

## Social and Physical Entrapments of Women in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Received: January 26, 2019    Accepted: February 20, 2019    Online Published: May 23, 2019

doi:10.5539/ells.v9n2p57    URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ells.v9n2p57>

### Abstract

The study highlights the social and physical entrapments of women in two novels: Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Both writers belong to two different cultures. Bapsi Sidhwa is a Punjabi, Parsi, Pakistani novelist while Arundhati Roy is an Indian Author. Regardless of their different cultures, they have discussed similar issues faced by women of their contemporary societies. This case study adopted exploratory research framework to gather data and undergo its content analysis from the text of two selected novels. The findings explicate that woman exploitation can be observed evidently among different societies irrespective of any culture, religion, caste or creed. In both novels, women are represented as shallow creatures and they are utterly victimized physically as well as emotionally. They are raped and beaten brutally by males being their unbidden masters. Sidhwa and Roy enlighten the plight of women in their novels, though slight elements of unjust maltreatment of the male characters can also be seen at many places.

**Keywords:** physical entrapment, social entrapment, women exploitation, feministic theory

### 1. Introduction

Feminist literature tells us about men's behavior towards women, the lustful desires of males and the way they treat the women as sexual objects or for the fun as Aristotle says "woman is a deformed male", woman as a sexual doll" (Ehsan et al., 2015). If we look at the time of partition, we can truly endorse Aristotle's views about women that woman is inferior to man who has no identity in patriarchal society (Ehsan et al., 2015).

Feminist analysis of the literature means analysis of the literature in order to understand the role of female in the society and allowing the reader to understand the society where she lives and comprehend the social changes around her. In this context, Ahmed (2009) stated that it is crucial for the literature to present the true picture of the society and social changes in a society. The representation of the female characters throughout the literature provides a significant contribution towards the understanding of female position in the society (Ahmed, 2009, p. 90). The primary concern of fiction writers from feminist perspective is that they use words and literary terms in order to present the true nature of female experiences. Authors of fiction use their rational, institutional, imaginative capacity; and experience to fabricate language that creates the cultural perspiration and interrogates the treatment which is received by frivolous women. Moreover, they highlight male chivalry which treats them as inferior. In most of the developing and under-developed countries, women have been suffering from high rates of rape and sexual assault from the long period of time, even today. In developing countries women are dealt as property to men (Ehsan et al., 2016). However, at times literature does not reflect the true picture of society. Writers tend to advocate suffragettes to win fame and respect of the western world. In order to win undue accolades, they deviate from facts, distort cultural norms and demolish moral and ethical standards. This becomes the true stance most specifically among Pakistani post-colonial writers.

Feminism gained voluptuous magnitude in the last century and history traces out three major waves of feminism. Generally, followers of feminism believe that patriarchy is a system of male-dominated society where men possess dominance over women and also children, both within the family and in the society. Patriarchy is the

system of society in which women are considered not as subjects but as the others: they are the objects, not the subjects. In other words, feminists criticize society as the place of women's suppression and inequality. Femininity is considered as weakness, emotionality, dependence and suppression. This definition of femininity provides a rigid frame of responsibilities not only for females but also for males (Stefanidou, 2007). On the other hand, the same patriarchy also demands masculine roles. Men have to behave like powerful, rigid, emotionless and independent creatures. In other words, the same patriarchy model compels the men to possess their masculinity.

### 1.1 *Ice-Candy Man*

*Ice-candy man* is the first ever novel written by a female Pakistani writer. It deals with the partition of India and Pakistan. Different writers described this story differently but Bapsi Sidhwa approached this story by the view point of a four-year old girl, Lenny. She is the narrator of the whole story. She also describes all the bloodshed, pain and miseries experienced by different individuals of the society at the time of partition. Basically, *Ice-Candy Man* (ICM) novel relates heart breaking story of partition of subcontinent into India and Pakistan during 1947. This story deals with trauma, pain and helplessness of people during the partition. Many research studies (Ahmad, 2009; Ehsan et al., 2016) explored various view point of people about the hurt and pain during the partition. However, the current study portrayed the females and their misfortunes in the society in the light of the novel ICM. Sidhwa belongs to a parse community, which was a small ethnic and religious group and also considered as a minority in sub-continent. Her narration of life in novel shows that she learnt horrible lessons like religious intolerance, the wrestling for the political power, leading to mob killing, mass killing, and disloyalty of friends and murder of family in her childhood. She observed from the partition of sub-continent that her parse friend escapes from violence and death. She was forcefully thrust in the adult world because of this partition and political upheaval in the sub-continent. This forces her to cope with the bitter realities of life. She learns to manipulate the situation and to grab advantage from every situation. Lenny was introduced with the world by Ayah because she takes her with her wherever she goes. Her beauty draws the attention of the men and achieving her was the target of men in the society. Lenny makes the coterie of character, while going out in the park with her Lenny reported:

