

Unveiling Women Power: A Feminist Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*

Ume Kulsoom Rind
Dr. Shumaila Memon
Fozia Chandio

Abstract

This paper analyses oppression and subjugation of women in patriarchal society in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel Ice Candy Man based on Simon de Beauvoir's (1988) feminist theoretical perspective. The novel is analyzed on the following grounds. Firstly, in a patriarchal society woman is considered as an object and her oppression is veiled in the name of domesticity and marriage. Secondly, patriarchal society has made dual standards for man and woman to oppress woman. Thirdly, silence on the part of woman invites more oppression on her and encourages her exploitation. Lastly, woman's realization is essentially required to resist her operation. Following these grounds, the research discusses Sidhwa's endeavour to unveil men's hegemony and the struggle on the part of women to come out of their submissive position. The technique of close reading is used to analyze and interpret the text in qualitative approach. Through close reading of the text, the study finds out that Sidhwa empowers women to come out of their domestic lives to bring change not only in their own but also in other women's lives. She defends women's cause, by upholding the view that until woman herself does not raise voice against oppression, she will be suppressed throughout the life.

Keywords: Women, power, feminism, Ice Candy Man, Bapsi Sidhwa.

Introduction

Society is the great programmer of attitudes at every level of human life. It programs, produces and nourishes the mentality of man and woman (Beauvoir, 1988; Bourdieu, 1977). It has created a mindset about genders which defines man as dominant, powerful and the superior being, who is the owner and proprietor of woman; whereas, women as submissive, inferior, passive, weak and the property of man (Babur, 2007; Verma, 2013). These gender based social attitudes revolve around the programming of society. This consistent programming has created a superiority complex and a sense of dominance in man and put woman at the subject of multiple oppressions; ranging from domestic violence to the deprivation of her rights at social, economical and political levels (Dar, 2013; Habib, 2013; Ehsan, et.al, 2015). Simon de Beauvoir (1988) in her book *The Second Sex* asserts that society relates masculinity with superiority, whereas femininity is allied with inferiority. Women are marginalized and made to abide by the men-constructed moral and ethical codes; which they impose on women to assert their superiority. She maintains that in a patriarchal society woman is considered as an object and her oppression is veiled in the name of domesticity and marriage. The patriarchal society has made dual standards for man and woman to oppress woman. Moreover, silence on the part of woman invites more oppression on her and encourages her exploitation. She asserts that woman's realization is essentially required to resist her operation. Keeping in view Beauvoir's ideas this study analyses Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* in a feminist perspective.\

Literature Review

Feminism: A Brief History

Revolting against the patriarchal mindset and the programming of society, many writers have raised voice against it. Among a variety of movements that were started by the oppressed for their self-assertion in the history of human life in different periods one is the 'Feminism' or 'Womenism' (Walker, 1990; 1992). Feminism is a social, intellectual and political movement that recognizes the fact of women's oppression and raises voice against it. It aims to emancipate women from oppression, inequality and patriarchal social attitudes (Offen, 1988; Dar, 2013). As a result, it struggles for establishing equal political, economic and social rights for women without any gender biasness.

Some feminists and scholars like Chafetz and Dwarkin (1986), Pateman (1989) and Walker (1992) have divided the feminist movement for the rights of women as occurring in three waves. First-wave feminism lasted from 1848 to 1920s; it primarily advocated that women are human beings so they should not be treated as property. Second-wave feminism lasted from early 1960 to late 1980s focusing on total gender equality in social, political, economical and legal spheres. Lastly, third wave feminism started in 1990s and is continuing today attempts to solve the problems and issues faced by a woman in different societies and in different fields of life, not just the problems faced by white, middle-class women as the first two waves did.

Different feminists persistently have tried to explicate the origin and the causes of the women's oppression. Some of the feminist like Marx (2009), Engels (2008) and Beauvoir (1988) opine that institution of monogamy and nuclear family system where man possesses a dominant position are the root cause of the oppression and exploitation of women. They assert that women's oppression rose at a particular stage of social development and was institutionalized through a particular form of the patriarchal family. Moreover, woman's oppression is social, not biologically exerted on her.

