

Human Psychology and Status of Women in the Works of Amitav Ghosh and Bapsi Sidhwa

Dr. Manjeet kumar

Assistant Professor

MA, B. Ed, NET, Ph.D

PG Diploma in Translation

Email: manjeetkumar5233@gmail.com

Abstract:

Bapsi Sidhwa and Amitav Ghosh are two towering figures in Commonwealth English literature. Both the writers have dealt with partition as the theme of their works. It's a known fact that wherever such incidents took place, a tragedy for the people always originated. A small incident got spread in the locality by some tyrants and politicians that it got started anarchy everywhere. India is a vast country where people of different religions, castes, culture, customs and languages are living like different kinds of flowers in a bunch. This paper presents the human psychology during and before the riots in the novels of the writers under research and some traditions which implemented in the society. These rules work differently for different contexts. When it is related to specific gender and caste it has different aspects. India is a country where patriarchy existed for thousands of years ago. Males have the legal authority over his wife and children. Women are targeted victims in these circumstances. When they belong to the lower strata of their society then situation becomes more miserable. Family and environment play a very important role in constructing the formation of laws in constitution and the ways they implemented over the women. There are various ways through which women are victimized. They are physically as well as psychologically assaulted by men.

Keywords: human psychology, reciprocal relationship, communal violence, religion.

Objectives: The essence of writing this paper is to acquaint the readers and lovers of literature about the circumstances and situations prevailed in India during partition. Today we all talk about equality and equal treatment to women. We always talk about the family that a family always seems incomplete without a women. But are we giving them respect and position in our society what they deserve? This paper will make us acquaint about the status of women depicted in the works of Amitav Ghosh and Bapsi Sidhwa.

Introduction: Bapsi Sidhwa is a prominent novelist who writes in English. She took birth in Karachi in undivided India in 1938. That time India was under the rule of British government. Her childhood was spent in the Panjabi community of Lahore where she experienced the Panjabi culture. She got her education from Lahore and passed her graduation from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. Gujarati and Urdu are his first languages but she writes in English. She is now settled in U.S.A. and lives in Houston, Texas.

Her debut novel was 'The Crow Eaters', published in 1978. She got fame and popularity with the publication of 'Ice-Candy-Man'. In this popular novel she rewrites the history of India or Indian subcontinent. She presents the true picture of that time when this nation was a colony under the British rule. In 'Ice-Candy-Man', she tries to recall the incidents that happened during partition. She presents the happenings in a realistic way. She describes the story through a very young girl named Lenny. Lenny is of eight years that time and observes each and everything with her own perception, one being a woman and other as a Parsian. In this work (Ice-Candy-Man) she examines the psychology of male gender towards women and human psychology during and before partition. The divide or partition of a nation proved as a sordid boon that was primarily considered a solution of complexity of opinion between both communities i.e. Hindu and Muslim. Bapsi's portrayal of communal violence during partition is so brilliant that it disperse the Lenny's world. She realises that religion and culture which were a root of reciprocal relationship between communities now seem as artificially created. The novel begins with the words, "My world is compresses" (Ice-Candy-Man, Chapter-1, P.-1). It sounds as Lenny is confined to limitations that are barriers in the

life long journey of a woman. She moves in the locality on a wheel chair that is driven by Ayah, a young Hindu girl. She is girl of eighteen years. She seems as the desired object for all the crowd of young men nevertheless they belong to any caste, creed and religion. They all want to get her as their beloved. Sidhwa expresses it in Lenny's words as, "Only the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee are, as always, unified around her". Her admirers are in multiple but they also feel jealous with other. In chapter three when Ayah and Lenny were sat in the park they saw a statue of Queen Victoria that was symbolizing the fact that India is a colony under British rule. It is here, where Lenny gets introduced with the Ayah's admirers. They come from different strata of society. Here, they discuss what is happening outside the village. Lenny takes the advantages of Ayah's admirers. Ice-candy-man is one of them. That's why she calls him to massage her legs. At this time he seduces Ayah. She is a short heighted young girl of eighteen years. She does not look much stunning. Everybody looks her with lustful eyes. "Hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes".