The covetous glances Ayah draws educate me. Up and down, they look at her. Stub-handed twisted beggars and dusty old beggars on crutches drop their poses and stare at her with hard, alert eyes. Holy men, masked in piety, shove aside their pretenses to ogle her with lust. Hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes, pushing my pram with the unconcern of the Hindu goddess she worships (12).

Ayah was forced to be a dancing girl and prostitute by her beloved *Ice-candy man*. Her beauty, cheerfulness and proud demeanor were punctured in the imprisonment at the *Khatha* (brothel). Lenny with the help of her Godmother was able to rescue her from the imprisonment and send her to her family in Amritsar. Amritsar had become the part of the India after the partition. After her rescue, Ayah was not same as she was previous; her light-hearted and joyful approach towards life was ruined.

### 1.2 *The God of Small Things*

*The God of Small things* is the debut novel by the Indian novelist Arundhati Roy which she started writing in 1992 and finished it in 1996. It took four years to complete the story and published in the following year. It was a story of childhood experience of twins: their lives were destroyed by the applying "love Laws" which describes rules for love, how much someone should be loved. She herself called it as a "semi-autobiographical" because reader found some elements of her own life events in the story. It is the story of twins who reunite as young adult, though family tension has kept them apart for many years. This story was set in the Ayemenem which was a part of Kottayam district in Kerala, India. The story sifted back and forth from 1969 to 1993 and deals with the temporal settings when the fraternal twins Rahel and Esthappen are seven years old. When Ammu found that her father is not wealthy enough to arrange a dowry for her, she thought to escape from her ill-tempered father. She was also sick of her mother's status and her suffering in the hand of her father. She persuaded her parents to allow her to spend her summer holidays with her aunt in Calcutta. She went there to attend the marriage, and in order to avoid the bad situation at home she married there with a man who trapped her by showing his love for her. She later discovered that he was not a right man and she made a hasty decision. He was an alcoholic as well. In order to get money from his boss he tries to pimp her to his boss. He also physical abused her. Consequently, she gave birth to twins Rahel and Estha. She along with her twins left her husband and came back to her parental home where she was unwelcomed by her parents and even her brother. At the end of the story, the twins, Rahel and Estha were 31 and reunited for the first time after a turbulent childhood. They had spent grief-ridden

childhood and their guilt kept haunting them due to their mischiefs. Rahel went to America and there he worked day and night to earn money and finally got married. Moreover, the situation revealed that they never found any person who can understand them as the way they understand each other.

### 1.3 Rational of the Study

The postcolonial fiction normally overemphasizes the issues of gender inequality, racial discrimination and ethnic bigotry. This study attempts to assess the social and physical entrapments of women in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man* and Arundhati's novel *The God of Small Things*. The main issue highlighted in this study is that women are exploited socially and physically. This study also discusses the reasons of this universal problem. The interpretation of this data describes the weaknesses of women who suffer from exploitation. This research helps to know the ways of suppression of women in the contemporary society. Though much work had been carried out to explore othering and alienated state of females in Pakistani fiction, however comparative study from two different societies have not been undertaken in perspectives to reflect women plight.

### 1.4 Research Questions

- 1) What kinds of Physical Entrapments are present in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*?
- 2) What kinds of Social Entrapments are present in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*?
- 3) How women are misinterpreted and exploited in the text of the both selected novels?