Origin of Patriarchy

Patriarchy can be explained as male privilege, male dominate, male identified and male centered attitude. A Patriarchal society is transmitted ideological, social and political system in which men via force, pressure, or through norms, customs, law, and language, etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in that case, female is everywhere subsumed under the male (Bennett, p.55).

Tracing the history of patriarchy, Engels (2008) records that in a pronominal society there was the matriarchal civilization where women cultivated lands to produce food for the family. As breeders of the family, they had great recognition and esteem in social order. They were self-sufficient and had relations with men on their own accord. They were the controller of property and parentage or descent was traced through the female line. With the passage of time, when men learned the cultivation procedure, the dominance of power in agriculture was shifted from women to men. Thereafter women lost their harmony; as a result their power was degraded. Not only this; but their condition became worst when they were enslaved and considered a mere instrument of breeding children. Men become the controller of the properties and inheritance passed through the father not the mother. This is how the matriarchal system came to an end and patriarchal system came into existence. Engels further notes that this "overthrow of mother right was the world-historic defeat of the female sex" (Engels, 2008, p. 67). Thus, the society became Patriarchal: where men have absolute power. Institution of monogamy was formed in the result of which women became "in reality, merely the mother of his [men's] legitimate heirs, his chief housekeeper, and the

superintendent of the female slaves, whom he may make, and does make, his concubines at will” (p. 71). Thus, not having any right of their own, slowly and gradually women internalized the self-destructive values, which patriarchal ideology had constructed for her.

Beauvoir’s Feminist Theoretical Framework

Simon de Beauvoir (1988; see also Schwarzer, 1984) a feminist of second wave condemns patriarchal ideology in her book *The Second Sex*, by arguing that women are not “born inferior” rather they are programmed in such a way that they consider themselves inferior to the men, she further maintains “one is not born but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature” (Beauvoir, 1988 p. 295). Women have been denied human rights all through the history of humanity. They have always been confined to house jobs and never have been provided the opportunity to create something valuable as men can do. She explains the patriarchal attitude that in order to maintain male dominancy, the priests, legislators, philosophers, and scientists always have striven to show the subordinate position of women desirable in heaven and earth. She condemns the institution of marriage, believing that marriage is an enslavement in which “women is husband’s prey, his possession” (p. 184). It enchains her within the confinements of the home and stops her to interact with the outer world, hence hinders her intellectual growth. It makes woman economically dependent on the man and reduces the chances of her freedom.

Studies on Ice Candy Man

Ice Candy Man has been discussed and analyzed from different perspectives provoking numerous questions in the field of research paradigms concerning political, social, religious, psychological, postcolonial and feminist point of view; in fact, almost every side of human life has been discussed in the proposed novel. Researchers have discussed different perspectives with the help of various critical theories. Following is an understanding of a few studies carried on the proposed novel.

Hai (2000) in her study ‘Border work, border trouble: Postcolonial feminism and the Ayah in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*’ discusses the novel from Post Colonial Feminist perspective. Drawing upon, Bhaba, Spivak and other theorists’ she analyses women oppression with special reference to Ayah: a maid in *Ice Candy Man*. She maintains that Ayah is the representative figure of female violation that is used as a ‘beautiful object’ by the men to satisfy their carnal pleasure and sabotage for their racial rivalry (p. 390). Men are agents of violence, while women are victims, bound within the limits of domesticity.

A more recent feminist study on the novel has been done by Gida (2006) which is a comparative analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa and Namit A Gokhale. She compares the portrayal of oppression on female characters by both writers. She discusses Sidhwa’s depiction of ‘woman-as-victim’ paradigm. In her view all victim women “try to fight the rigid customs but are restricted by the patriarchal dominance. They don’t have a significant role to play. Cultural impact is observed to an extent” (p. 64) but the end of the novel is quite optimistic, which is a trait of Sidhwa which change macabre into a loving situation.

Focusing post colonial feminist perspective, Ahmed (2009) analyses that post colonial women are doubly marginalized. Ayah, the victim of partition is not one woman but a representative of thousands of Hindu, Muslim and other minority women who were raped, killed, and cut to pieces because of the aftermaths of British imperialism. He affirms courage and determination of such women who survives even after such bitter experiences of life.