When the violence has been spread and people over there are well acquainted about the consequences. Trauma of riots spread in different parts of the nation and population exchange is still continued. They started migrating to safe places. But many poor people were not in the Condition to migrate so they changed their religion. The incident of Hari has been become common for all. Since, he has nowhere to go. He has changed his style of wearing dhoti. He comes to Muslim-style loose salwar pants. He has also had his penis circumcised. When Ayah was kidnapped, raped and made a dancer in the Hira Mandi, the red light area of Lahore. It become more heinous because it was all happened with the active participation of Ice-candy-man, who is an admirer and lover of Ayah, although married her later. Ayah's marriage with Ice-candy-man is nothing but a trauma in her life. After getting married with Ice-candy-man she becomes 'Mumtaz'. Her identity has been changed. She says to God mother that, "I want to go to my family" (Ice-Candy-Man, P.-261) It is clear through her voice that she was in a miserable condition. Her voice was harsh and gruff. It seemed as someone has pressed her vocal cords. She cannot forget her rape

and she is not taking herself alive. This incident obviously shows the psychology of people in general. Such riots brutally snatch the humanity.

Psychology of the villagers is quite different before reaching the crises in village. Sidhwa describes it through a communication between the village Chaudhry and Imam Din. They are discussing about the crises happening in cities like, ‘Hindus are being murdered in Bengal...Muslims, in Bihar. It’s strange...the English Sarkar can’t seem to do anything about it’. They are very much friendly and discussing about the riots spread in the different parts the country. Their relationship with one-another are so rich that they take it as they are just categorized but actually there is no difference among them. Sidhwa gives one another example of their reciprocal relationship through another discussion between village Chaudhry and Imam Din. When they are discussing about the government they also discuss about the Hindu-Muslim trouble and Sikh-Muslim trouble. In a reply it is said that, “Brother, the Sikh says when the tumult sub-sides, our villages come from the same racial stock. We are basically Jats. We are brothers” (Ice-Candy-Man, Chapter 7, P.-56) It clearly presents a harmonious picture of the reciprocal relationship among the villagers before spreading the violence in the village. Further in (Ice-Candy-Man, Chapter 14, P. 122) conversation between Ice-candy-man and Sher Singh shows that it seems no great difference between people i.e. “Oye, donkey.” I told him. “So what if you’re a Sikh? I’m first a friend to my friends...And an enemy to their enemies...And then a Mussulman! God and the politicians have enough servers. So, I serve my friends.” Mr. Singh who is a very brave person now feels isolation. All his neighbours have left that locality but he with his spouse and children staying there. He says to his wife, “Mr. Mehtas have gone! The Malhotras have gone! The Guptas have gone!”. Violence has changed the environment of the society. Before spreading violence people were cursing the government but now their psychology has also changed. They start hating to their neighbours who belong to other religions to them. Writer depicts it as, “Things have become topsy-turvy. We’ve stopped going to queen’s Garden altogether. We’ve also stopped going to the wrestler’s restaurant. There is discussion in the admirers of Ayah”. Now, Ayah’s suitors have reduced in number. They are not gathered there in group. Masseur is the only visitor left.