## 2. Methodological Framework

Research can be defined as an activity which find outs the things which were not known, by adopting Walliman and Williman (2011). Research problem in any research study guides the researchers how to plan a research methodology and select appropriate research design for conducting the study. According to Brown (2006) methodology is the philosophical framework within which the research is conducted. It is also a foundation on which research is based. On the other hand, O' Leary (2004) describes research methodology as a Framework which is associated with the particular sets of paradigmatic assumptions that a researcher used while conducting any research study. However, Allan and Randy (2005) stated that a systematic design should be followed when conducting any research. This study adopted exploratory framework in case base research design. The two randomly selected novels of Sidhwa and Roy were taken as the accessible population. The data were gathered and analyzed qualitatively. Qualitative methods of data analysis offer a pragmatic and rigorous approach towards data analysis. The data were divided into patterns and categories by employing the technique of codification. After the careful evaluation and study of data, researchers deemed it necessary to formulate framework of analysis. Content Analysis technique has been used to analyze the data. It is a technique of conducting research in which duplicate and reliable results are obtained by using interpretation and coding of the original text. Documents, novels, dramas and oral communication are evaluated systematically. It is purely a qualitative research technique. The framework of analysis adopted for current study was developed from different models and theories of Marxist school of thought.

Table 1. Framework of analysis

Framework of Analysis	
Social entrapment	Physical entrapment
Family issues	Biological issues
Relational matters	Sexual matters
Societal concerns	Emotional Stance
Professional issues	Spiritual Concerns
Social allegiance	Physical allegiance
Social rebellion	Physical rebellion

Framework of the analysis shows that content analysis of the text was undergone at different levels. The elements of social and physical empowerment and entrapments were found in this study. The sub-categories of social entrapments i.e., family issue, relational matters, societal concerns, professional issues, social allegiance and social rebellion were traced out and discussed logically. Moreover, elements of physical entrapment were discussed by highlighting biological issues, sexual matters, emotional stances, spiritual concerns, physical allegiance and physical rebellion.

### 3. Findings

Different destructive elements of caste, religious divide and violent politics can be found in both novels. They also contain trauma suffered by children and adults, and explored uprooted lives and victims of mental and physical insecurity. Sidhwa and Roy penlight different social, physical and religious point of views about justified rights of women. Every religion of the world gave equal rights to the women about education, property and proper status in society. Moreover, according to all religions women are equal to men and both genders are equally independent. However, it is society which drives rules and status for the women. Both novels truly represent the picture of females in the male dominating society and stress upon the equal rights for women. The characters in both the novels are very unpredictable, natural and very real. Both Bapsi Sidhwa and Arundhati Roy pictured the male and female characters in their true colors. One can find the different shades of human thoughts, feelings and behavior depicted in their works. They talk about worsening of male chauvinistic culture and as a result stress upon its refinement. In *Ice-Candy Man* and *The God of Small Things* many elements of feminisms were found.

#### 3.1 Social Entrapments

Entrapment means the act of being enticing an individual into a law-breaking act with the intention of prosecute the person for it. Both of the novelist presented women as an object of oppression, subjugation, domestic violence and discrimination, social pressure and prejudices. Both novelists presented the miserable situation of women in subcontinent and also presented their sufferings at different levels. Especially Sidhwa presented the miserable scenario during the partition when women suffered a lot. The houses were broken by the mobs and they were torched not only physically but also emotionally, spiritually and sexually (Singh, 2005). The women were being beaten, raped and victimized during partition. Such maltreatment cast bad effect on their minds. The sexual victimization of females during partition shows the patriarchal exploitation of females. Moreover, females were controlled and suppressed by male members of their family which shows the male domination in the society (Sinha, 2008). Many tales about the violence during the time of partition were described by Lenny; especially when *Ice-candy man* told the story of horrified scene which he witnessed while travelling from Amritsar. He wants to take revenge for the atrocities committed against Muslim women. He says, "I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women" (ICM, p. 156). Few more lines from Ice candy man telling about the violence during the time of partition reflect the writer's bent of mind. "They are killing all Muslims. Setting fires, looting, parading the Muslim women naked through the streets—raping and mutilating them in the center of villages and in mosques" (ICM, p. 197). Ranna experiences the horrors of violence when he heard a woman crying. "Do anything you want with me, but don't torment me... For God's sake, don't torture me!" (ICM, p. 200). Ranna saw his own sister Khatija, "run stark naked into their courtyard, her long hair disheveled, her boyish body bruised, her lips cut and swollen and a bloody scab where her front teeth were missing" (ICM, p. 202). Sidhwa (1989) deliberately focused to portray the worst picture of the women plight which overhauls the gloomy picture in reader's minds.

Roy (1997) dealt with the theme of patriarchy, which is a social system in which male-dominates the society. Moreover, men possess dominance over women and also children, both within the family and in the society. He is also the chief commander of the family. Patriarchy is a system of society in which women are considered not as subjects but as the objects. In other words, Roy criticize the society as the place where women face suppression and inequality (Pathak, 2001). She has no right for getting education on the other hand male member of the society were sent abroad to get higher education as in the novel *The God of Small Things* Ammu was not allowed to get education but her brother was sent to England for getting education.