A study 'More than Victim: Versions of Feminine Power in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*' by Kleist (2011) discusses the novel from feminist perspectives, examining women's familial and communal connections to affect change and bring healing. The study assesses that Sidhwa's women are not solely victims rather they have very distinct power and agency such as Lenny exhibits narrative agency, though her moments of agency happen largely prior to Partition; Ayah, similarly, enjoys influence over the male community before Partition—though her authority is primarily based on her physical appeal—which gives Sidhwa an opportunity to comment on the temporal and limited nature of sexual power and physical attraction (p. 69-70).

In the same year Waghmode (2011) in a study 'Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*: A Feminist Artifact' focuses the human experiences with the special emphasis on the dynamics of man-woman relationship in the novel. Waghmode believes that there is poetic justice in the lives of characters, the corrupt and short-sighted person is defeated and the virtuous woman is triumphant and successful. It is further maintained that Sidhwa has immaculately painted the powerful world of female characters where men and women are placed side by side. Waghmode asserts that Sidhwa has set an example that, by no means, women are inferior to men. And if we give them chance, they, with their potential, can prove themselves as able as men, and sometimes better than men (p. 03).

Dar (2013) discusses the novel from feminist perspective in his study 'Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*: A Feminist Perspective' by highlighting women's plight and exploitation in the Patriarchal society calling it a contrast to male discourse. The study exposes men establishing their masculine power and fulfilling their desires by assaulting women. While women endure the pain and humiliation enacted upon them. Eulogizing Sidhwa's efforts to empower women like Lenny, her mother and godmother, Dar argues that Sidhwa shows women essentially not only as victims but also as saviors who perform heroic duties to bring order in this disordered world.

In a more recent study Parmar (2015) analyses the novel under the title 'Feminine aspects in Bapsi Sidhwa's the *Ice-Candy-Man*' in socio-political environment of partition, by depicting the impacts of partition on women, and examining female characters. The study is an illustration of Sidhwa's cause for women, and her strong voice to support women against patriarchy during fights/partition.

Keeping in view women's plight and Sidhwa's efforts to unveil women power, the present research explores the novel from the lenses of Feminist perspective based on Beauvoir's (1988) theoretical framework following her four ideals; Firstly, in a patriarchal society woman is considered as an object and her oppression is veiled in the name of domesticity and marriage. Secondly, patriarchal society has made dual standards for man and woman to oppress woman. Thirdly, silence on the part of woman invites more oppression on her and encourages her exploitation. Lastly, woman's realization is essentially required to resist her operation.

Story Line of the Novel

The story of the novel is presented through the eyes of an eight years old Parsee girl named Lenny from Lahore, Pakistan. The protagonist; Lenny, gives a considerable and in-depth picture of women in the wake of partition. She is attached and cared by her Hindu Ayah (Shanta). Ayah is the center of attraction for men belonging to different occupations and religions. Of these, Ice Candy Man (Dilnawaz) and Masseur (Hassan) are her serious suitors. During partition, heinous and terrible violence starts. Pir Pindo; a village of Muslim majority is attacked by Sikhs and their women are dragged, raped and brutally killed. A train from Gurdaspur came to Lahore filled with mutilated bodies of Muslim men, there were no

women in the train but two sacks full of breasts. This ghastly sight created frenzy among Muslims especially Ice Candy Man, because his sister was also traveling in the same train. He wants to avenge his sisters' defilement from Ayah. Out of revenge, he smothers his love for Ayah and abducts her from Lenny's house and brings her in a brothel. She is dragged, defiled, gang raped and forced into prostitution. Though, later on, Ice Candy Man marries her but she lost her spirit and trust in her close relations. She is, then rescued with the help of Lenny's mother Mrs. Sethi and her Godmother; Rudabai. After Ayah's abduction, Mr. Sethi brings another ayah named Hamida, for Lenny's care. Hamida, is yet another victim of partition, lives in Rehabilitation Camp, because she is dishonored during partition riots, and now unacceptable for her husband. Mrs. Sethi and Godmother play pivotal role in rescuing and helping partition- victim women to send them at their home or to settle them at rehabilitation camps.

