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**HISTORY OF INDIAN PARTITION 1947 AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN  
FICTION AUTHORED BY BAPSI SIDHWA**

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**Abstract**

*History and fiction have strong relation with each other. History provides themes and material to fiction so that fiction writers may create stories based on historical events. In the history of India, partition was most significant event which was followed by migration on both sides of the border. The riots, the victimization of women and large scale killing of the people followed the event of partition. This partition resulted in formation of two countries but followed much disturbance and violence. Many writers of that time write about partition and women victims as they were brutally targeted by the men of both communities. Bapsi Sidwa is amongst those writers who contribute literature by creating stories which depict the scenario of that time. The current study explains the history of partition of India 1947 as seen from the eyes of Bapsi Sidwa. Her accounts of Indian partition are important because of her feminine gender as well as she was a witness of that event and she was neither Hindu nor Muslim to may have subjectivity in her representations. Therefore, her fiction work is considered objective narrative of the Indian partition presented in this article.*

**INTRODUCTION**

It is human nature that he is always curious about the past, that what happened in the past, how people survived, what were their needs, what was their way of life. All these questions can be answered by evaluating past and history refers the real facts and the happenings of the past. The detailed answer can be found in the literature of that era or the stories written based on that facts. So, from here, the relation of history and literature starts which is not dependable on period.

During the partition of India which resulted in riots, women were the most effected part of the society as they were brutally targeted just for the sake of revenge. Men of both communities Hindu and Muslim targeted women to show their superiority over them by degrading their women and girls. Although partition in general was accompanied by a huge wave of violence, the atrocities against women were probably the most horrible ones. This is important because history is always written by men, and normally, women's perspectives does not come to be viewed.

In the culture of sub-continent, land of a country is considered as motherhood, "Bharatmata or Mother India" so land is seen as metaphorical mother, which was then being divided with the creation of Pakistan. Most of the people especially Hindu community did not want this division as this division was meant to create violence and women who is seen as the dignity of a family, a nation humiliated brutally. The body of the women were branding with the religion tattoos and then paraded naked in front of the worship places, this is a double-edged attack, first is to humiliate the women, her honor, after this, she was considered as sinful and second was the humiliation of religion. Abduction and raping were the common one tool for this humiliation. These cases were the "worst case scenarios" and sometimes, women were also grateful that they were recovered and sent back to their paternal families.

## **HISTORY AND FICTION**

History in a most easy way can be defined as "a record of real facts or events that happened or occurred in past". According to the traditional way, we can consider history as a branch of literature, and then as a discipline that has a link close to science (Roosevelt, 2006). Normally, there is no rise of questions and doubts to ask for the authenticity of the past because people have not the access to the past. Generally, there is universal tendency to accept history without questioning about the authenticity of the recorded history. According to Patricia Waugh the terms of history, history writing, and metafictional novels can be evident as "history consists of multiple worlds which are fictional" (Waugh, 1984). According to postmodernist context by Linda Hutcheon, fiction about history is called historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon, 1988). History also has its scientific aspects, in term of this traditional historians regard it as, "to find the absolute reality of the past events, it was considered correspondence of empirical search for external truth (Onega, 1999).

In White's article (1978), he mentioned that traditional historians by reconstructing the recorded documents explained past events, while new historians for whom he used the term 'meta-historians' (Onega, 1999) by interpreting the documents explained past events subjectively. New historians normally interpret the documents by including or excluding other facts or documents accordingly. For the interpretation from the new historians, White (1978) says, "Historical narrative is a mixture of accepted or unaccepted explained events, at once it is representation that is interpreted, and the interpretation somehow passes the explanation of the whole process that is mirrored in the narrative" (Onega, 1999).

Fiction on the other hand deals with events that have not happened in a real life. In general, the unreal and imaginary story telling of the past events is called fiction. In literary narratives, fiction is a prominent degree that is based on biographical, historical or contemporary facts (Abrams, 2001). These we can categorize as historical novel, science fiction, fictional biography, detective novel, social novel and non-fictional novel. In fiction, author creates his own fictional sentences which referred to a special world in an imaginary setting of beings and mode of coherence, this created world is analogy of the real world. The judgement of the narrative's truth is based on the reader's own moral, religious and social convictions (Abrams, 2001).

Narrative is an important element of fiction, to comprehend historical fiction along with its truth value in a proper and better way, narrative should be analyzed before it deals with the literature and history. Narrative by itself is a combination of plot, character, dialogue, genre, ideology, language and identity (Herman, 2007). Marie-Laure Ryan (2007) said about narrative that it is culturally not categorized as general like historiography, historical fiction, science fiction or fantasy. To frame narrative the concept of framing about an event play a vital role. Author's imagination about the story sparks our mental framing of some conception (Ryan, 2007).