In her growing years, Ammu had watched her father weave his hideous web. He was charming and urbane with visitors ... He donated money to orphanages and leprosy clinics. He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and then made to suffer the envy of friends and relations (Roy, p. 180).

Same is the case with having property share, women were only given dowry while she was getting married and it is considered that she was given her due share. Now she does not have any share from her father's property and all the property belongs to her brother or brother. Same is the case with Ammu, her brother many times repeated that what belongs to her will belong to him; however, whatever he possesses belong to him.

#### 3.2 Physical Entrapments

Physical entrapment mostly characterized by feelings of being caught up in some sinister plan. It also includes a general attribute towards the helplessness of any individual and this helplessness is the consequence of physical entrapment. Moreover, individual have no control over destiny. Both the writers highlighted the issues related to

physical entrapment in their fiction works. Both of the novelists dealt with the themes of weakness on the behalf of women in society, emotionality instability, dependence on the male members of the family and suppression. The analysis done for current study provides a rigid frame for finding the elements of social and physical entrapment responsible for the suppression of females in the hands of patriarchy. The analysis also interpreted how male behave like powerful, rigid, emotionless and independent creature. In other words, the same patriarchy model compels the men to possess their masculinity (Prasad, 2004). Many incidences in *the God of Small Things* indicated physical entrapment including the forcefully working of Ammu in the pickle factory without getting anything in return. Moreover, other women of the society also add to their pain and miseries (Shaheed, 1991).

Baby Kochamma disliked the twins, for she considered them doomed, fatherless waifs. Worse still, they were Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry. She was keen for them to realize that they (like herself) lived on sufferance in the Ayemenem House, their maternal grandmother's house, where they really had no right to be (p. 45).

Every religion of the world gave equal rights to the female of the society. It is also found that male and females were born independent and have equal rights for getting education and having property but societies make different rules for male and females of the society. Males were given importance and females were confined in the four walls of the house. Females get less opportunities for getting education and it is very odd if female was the owner of the property. Major themes covered in the works of Bapsi Sidhwa and Arundhati Roy includes History and truth telling, anti-patriarchal rage, communal frenzy and management of relationship. The themes of their works range from showing their affection of their native lands to their concerns of communal harmony. The themes move from personal relationships to the national issues, very often crossing the boundaries of countries. The study also found conflicts in both of the stories. Political conflicts were found in work of Bapsi Sidhwa who wrote about the conflicts about the time of partition whereas the novel written by Roy presents the social and individual level.

The terror the mob generates is palpable—like an evil, paralyzing spell. The terrible procession, like a sluggish river, flows beneath us. Every short while a group of men, like a whirling eddy, stalls—and like the widening circles of a treacherous eddy dissolving in the mainstream, leaves in its centre the pulpy red flotsam of a mangled body (ICM, p. 135).

Physical entrapment mostly characterized by feelings of being caught up in some sinister plan. It also includes a general attribute towards the helplessness of any individual and this helplessness is the consequence of physical entrapment. Moreover, individual have no control over destiny. Both the writers highlighted the issues related to physical entrapment in their fiction works. The current analysis of the novels discussed following issues of physical entrapment. Biological issues include the issues related to the father and mother relation towards their Children and the biological issues also related to the issues of health and disease of individual in society. Textual and contextual analysis of both fictional works make it clear that biological issues were found in the work of both writers. Both of the novels interpret that male members of the society were given importance and preference. They get the opportunity to get education where as women never get the opportunity to get education. Male members were having the rights of property and they were the owner of the property whereas females were not given the right to have property. However, when it comes to their relationship with females, they were having authoritative towards their dealings with females. On the other hand, females were subordinate to them.