Research Methodology

The present study is qualitative, following close reading method to analyse the proposed novel. Close reading is an appropriate method to obtain textual understanding (Cuddon, 1999). In the light of this method, meaning of a text can be understood by focusing its specific tone, words, characters, symbols and point of view of the novelist. The text of the novel is analysed to identify, measure, describe, and make inferences about specified characteristics within or reflected by written text (Lenz, 2010, p. 279). This technique explores "the question of the relationship between how we represent texts, how we see them" (Rockwell, 2003, p. 209). After the close reading of text of the novel, the data of the present study is put into main and sub-headings to fit the material to be analyzed. The study uses Beauvoir's (1988) feminist theoretical framework to analyze novel.

Data Analysis

Setting in the pre and post Partition scenario, the novel presents woman's oppression and victimization through different ways. Woman is victimized at and outside home. Whenever there is any fight woman becomes its most immediate victim. The partition of the subcontinent brings a series of miseries and brutalities on woman. The woman is defiled, abducted, raped and molested, as Ayah, Hamida, women in Pir Pindo Villange, the fallen women in Rehabilitation camp and the victims of the Gurdaspur train. Sidhwa depicts an assortment of woman oppression based on customs and rites of patriarchal society.

Woman: an Object

Patriarchal society has formed such customs, traditions, rites and norms which help men in marginalizing and subduing woman as an object of their use (Beauvoir, 1988; Shree, 2002; Babur, 2007; Noor, 2013; Habib, 2013, Ehsan, et.al, 2015). It is flamboyantly narrated in the novel that woman is constrained to the domesticity; to be used as an object; even she is not considered as a human being. Mr. Sethi; Lenny's father considers his wife as an object who works for him like a machine and behaves according to his dictates. She performs the role of an honest and obedient wife who rubs his feet when he returns home, comforts him and fulfills his every need. While Mr. Sethi does not bother to talk her directly, once when he addresses Mrs. Sethi, it surprised Lenny to see for the first time that father has directly addressed and talked to her mother "instead of the walls, furniture, ceiling" (Sidhwa, 2005, p.237).

Woman is regarded as a machine of conceiving and delivering new generation irrespective of her health and choice. When Ice Candy Man (Dilnawaz) becomes 'Allah's telephone man' a woman comes with her four daughters. She looks very frail and weak in

health, she requested Ice Candy Man to ask Allah to give her a son (p. 98-99). Realizing her dismal position in patriarchy, even after four daughters she is inquisitive to produce a more child in hope of a son. In this societal order, woman has not even got a definition without reference to a man. She is an object related to man who is always defined in comparison with a man, as the one who is not rational, strong, protective and decisive like a man, is a woman.

Chastity and honour as ornaments of woman

Chastity and honour are related with woman as her ornaments and painstakingly woman has to protect them even at the cost of her life. When there is fear of attack by Sikhs in Pir Pindo village, the village men ordered their women and girls to gather at Chaudry's house and pour kerosene around and burn themselves, instead of being exploited by Sikhs (p. 208). Thus, woman's life and chastity as is an object for men; they use it the way they want. In the eyes of patriarchy, woman without her chastity is nothing. She is programmed in such a way that if she willingly or unwillingly is touched by someone, she does not have right to live in the society, that's why women in Pir Pindo village were ordered to sacrifice their lives in order to save the honour.

Woman Oppression Veiled in Domesticity and Marriage

The narrative depicts the trend of training girls for domestic life. The very young girls like Khatija and Parveen who are only two or three years older than Lenny, have heavy domestic responsibilities much older ones than their ages "they reflect the mannerisms and tone of their mothers and aunts, busy with chores, baskets of grain stuck to their tiny hips, they scuttle about importantly" (Sidhwa, 2005, p. 53). Girls are trained for these manners from the very childhood so that they may be easily molded into emblematic women desired in patriarchal society. They assume the role inherited from their elder women, to become a chaste woman. This confirms Beauvoir's (1988) view who asserts that one is not born but rather becomes a woman.