In the novel, “Water” Sidhwa presents a miserable condition of Indian women. She presents a vivid picture of ill-treatment of widows in Indian society. The story of this famous novel is set in Varansi of 1938’s to the reader. This work is written in 2006 and it is written by the writer by keeping in mind a film by Deepa Mehta. It was the time when child marriage was common in Hindu families. Widows were bound to lead a miserable life. They had to spend their lives in worshipping God and they were bound to have minimum food for a single time in a day to live. Widow’s remarriage were legitimate in those days but it was considered a taboo in society. It highlights the subjugation over widows in Indian society. It depicts the contradictory standard of the male. The story of the novel is centered round the Chuyia, an eight years old girl and Kalyani, a young widow in ashram. Chuyia lives with her parents in a village on the Bihar-Bengal border. She got married with a person names Hiralal when she was of little kid of merely six years. Hiralal was forty four years old man. The marriage ceremony occurs at a temple. In this ceremony only Brahmins were allowed to attend. Chuyia looked like a doll and rituals related to marriage were completed by the priest. After marriage she lived with her parents. After two years of her marriage Somnath brought the news that Hiralal is sick. A few days later Hiralal died and Chuyia was brought to her in-laws house for post death rituals. She was told that her husband has been died and she is a widow now. She even didn’t know the meaning of widow. She was confused and asked earnestly, “For how long, Baba”. But before her father could say anything, her mother-in-law took off her mangalsutra and broke her red bangles with a brick. It was the system or ritual in the village that when a husband died his wife cannot wear glass bangles and colourful clothes. So a white saree was provided to her. She was made bald head by the barber as it was the Hindu tradition. It was all done for rest in peace her husband soul. Her father left Chuyia in a ashram to lead her further life. Ashram was considered the safest place for the widows. The ashram is run by a cunning lady named Madhumati. She supplies the young widows to high class people and local Brahmins. She earns additional money by doing so. Young widows are not bound to cut their hair. They look attractive in their long hair. Kalyani is among them. Chuyia befriended with Kalyani over there. Kalyani feels herself in love with an upper class, young man Mr. Narayan. He makes a plan of elopement

with Kalyani but this plan was got failed when Chuyia asks Madhumati that, “So what? I’ll eat a hundred of puris at Kalyani wedding, Chuyia defiantly boasted”. When Kalyani left the ashram with Shakuntala’s help and met with Narayan in a temple where he was waiting for her asked her again, if she will marry him. In reply to this question she leans down and brushes his teeth with her fingertips. Then she reached to Narayan’s home and after reaching there she recognized the bungalow because she had sent to this as a sexual commodity. Narayan, it is found out that he is the son of that person she had slept with. Narayan also got acquainted with the fact and when he went to take her back he found out that she had drowned herself in grief.

People have the psychology that in holy text it is stated that Brahmins are superior beings and can sleep with anyone they want, and the women they sleep with will be blessed. It clearly explores the contradictory standard of male. Same thing is implemented in different ways. Patriarchal system always dominated the society and women are always considered the second sex.

Amitav Ghosh a commonwealth English writer born on July 11, 1956 in Calcutta. He is the only writer in English literature who got Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpith award for literature. In his works he vividly portrays the themes of partition of nation and status of women. He depicts the psychology of people who are living in their own nation and who have to abandon their country after partition. In his novel, “The Shadow Lines” he describes the story of a family and its three generations. It deals with the period of colonial India or British India. The grandmother of the narrator, Thamma, was born in Dhaka at present the capital of Bangladesh. She shows her attachment with her native place though she lives in Calcutta. Her sister, Mayadebi, is living in England with her family. There is a close bonding reflected between Indian and English family. It was started when Lionel Tresawson was in India. Later on, in India he developed an interest on spiritualism and started attending the meetings of the Theosophical society in Calcutta, where he met and earned the trust and friendship of various leading nationalists. The friendship between Tresawson and Dutta- Chaudhary is strengthened by their heirs. The novel portrayed the theme of partition that changed the people lives in many ways. People started migrating from one place