#### 4. Discussions

Both novelists presented women as an object of oppression, subjugation, domestic violence and discrimination, social pressure and prejudices. Social entrapments from these novels were found that family issues are discussed in the work of both novelists. The novel *Ice-candy man* deals with the problems and issues of Parsi family, whereas *the God of small things* deal with the issues of multi generation family living together at Ayemenem, India. Both artists dealt with family issues differently. Relational matters were also dealt by both writers in their artifact. Reader found numerous kinds of relationships in both stories. Reader found different relationship including relationship between mother and kids, relationship between husband and wife, relationship with grand-parents, parental and maternal relatives, relational matters with servant and owner and also relational matters among lovers are discussed in these novels. Societal concerns were strikingly dealt in both novels. Both of the novelists exquisitely presented the male members who marginalized the women in the four walls of the house. Moreover, they also dislike such women who have vocal and vocation for herself. They consider women that are junior to them. Each and every religion of the world gave equal rights to the female of the society. It is also found that male and females were born independent and have equal rights for getting education and having property but societies make different rules for male and females of the society. Males were given importance and

females were confined in the four walls of the house. Females get less opportunities for getting education and it is very odd if female was the owner of the property. Many elements of social rebellions were also found in the works of both novelists. Both of them presented many characters which go against the norms of society. They never accepted the norms as they were supposed to do. In *the God of small things* writer presented Ammu and Velutha as rebellious characters both of them goes against the norms of society, moreover both of them were talented and have rebellious spirit as well.

Sidhwa and Roy raise serious questions and doubts regarding mankind's culture and refinement in the course of their fictions. Their works show the real position and the experience of feminine psyche with an exclusive approach. The women characters in both novels are conscious and certain of their independence and personality who cannot be easily suppressed and concealed. Civilization of female characters shows realism and the current status of women in the world. Their skillful handlings of the female character glitter marvelously than the male characters and dealing with minute and vivid description of her characters serves as a pedestal for feminism. Both writes used many devices in order to present the customs and religious sects of the societies. Moreover, both of them discussed love affairs of the females in their stories. The marginalized treatment of women is not biological but is culture driven. Women experience discrimination and unequal treatment in terms of basic right to food, health care, education, employment, control over productive resources, decision-making and livelihood not because of their biological differences or sex, which is natural but because of their gender differences which is a social construct. Sidhwa reveals the treatment of a western, upper-class woman in the male-dominated society of the novel. She sheds light on the idea that only by embracing the idea of cultural the concept of national identity can be understand. She herself belongs to the new hybrid having a Parsi youth identity. She describes the concept of cultural hybridity. The treatment of women is equivalent in *The God of Small Things*. There are different sets of rules for male and female regarding the cultural identity. Twins in the novel are hybrids in reference to their religion, because their father is a Hindu and their mother is a Syrian Christian. The same treatment is not meted to the hybrid of cousin of twin who is the progeny of male—the head of the family. In *The God of Small Things*, Kerala is hybridized in many aspects in relation to language, religion, politics, economics, and so on reflecting the hybrid elements of Indian multiculturalism.

## 5. Conclusion

This study found the different causes of social and physical entrapments of women as presented by authors in their novels. The study shows that women are just plaything in the hands of the males of the society. Moreover, this study also found the miseries, pain and trauma faced by the females of the society in different cultures as were discussed in the study conducted by Sunil (2014). In both novels selected for the analysis of the study, women are represented to be entirely victimized. They are raped and beaten brutally by the male of the society. Sidhwa and Roy draw parallels in order to seek the attention of the readers. Moreover, both of them share the religious point of view about the rights of females. Each and every religion of the world gave equal rights to the women about education, property and proper status in society. Moreover, according to all religions, women are equal to men and both are equally independent. However, it is society which drives rules and status for the women. Both the novels truly present the picture of female in the male dominating society and explain the rights of women.

The study also interprets the problems faced by women in the society, how she was treated by the male patriarchy and the ways to overcome these problems. The study also found that both novelists are dealt with the issues in a realistic manner which was closely found in the Indian and Muslims societies. Sidhwa and Roy have viewed the image of society with great balance and their approach was very constructive towards females' dilemma. The whole background of the novel written by Sidhwa present the atmosphere of war, bloodshed, cries, tears and wrapped with the burning smoke of India. Both of the writers raised their voices against the social inequality against women. They advocate that females are human beings and not inferior to men therefore they should be treated equally like men. They can work with them and walk with them in every field of life. Therefore, they should get the equal chance of getting education and also get the opportunity to get inheritance in property. They should be considered as independent individuals. The interpretation of the text of both novels revealed that according to the writers nobody should suppress women to the four walls of the house. It is her legal right that she should possess property and get due share from her father's property and husbands as well. The findings of the study revealed that the main reason of societal issues was the maltreatment of women in and outside homes. The main issues belong with the inferior treatment of the women in society. The society considered women as subordinate to men and as a weaker sex. It is therefore necessary that women should be treated equal to men according to the law.

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