In Beauvoir's (1988) view marriage is a decorated form of oppression and slavery of woman, man oppresses and deprives woman of her individuality and makes her his subordinate. The calamities of woman take place due to marriage (Friedan, 1963). Men take the privilege to rule over woman because they are considered as their property in the name of marriage. Similar to Beauvoir and Friedan's view, Sidhwa points woman's plight in the name of marriage. She raises the issue of woman's oppression in the name of marriage by pointing men psyche as the proprietor of his wife. Men, like Mr. Sethi, Ice Candy Man and Hamida's husband treat their wives as subservient and their inferior beings. Lenny illustrates the way her father beats her mother "at night I listen caged voices of parents fighting in their bedroom. Mother crying, wheedling. Father's terse, harsh indecipherable sentences" (Sidhwa, 2005, p.222). Hamida, a victim of the partition was abducted by Shikh is unacceptable to her husband, because he "can't stand woman being touched by other men" (p. 225), while, Ayah is "emptied of life and despairing" (p. 276) because her husband; Ice Candy Man, has defiled and made her prostitute. Papoo, a very young girl, who still plays with dolls, is married at the age of nine to a middle-aged man. It confirms Beauvoir's view that marriage is an enslavement in which "women is husband's prey, his possession" (1988, p.184). It enslaves woman within the confinements of the home and makes her dependent on the man and reduces the chances of her freedom.

Representing the patriarchal thinking, confirming with Beauvoir's (1988) view, Sidhwa asserts that even educated men strive to show the subordinate position of women; a doctor Col. Brucha tells Lenny's parents that she will be able enough to marry and produce children after treatment of polio-affected foot. Thus, he advises Lenny's parents not to bother

about her. He justifies his claim by arguing that she would be able to walk well to marry. She would produce children “she’ll marry – have children – lead a care free, happy life (Sidhwa, 2005, p.15).

Moreover, in a Patriarchal society, an ideal wife is the one who internalizes the oppression of her husband, and relates her identity with that of her husband. Lenny once inquires Hamida, “why she is not going to see her family?” she replies because “her husband would not like her to go to her family” (p. 232). As she is abducted and raped, her husband neither wants to see her, nor allows seeing her children; therefore she did not dare to go to her family.

Dual Standards of the Patriarchal Society

Society has made different rules and tags for men and different for women. A woman is always expected to exercise the virtues of loyalty, chastity and virginity; she is the icon of honour. While, man free from such constraints; expects woman to be loyal. When godmother questions the loyalty of Ice Candy Man with his wife Ayah, he says, “I am a man! Only dogs are faithful! If you want faith, let her marry a dog” (Sidhwa, 2006, p.260). Nevertheless, he expects his wife to be obedient and follows the commands whatever he asks her.

A husband cannot bear his wife being touched by other men. Indeed, man is the defiler of woman and again it is he who rejects the defiled woman. Society lays the burden of both honour and dishonor on woman, without condemning the ones who violate her honour. Hamida is obnoxious for her husband because she is defiled by Sikh men. She is not allowed to meet her children; even her shadow is considered ill-omen (p.225). Consequently, she spends her life miserably in rehabilitation camp, just reminding and recalling the good days with her children.

It is not just the matter of honour, but in every walk of life there are dualities in society, different rules for men and different for women. Boys are happily sent to schools and they are expected to gain a high position after getting education. But for girls, there is no obligation of education, they don’t have to do anything with education just get marry and bear children as Lenny’s doctor suggest her parents not to bother about her education, she won’t have to do something extraordinary, what she needs is only to be good enough to get marry and produce children (p.15).