### **BAPSI SIDHWA AND PARTITION**

Bapsi Sidhwa was born on 11 August 1938 in Karachi Pakistan. She is a Pakistani novelist of Gujrati Parsi descent, writes also in English, recently resident in United State. Her famous novel on partition is *Ice Candy man*. Gujrati is her first language, Urdu is second and English is third. She has full command on English language, but she is more comfortable in Gujrati and Urdu language. She also translates many literary works of Gujrati and Urdu literature into English. *Cracking India* was first published in 1988 as *Ice Candy Man* in England, then it republished as *Cracking India* in 1991 in US and 1992 in India. This novel was also gone under charge of obscenity in Volusia Country, Florida as this novel taught in country's public school, so charged was it contained pornographic material, but district court did not ban the novel.

The novel *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa is, undoubtedly, among the widest discussed and researched novels on India's partition. It is the most famous and important partition novel by a South Asian woman writer. The book was originally published in Britain with the title *Ice-Candy Man* in 1988. In 1991 it was re-published in the United States with the modified title *Cracking India* (Sanga, 2004). In 1998, *Earth an Indian* film was released based on the Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *ice-candy man*. The story centers on a Parsee family in Lahore at partition time. The narrator, Lenny, is daughter of the house. At the beginning of the narrative she is seven years old and turns eight when Pakistan becomes independent from India. Lenny belongs to upper-middle class family and her servants have multi-religious backgrounds. For Lenny, Ayah is one of the closest servants, she is a Punjabi Hindu girl and named Shanta. Like this, many characters do not have proper names in the story like *Ice candy-man*, *Chinaman*, *Godmother*, *Electric Aunt* etc. This shows child's simple, innocent and immature perspective.

Ayah's character is a beautiful eighteen-year old girl, who can attract the men of every class, religion and background (Sidwa, 1991).

The political situation becomes worse in Lahore, violence starts, and Ayah gets abducted by her former admirers named Ice-candy-man. Lenny tries to find because she thinks it's just because of her ayah gets abducted, as according to her she can trust Ice-candy-man. At the end of the story, Lenny with her cousin finds out Ice-candy-man and Ayah, both get married and live in the red-light area of Lahore as professional dancer. Lenny's godmother helped Ayah to bring her to a camp of abducted women and then her family from Amritsar. Ice-candy-man love her so much, so he follows her to India, because he cannot live without her any longer. This transformation from the shameless admirer to a mad kidnapper and later to the hopeless lover makes the figure of Ice-candy-man a very disputable character.

Kleist, who has written an article about feminine power versions in this novel, identifies four instances of female authority: Lenny, as descriptive narrator; Ayah, as influential over men prior-partition; Lenny's mother and aunt, as refugee helpers for abducted women; and Godmother, as nearly omnipotent with many social connections (Kleist, 2011). Lenny, as narrator, describes her experiences during that time, she is basically disempowered figure, a young physically disabled female. Hai compares Lenny's position with Victor Turner's liminal figure. *Cracking India* can additionally be classified as a coming-of-age novel, because Lenny attains important knowledge during that critical period of history (Hai, 2000). "I learn fast. I learn of human needs, frailties, cruelties and joys. I also learn from Ayah that the tyranny magnets exercise over metals. I have many teachers. My cousin shows me things" (Mitra, 2008).

Violence starts to threaten Lahore's harmony and inter-religious hatred increases, ayah is also able to re-unite her admirers when a political discussion gets out of hand. Lenny is primarily occupied with comprehending and interpreting events that are more prominent, like the maltreatment of Papoo, the servant's daughter. Papoo's mother does not treat her well. Lenny considers her brave and determinant girl. Papoo endures all this, knowing that as a lower-class girl she has not many options. Her story is like other girls of India who before their legal age of marriage undergo this fact (Mitra, 2008). The most prominent feature of female victimization is abduction of Ayah, after which she is presumably raped, and later coerced into prostitution, conversion and marriage to Ice-candy-man (Feng, 2011). Butalia had observed that it was virtually impossible to procure eye-witness accounts from raped or abducted women, because they did not want to report their experiences due to various reasons (Butalia, 2000). Therefore, Ayah's body can be interpreted as representing the nation before and after partition. In pre-partition Lahore Ayah and her group of admirers signify religious harmony that used to be prevalent on the subcontinent (Didur, 1998). She also articulates the wish to go back to her parental family in Amritsar, but she has waited too long.

