid". "But what are pimps?" Another word that arouses peculiar reactions in people.

Through Ranna's horrifying tales of the Sikhs' attack, Bapsi Sidhwa indicates the intensity of the terror that can frighten a child, who chases a child, who shows a bad scene of the massacre:

"DostMohammadsteppedoutandwalkedthreepaces. Therewasasunlitweepofcurvedsteel. Hisheadwasshorn clear off his neck. Turning once in the air, eyes wide open, it tumbled in the dust. His hands jerked up slapping the air above the bleeding stump of his neck. Ranna saw his uncle beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. He felt a blow cleave at the back of his head and warm flow of blood. Ranna fell just inside the door on a tangled pile of the pile of bodies. The room in which they hid themselves becomes a "pool of blood" due to the "bodies blocking the entrance" (213).

Due to the division of the nation, his novels have manifestations of cultural quagmire and identity crisis. Culture plays an important role in shaping and shaping the lives and thoughts of individuals through their perceptions. It provides basic education to survive in society. According to Desai (2013):

“The writer in her novel shows different facets of cultural difference and identity crisis. One such facet is that she depicts cultural difference as victimizing the people. Cultural victimization creates problem for the characters.”

Uncovering the identity crisis in *Pakistani bride*, Qasim lost his family due to epidemic disease, smallpox and typhoid are a Kohistani and after the death of his family, he moved to Jullundur for his income. However, Jullundur's food surprised him a lot. He got the job of a watchman and being a small-town resident of the hill, Jullundur's talk always surprised him. Qasim says:

“The men of the plains appeared strangely effeminate. Women roamed the streets in brazen proximity. These people were soft, their lives easy. Where he came from, men – as in the stone age – walked thirty days over the lonely, almost trackless mountain to secure salt for their tribes (21)”.

Her efforts badly but couldn't adjust in the culture of the Plains and the many incidents occur for the bitterness between him and Girdharilal. He married her adopted daughter Zaitoon to a Kohistani youth but she also couldn't adjust in the culture of the mountains. Her husband beats her mercilessly and has no freedom to say her thoughts and feelings. Being tortured by the life of the mountain, Zaitoon flew off the mountain and once again, they ended their relationship due to cultural differences. His novels are full of depictions of cultural difference.

In *Cracking India*, Bapsi Sidhwa depicts inter-community marriages between a Hindu (Ayah) and a Muslim (Ice Candy Man). Initially, Ice Candy Man was part of a frantic mob that abducted Ayah in a passion for revenge from other communities. Ayah is sent to the brothel Hira Mandi and later falls in love with her. He forcibly married her and changed her name to Mumtaz. Ayah's identity was changed, but she was rescued by Lenny's godmother and sent to the recovered women's camp. Finally, he was sent to his house in Amritsar. This is the reason that the relationship between Ayah and Ice Candy Man ended due to this cultural difference. Bapsi Sidhwa uses very simple and moderate language. She uses some Hindi and Urdu words in her works. Her prolific character is her characterization. Bapsi Sidhwa accepts that indeed, in this book (Ice Candy-Man) her love of Urdu poetry overflows. She made it a part of this novel and tied it up with it because it gives her the impression that it resonates with the novel, that it is cultural. Urdu has impregnated the books within a mode of poetry, something quite eastern.

II. Conclusion

Bapsi Sidhwa is a protuberant and first female author to write her novel objectively. She is known as a courageous woman raising her voice against the patriarchal society and exposing all the lacunas of our society. Sidhwa, in *Cracking India*, depicts images of the pre-Partition period and the Partition period and shows the changing society as time passes. Ice Candy Man from Sidhwa and to a lesser degree Pakistani bride are grappling limitedly with the massacre. The discrepancy between the recited memory and written past can be found in both novels. Concerning these massacres of Muslims, we have multiple incarnations of the history or memories of this slaughter at the time of the partition. Sidhwa portrays the partition's Pakistani version and

explains how Hindus and Sikhs were brutally murdered by hundreds of innocent Muslim women, men and children.

Bapsi Sidhwa is an infinite artist of characterization. She introduces the complexities of female victims in society and raises her voice against the atrocities of society. He understands the topic of the partition of India very well. *Pakistani Bride* is also a very provocative novel that shows her character-portrayal abilities and attracts her physical features. The novel is also important for the dramatic performance of marriages, beliefs, honour, and their struggle with old customs in this conflict.

Authors contribution

All the authors have contributed equally.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Acknowledgement

The authors are extremely grateful to the Heads of Department of Manipal University Jaipur, India for providing the necessary facilities to carry out this research work. We also hope to express our appreciation for the journal proficiency review received for grounding its final version.

Note on contributors:

Archana Kataria is a PhD Scholar in the English Department of Manipal University Jaipur, India. Her research area of interest is based on memory and spaces associated with colonial studies and has planned and conducted this research work.

References:

1. Astrid,Erll.“Traumatic pasts, literary afterlives, and transcultural memory: new directions of literary and media memory studies”, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 7186,2011, DOI: 10.3402/jac.v3i0.7186.
2. Brown, Steven. “The Quotation marks have a certain importance: Prospects for a ' memory studies”. *Memory Studies*,2008,DOI: 10.1177/1750698008093791.
3. Crespo, M. & Fernández-Lansac, V. “Memory and narrative of traumatic events: A literature review”. *Psychological trauma: theory, research, practice and policy*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 149–156, 2016,DOI: 10.1037/tra0000041.
4. Deshai, Dhanusha. “Cultural quagmire and identity crisis in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa”. *Journal of higher education and research society*. vol.1, no.1, pp. 205-214, 2013.
5. George, Rosemary Marangoly. “(Extra)Ordinary Violence: National Literatures, Diasporic Aesthetics, and the Politics of Gender in South Asian Partition Fiction.” vol. 33, no. 1, pp 135–158,2007,DOI:10.1086/518371. Published by *The University of Chicago Press*, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/518371>.

6. Hai, Ambreen. "Border Work, Border Trouble: Postcolonial Feminism and the Ayah in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*", *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp 379–426, 2000, DOI:10.1353/mfs.2000.0028.
7. Hakyoun, Ahn. "Queer eyes and gendered violence in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*,". *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/17449855.2019.1627570.
8. Khan, Tariq and Naseer, Ahmed. "A feminist analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's ice candy-man: an unbound practise of linguistic deposition of feminine frame". *Pakistan journal of society, education and language*. vol. 5, no. 2, pp 37-48. 2019.
9. Mohsin, Jugnu. *The Friday Times*. July 20-26, 1989.
10. Pandey, Gyanendra. "*Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories*. Stanford", CA: Stanford University Press. 2006.
11. Sidhwa, Bapsi. "*Cracking India*". New Delhi: Penguin, 1991.
12. Sidhwa, Bapsi. "*The Pakistani Bride*". New Delhi: Penguin, 1990.
13. Singh, K Pramod. "*The novels of Bapsi Sidhwa: A Critical Evaluation*". Aadi Publication Jaipur India. 2013.