The Silence of Women

Women’s oppression and victimization begins with their silence to it. Women silently tolerate the exasperation of patriarchy and serve the callous men related to them. “Silence condones injustice, breeds subservience and fosters a malignant hypocrisy” (Durrani, 1995, p. 374). Jaidhka (2004) is also of the same view that the silence on the part of women is a hindrance in getting their true identity as human beings. In order to break the silence, Sidhwa writes to give voice to women to unveil their power. She criticizes the silence of women and proposes breaking the silence to come out of the shackles of the andocentric society. Confirming Jaidhka’s (2004) ideas, Sidhwa suggests three ways to face this situation, either women victims in the novel find an escape route, or bow to dominant powers, or else suffer. Sidhwa affirms that the root cause of women’s victimization is their silence to the oppression. Women have internalized self-destructive values of societal order. The silence of women prevails not only in domestic life but in social and matrimonial life as well. Women remain voiceless throughout their life. In early age, they are taught to remain silent in front of men, consequently, they internalize the silence as a part of their life and deem it as their fate. Such as the fallen women in the novel remain silent because they accept their dishonor as the decree of fate. They do not challenge the imposition. Hamida labels

these women as “poor fate smitten” (Sidhwa, 2005, p.213). They endure the atrocities of the patriarchy silently and patiently as a commandment. They do not resist or challenge the norm. They remain silent lest they should fall short of social standards. They seek their salvation in serving and obeying the men.

Sidhwa asserts that woman has to abort the cruelties and stand by herself. Believing in woman’s emancipation, she asserts that emancipation will not be granted to women, but they have to snatch it. And it will not be possible, until women realize their value in the society and raise voice against victimization. Women have to raise their voice against the restrictions imposed on them. Unless they do not do it themselves, they would remain subservient to patriarchy. Thus realization on the part of women is first step to unveil their power and restrain the oppression.

Realization on the part of woman

Sidhwa denies the patriarchal and traditional definition of woman through portraying unconventional female characters who do not accept the roles assigned by men. She portrays two types of women to indicate the importance of realization on the part of women; those who realize their value in the society and those who don’t. The women who recognize their value and importance in the society, they resist and stand against the settled anti-women attitudes of patriarchy and liberate themselves from the chains of womanliness. And those who do not realize remain under oppression and subjugation throughout their life. Emphasizing on women’s realization and their assertive power, Sidhwa gives a broad view of feminine roles. Her women realize their position and stand against victimization. Such women are discussed as follows.

Lenny Sethi: a feminine agent

Among the bold women in the novel who changed their lives one is the protagonist of the novel Lenny Sethi, who moves beyond traditional roles of female having critical observation and perceiving power towards women’s exploitation in patriarchal system. She deviates from traditional female roles. She is a feminine agent to perceive the victimization and observe the miseries of women and present a womanly aspect of understanding of social institution. From her childhood, she recognizes an unequal conduct of men. When, doctor suggests her father not to worry about her schooling, she instinctively, realizes that her freedom is suppressed and the doctor sealed her fate (Sidhwa, 2005, p. 15). She would never allow anybody to seal her freedom. Sidhwa presents her as a recovering woman who defies oppression and questions every unjust attitude. Kleist (2011) maintains that Lenny exhibits increasing agency by deliberately distinguishing herself from social norms. As she finds out the constructed systems which delineate her freedom, she makes a careful choice between conforming with or digressing from those systems. For example, she freely accepts her “manipulative power of limp” (Sidhwa, 2005, p. 56) and does not feel shame in her physical problem of limping.

In contrast to the patriarchal demand for women to be silent, Lenny inquires about different attitudes of men, once she was queering different things, her mother stops her from asking questions by saying “when little girls ask too many questions their tongues drop off” (p.119). Ayah also instructs her same, “stop asking too many questions, men don’t like so much talk” (p. 132). Nevertheless Lenny continues questioning and challenging the meanings and attitudes. She, by no means internalizes the traditionally imposed norms. She is assertive and never lets anybody to take charge of her life. Through Lenny, Sidhwa underlines the assertive role of women and encourages woman to recognize her position and stand against autocracy of men. Sidhwa asserts that the women who stand on their behalf can never be defeated and their resistance towards patriarchal imposed norms will lead them

towards emancipation and their “self” will be recognized. Through the inquisitive nature of Lenny, Sidhwa emphasizes woman’s awareness of how her use of discourse and realization of her potential enables her to challenge women’s oppression.