Menon and Bhasin affirm this idea, women's body was considered as motherland who was violated by the foreign invaders (Menon and Bhasin, 1998). The result of

the violence was suffered by the women, they had to marry their abductors and most of them converted their religion too. Same as Ayah in *Cracking India*, her own admirer abducted her. Therefore, when the boundaries are demarcated Ayah was on other side as a Hindu in Pakistan. When Godmother and Lenny recover her, it is found out that Ayah had married Ice-candyman, converted to Islam and changed her name to Mumtaz. On the surface, she is imbibed by Muslim culture and religion.

Additionally, in the context of partition, women's bodies became the respective territory, who they wanted to conquer. It means, if they wanted to harm the other country's honor or religion, they targeted and treated badly the women of others community. All abducting, mutilating, tattooing and raping women were a demonstration of power over the others, women's sexuality symbolizes manhood, manhood symbolizes nationhood. So indirectly, if women get violated, it means, nation get violated. The abducted women who were recovered that's why their life was not easy in their own country.

Similarly, another example of her child's perspective is when she observes that building next to her house might be a women's jail. Hamida, her new ayah is employed from that jail. Hamida tells her that this is a camp of abducted women, but Lenny does not get this designation. On asking the details, Hamida breaks out in tears. Therefore, Lenny seeks clarification with Godmother, who explains Hamida's situation to her, "Hamida was kidnapped by the Sikhs, says Godmother seriously. On serious matters I can always trust her to level with me. She was taken away to Amritsar. Once that happens, sometimes, the husband or his family won't take her back. Why? It isn't her fault she was kidnapped! Some folk feel that way they can't stand their women being touched by other men. It's monstrously unfair: but Godmother's tone is accepting" (Sidwa, 1991).

Hamida's attitude towards her desolate situation was very common among affected women at that time. Instead of condemning men or politics they often blamed their own destiny, because it was a shameful act for all, so they kept silent (Butallia, 2000). Social workers who recovered these abducted women were eyewitness of all the information. Hamida's character is one of that kind who can help scholars to understand the difficulties and worries of such women (Roy, 2010). In contrast to Ayah's story, which seems to be more artificial and artistically created, Hamida's story might be an example that more authentically mirrors reality.

In addition, apart from the abduction of women, also other atrocities are described in the story entitled "Ranna's Story" and are embedded in the main frame of the novel. This part of the novel is about Ranna's experiences. Ranna is Imam Din's grandson who meets Lenny twice when she visits his village, on the way from his village to Lahore, Sikh attacker badly wounded him and later he shares his experience with Lenny (Sidwa, 1991). Moreover, children of the time during partition were also deeply traumatized during the struggles. They witnessed too many changes and got confused that what was going to happen all around, Ranna also witnessed all the killings and tortures. It can be argued that children suffered more, because they were unable to protect themselves emotionally from the violence (Butallia, 2000).

Sidhwa's initial proposal was to write a less biased and more objective account on partition regarding politics, but she also accomplished a novel in which women play a major role and she created a nuanced variety of feminine roles (Kleist, 2011). Generally, it can be said, that partition as a major historical event affected everybody on the Indian subcontinent. Partition is a collective and inter-generational trauma and writing about it is part of a collective accounting for the past. Sidhwa affirms that the starting point of her novel originated in personal memories, but most of the narrative is fiction (Bhalla, 2006).

Cracking India can be classified as literary eye-witness account relying on several autobiographical traits. Sidhwa's role as a woman is to clearly depict the female side of partition history (Kleist, 2011). It is important that Sidhwa does not just employ a one-sided female representation, but she shows a whole spectrum of different ways women reacted to partition. Many women jumped into well to secure their respect and dignity and honor of their families. Near Ghaggar bridge in Ambala, a convoy of Muslims coming from Patiala State was attacked by an armed Sikh gang and Muslim girls had to save their honor by jumping into the river.

Partition literature depicts the scenario of that time, as partition literature is full of such stories, which help us to understand what happened at that time. The whole Punjab was in drastic situation. Killing, kidnapping, raping and looting was at its peak. Nobody was saved at that time. Our writers did a marvelous job that they wrote such a master pieces, which make it easy to understand the scenario and feelings of the people. Writers of both the sides wrote stories regarding partition, the circumstances were almost same across the border. Cruelty, savagery, inhumanity was shown by both sides. Oral accounts and literature support each other.

## CONCLUSION

In short, this is how partition affected on the psychology of the masses especially the children. They did not understand exactly what was happening, but they felt that all these things were going wrong. This situation was responsible to build a bridge between the people who once were friend. The event of Indian partition split them and turned them into their worst enemy. They were not hesitant even in killing each other. Neighbors killed their neighbors and life which was pleasant once changed into drastic situation. History witnessed that the people were killing each other but they didn't know why they were doing all this; they all were taking revenge of unseen crime.

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