to another. With the passes of time culture of that place was adopted by them. How culture affects their lives is vividly shown. Ila is the chief victim of this enigma. She is well acquainted about both the culture, Indian and British. She behaves like an English girl but at the same time she is bound with the Indian culture also. She got married with Nick Price, who is an English man. She is well acquainted about the English culture still becomes the victim of it. Nick Price has extra marital affairs outside. She tries her best to save their relation but in vein. At last he divorced her. She suffered physically as well as psychologically. In the novel, “Sea of Poppies” Ghosh shows the effect of colonial rules and orthodox Hindu society. The central figure of this famous novel is an upper caste girl Deeti. She gets married to an opium addicted man named Hukum Singh. He was in army but got injured over there and now works in an opium factory that is only fifty miles away from Banaras. Deeti, a gentle lady, accepts this marriage proposal only for her brother sake. Ghosh makes us acquainted about Deeti who marries Hukum Singh, “because Deeti’s own brother, Kesri Singh, had proposed the match. The two men had belonged to the same battalion and had served together in a couple of overseas campaign” (Sea of Poppies, P. 21). Since, it was the tradition in the society that male member will take the decisions of the family. But on the very first night of her wedding she is raped by her brother- in- law and in this heinous act her mother-in-law actively participated or it can be expressed as it was done by Chandan Singh on his mother’s intension. Hukum Singh is an impotent person. Such consequences are the result of some set rules or traditions prevailing in society that time. India was under the British rule that time and Indian people were slaves to them. In particular, in India, patriarchal system always dominated the society. It obviously shows that what would be the condition of females that time. They were first slave to the imperial governance of the British government and second slave to the tradition and some set rules and traditions of the Indian Society. Many decisions were deliberately imposed upon them. Deeti begets a girl child and she found that she would not be able to claim for property. She surrenders her daughter to a lady who is her aunt. She runs away with a lower class person Kalua who works as a driver of Hukum Singh. Then her next phase of life starts on ‘The Ibis ship’. Here also women are busy in the lower class works. They are just busy in cooking, washing clothes and

cleaning. Having gone through the novel it is found a reflection that patriarchal system is still working everywhere. She has been left there by her current husband Kalua. It also depicts the gender discrimination in the society. Subjugation over women are very common everywhere.

Findings and suggestion: The works of both the writers are based on the evils present in Indian society. Though both the writers are now diasporic still they chose the themes from their country where they born. Bapsi Sidhwa and Amitav Ghosh both the writers are born in India. Bapsi Sidhwa belongs to undivided India and Amitav Ghosh belongs to post independence. Bapsi Sidhwa takes the theme from India and aware the readers through her works. Her works reminds us Joseph Addison whose motto was not ridiculing the vicious people but to vice and folly prevailing in the society that time. Likewise, Amitav Ghosh does the same work. He also shows the mirror to the society and presents everything in details and in a realistic way like Sidhwa. Both the writers are successful in their purpose of writing and presenting a true picture of a nation.

The study of these works acquainted the readers and scholars about the social evil prevailing in our society. These types of evils may be present in any country or at any place but the purpose of writing is to improve the surrounding and society through actively participation in social improving activities. It is observed that condition of women is not up to the mark. Constitution provides the equal rights to all the people. It never creates any type of discrimination in gender, race, religion, and caste. But it is usually the thinking of people that works as that makes the self satisfaction as a tradition. These traditions are only for a particular class and gender. It can be removed only when then citizen of a nation are educated. For instance, World Women's Day or Women's Day is celebrated in many countries. But, mere celebrating one day or garlanding the statues of great personalities of the world do not aware the people about the social or moral duties. It will be fruitful only when then people start respecting the women by heart, and give them regards they deserve. Only then the world of fantasy will become the real world, where women will be able to take breathe in a free air and feel safe and equal to men. Education certainly plays a great role in this situation. It will surly make the women empowered. They will be able to take the

decision of their lives themselves. Then they will be able to establish their identity and history be created.

Conclusion: Bapsi Sidhwa and Amitav Ghosh both explored the situations and circumstances during violence. They presented the reason of violence, happenings and their results. All the sub themes along with communal violence like cross culture, subjugation of women, changing psychology of people during partition and sexual assault are perfectly portrayed. Sidhwa is not adhered to a particular religion and her approach is not biased. She portrays the existed stereotype conviction over widows' remarriage. She also shows that a particular class did not want to make the public aware about the legal rights for women. They do so for their personal benefits. Amitav Ghosh describes the partition of nation in his great work, "The Shadow Lines" and social evils prevailed in society in his work, "Sea of Poppies". In the novel, "Sea of Poppies", he presents the social fear in form of social traditions. Male dominance is shown in fully flourished form in the works of both the writers. It is the weakness of women who are bearing all the atrocities and burden of age old rigid convictions. Such problems may be disappeared from this world only when people start taking humans as humans' not as different gender and of different religion, caste and creed. It may be said undoubtedly that Bapsi Sidhwa and Amitav Ghosh both the writers displayed the realistic scenario of the nation in a perfect way.

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