Sidhwa conveys the fact that realization on the part of women is obligatory to come out of oppression and victimization; women have to raise voice against social order and this is what she made Lenny do. Lenny challenges the dominance, centrality and exclusivity of man. In interactions with her cousin, she is not performing traditional and expected feminine behaviour of compliance and observance. Rather she proves herself self-confident and upholding unusual degree of control (Kleist, 2011). She does not capitulate and surrender to her cousin’s wishes. She candidly adopts forthright and direct expression to deny her cousin’s superiority and dislikes his authority over her. She demonstrates her will ‘pushing him back and holding him at arm’s length’ (Sidhwa, 2005, p.243). She is rendered as a bold, courageous and strong girl, who never yields, rather remains curious, lively, daring and demanding with the passage of time.

Mrs. Sethi: Recovering from Domestic Role

After Lenny, Mrs. Sethi is Sidhwa’s one of the strongest woman, who realizes her worth and comes out of domestic role to subvert the patriarchal social order. She affects the change in the lives of the victim women. Representing Sidhwa’s recovering woman, she steps out of the chains of domesticity and societal order. Initially, she was an enfeeble serving wife; who seems to be capable of only humoring her husband and rearing children, but then she comes out of her domestic role, and becomes a social activist. She undertakes the task of rescuing the Fallen Women and attempts to reinstate the women to their relatives or to find work or housing for those who due to defilement cannot go to their families. She plays sterling humanitarian and heroic role by “smuggling gasoline to her friends to cross the border safely” (Sidhwa, 2005, p. 254). In rescuing the fallen women, she has obviously moved beyond the traditional role of housewife (Kleist, 2011). Lenny notices a considerable change in her mother, she is no longer content to remain at home all the day, rather she “develops a busy air of secrecy and preoccupation...shoots off in the Morris, after father drudges off on his bicycle and returns in the afternoon and scoots out again” (Sidhwa, 2005, p.182). This conveys the comparative energy, efficiency and recovering efforts of Mrs. Sethi who represents the heroic role of a woman leading the revolution against inequality, abuse and social injustice, both for herself and other exploited groups in society (Sethi, 1999). Through Mrs. Sethi’s active role, Sidhwa asserts that besides domesticity, there should be a purpose of woman’s life for which she should utilize her abilities utmost.

Godmother: A Powerful Woman

Godmother is a very powerful and an influential woman in the novel, who has a strong sense of realization of women’s victimization. She exerts the most notable feminine influence on women. By portraying the character of godmother, Sidhwa highlights the influential and determining characteristics of a woman who traverses social boundaries and explicitly challenges the patriarchal pre-fix social norms and attitudes and plays pivotal role in rescuing and helping the victim women. The women who come out of the chains of patriarchal society and utilize their abilities, become assertive, influential and dignified like godmother, who single-handedly deal with man’s malicious desires. She helps people to reduce their woes. That’s why people bring their “joys and woes and show her their sores and swollen joints... she secures wishes, smoothes grief and prevents mistakes” (Sidhwa, 2005, p. 223). She is an activist and great helper of her friends, Lenny claims her power “she can move mountains from paths of those she befriends and erect mountain barriers where she deems it

necessary” (p. 223). She has the most notable feminine influence in the narrative. By opposing the traditional idea of passiveness of women, she proves that a woman can change the circumstances of individuals and can save them from the miseries of life.

Fate Smitten Women

To confirm the value of realization on the part of women, Sidhwa, in contrast to influential and empowered women, portrays the women who do not recognize their worth and remain silent and suffer. Among these women Ayah, Hamida, Papoo, Khadija, Parveen and the woman who has four daughters, are its prominent examples. Hamida never recovers from her victimization because she considers that her disgrace was part of her fate which she cannot change. She believes women are Poor fate smitten...There is nothing they can do. What can a sorrowing woman do but wail? She blames her fate for her sufferings ‘it is my fate that is no good... we are puppets in the hands of fate’ (Sidhwa , 2005, p. 224). Another character Papoo is married at an early age to an elderly man. She accepts this unequal marriage as the will of her father. The woman with four daughters remains under oppression of her husband because she gave birth to four daughters and does not have a son. She has internalized the anti-woman norms and never resists. By portraying these characters, Sidhwa advocates that those who do not realize their place in society and do not raise voice against the subjugation, they not only remain permanently under subjugation but they also replicate it. In order to break shackles of patriarchal dominancy and oppression, it is necessary on the part of women to recognize their “self” and raise voice against oppression which will empower them.

Findings

The analysis of the novel in Beauvoir’s feminist perspective shows that Sidhwa empowers her women to rise from their subservient position as suggested by Beauvoir (1988). The society, where women live is made up for men, by men, in which women must have to struggle hard, in order to survive they have to prove themselves strong enough. Thus, Sidhwa suggests women to refuse to internalize the patriarchal gender role assigned to them (as Beauvoir pointed) and demonstrates that women are not objects, neither born inferior, weak and submissive, but they are made so (Confirms with Beauvoir, 1988). She empowers her women, like Lenny, Mrs. Sethi and godmother to advocate the assertive and influential role of woman and asserts that unless woman herself will not raise voice, she will be suppressed and victimized throughout the life.

This paper reveals Sidhw’s endeavour to unveil the nuisances of women of the subcontinent especially at the time of partition. She candidly depicts the fact that women during the turmoil were inhumanly crushed, raped and killed under the name of being a ‘women’ who are known only with reference to their men. Thus, she emphasizes on woman’s liberation from constrains of womanliness, denying the idea that masculinity is a yardstick to define a woman.

Following the close reading of the text, the analysis of the novel shows that women’s continuous silence on men’s hegemony and their oppression replicates it (as that of Hamida). Whereas, the women who raise voice against it and those, who are capable of decision making (as Lenny, her mother and godmother); are assertive and powerful no less than men. They are not merely objects rather potential beings who assert their capabilities to reinforce women’s cause.

Emphasizing the need of realization on the part of women, Sidhwa attempts to give voice to voiceless women and breaks the silences of women to come out of the shackles of the andocentric society. She believes that the silence on the part of women is a hindrance in getting their true identity as human beings. Therefore, women have to raise their voice

against the restrictions imposed on them. Unless they do not raise voice, they would remain subservient to patriarchy. They prove that women's victimization is not because of their fate as Hamida, women in Pir Pindo village and the women in Rehabilitation camp deem it, but it's due to unequal treatment in patriarchal society. It is maintained that even if it is because of fate 'we can change our fate, if we want to' (Sidhwa, 2005, p. 232).

Conclusion

The present research examined the novel *Ice Candy Man* from feminist perspective of Beauvoir (1988), who holds that in a patriarchal society woman is regarded just an object and her oppression is veiled in different tags like, domesticity and marriage. Patriarchal society practices dual standards for man and woman to subjugate woman. This subjugation is further reinforced when woman keeps silence on it, which invites more oppression on her and encourages her exploitation. Thus, woman's realization is essentially required to resist her operation.

Based on these Beauvoir's ideals, this study analysed Sidhwa's portrayal of women's realization of their rights and their value in society. She encouraged them to raise voice against victimization and stop internalizing patriarchal norms and traditions imposed on them. She further puts forward the idea that the women who internalize patriarchal norms not recognizing their value and remain silent on their oppression and victimization, will always remain under such oppression.

From close reading of text of the novel, it can be concluded that through this novel Sidhwa attempts to unveil the issues of women of the subcontinent. She depicts the reality that women in the societal set up of the subcontinent, especially at the time of wars are oppressed and marginalized. They have no value of their own. They remain silent, at the back and are identified with reference to their male members. Thus, highlighting different grounds of women's oppression; Sidhwa shows that women are oppressed in the name of marriage and domesticity, where women are treated not more than objects.

By portraying unconventional women as the protagonist Lenny, her mother and godmother, Sidhwa denies the patriarchal definition imposed by the society on a woman. Her protagonist is an assertive woman who never lets anyone to take charge of her life and till the end fights for her rights and questions against unjust conduct. The author by portraying the recovering and the struggling women manifests the importance of struggle in the life of a woman to acquire freedom. Because freedom will never be granted easily to women, they will have to win it. Sidhwa points out the tags and labels on women, and unveils women's oppression and the double standards of the society where woman is oppressed in the name of different relations. She maintains that until woman herself does not raise voice against her oppression, she will be suppressed. The women, who do not internalize the patriarchal norms, remain independent and empowered.

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