
Lenny Examines Bapsi Sidhwa's Partition Novel, Ice Candy Man, through a (Dis)abled Lens.

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Abstract

People with disabilities are one of the world's most marginalised groups. In the past, positions of estrangement have been given to people with disabilities and anomalies. One is separated from the community if he is determined to be inept. This is mostly a result of our society's lack of awareness, ignorance, and prejudice. Disability is viewed as a stigma in society. The disabled are handicapped not only by their physical limitations but also by society. The way in which impairments are portrayed in literature emphasises the injustice and discrimination that disabled people experience. Either people with disabilities are completely left out of the story or they are just viewed as a problem. The disabled characters carve out their own spaces in stories alongside the regular ones. It is critical to recognise that, like ethnicity, class, gender, and nationality, a person's disability forms part of their identity. Characters with disabilities, whose bodies reflect the physical impacts of surviving such colonial abuse, can be found in many postcolonial writings. Disability is still largely absent from postcolonial theory and critique, representing a notable exclusion in the subject, although disability studies have already started to turn towards the essential work

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of globalising its vision and techniques. To understand how disability survives as a human condition, a metaphor, and a motif in partition fiction, the section on selected fiction critically engages with how people with disabilities are portrayed in the Indian setting. By focusing on Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man, this paper analyzes it from the perspective of Lenny Baby, a disabled character in the novel. A thorough reading of Sidhwa's book that goes beyond metaphors and analogies offers a fresh look at the Partition era. The novel's use of disability metaphors is discussed critically, arguing that a general theory about all disability metaphors may be a constraining method to analyse and understand individual debilitating disorders that have meanings in their unique situations.

Keywords: disability, disorder, familial impact, pain, partition

Bio Note

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Disability cannot just be interpreted as a social illness-inferring metaphor. Researchers studying literary representations of disabilities have begun to analyse these portrayals from the perspective of the disability rights movement and from the perspective of historicizing disability. By addressing the absence of handicapped persons and the experience of disability in discourses, critical readings, and public places, these studies

aim to make amends. As a continuation of this effort, the current study examines how disability is used as an analogy and metaphor in partition fiction and provides a critical interpretation of it while advancing a framework that is more focused on the materiality of the experiences with disability that are depicted in these stories. The section on selected fiction critically examines how people with disabilities are portrayed in the Indian context, with a focus on how disability continues to be a human condition, a metaphor, and a topic in partition fiction.

Disability studies are developing as a discipline that critically participates in academic research and scholarship to provide a new viewpoint on analysing cultural materials in the context of Indian literature. A fresh approach to studying the partition and examining disability as a social and cultural reality of that age can be used by disability studies, an emerging interpretive framework within literary and cultural studies.

By focusing on Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*, this section analyses partition literature from a disability perspective. A deeper understanding of the history of partition can be gained by reading Sidhwa's book closely and going beyond the level of metaphors and analogies. The novel's use of metaphors for disabilities is discussed critically, arguing that a general theory about all metaphors for disabilities may be a constraining method to analyse and comprehend particular debilitating circumstances that have meanings in their unique contexts. Through this type of partitioned literary reading, utilising the framework of disability, it is possible to grasp contextual experiences of disabilities that have only come to be understood figuratively or symbolically. It also provides a chance to learn about the partition era from the perspective of its disabled participants, who would otherwise go unnoticed. Disability is frequently employed in opportunistic metaphors that emphasise the negative aspects of the physical reality of the

debilitating disease being used as a metaphor. In addition to examining the metaphorical implications of polio and amputation metaphors, the current analysis tries to closely analyse the lived actuality of these incapacitating traumas. Polio is used as a metaphor in *Ice-Candy Man* to represent the social paralysis that the South Asian region was experiencing at the time of partition, but the novel also serves as a personal account of the protagonist, Lenny, who has the crippling condition.

In this novel, Sidhwa describes her transition from a concrete, first-person account of having polio to a metaphor for a form of subcontinental polio. In particular, the usage of polio and amputation in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel's metaphors for specific infirmities is examined in this section. From a theoretical standpoint in disability studies, the present analysis investigates the connections between disability metaphors and partition literature, emphasizing the material features of these metaphors in greater detail. In *Ice Candy Man*, the protagonist, Lenny, has polio. Symbolically, Lenny's leg and her reliance on Ayah represent Pakistan's subordinate and dependent political position with respect to colonial Indian power. Minimal research analyses the text from a disability point-of-view, despite the fact that the novel has been read from numerous viewpoints, including post-colonial, diasporic, feminist, and historiographic. In this work, the novel is analysed as a polio story in order to recover the concrete qualities of life with polio that are lost when we read polio solely as a metaphor for the afflicted limb that Pakistan has come to represent.

Lenny's memories of her traumatic history, her polio experience before the partition, her operation, and her recovery help us understand the actual presence of polio in the narrative. Even though Lenny's narration does not describe the exact moment she became ill with the poliovirus, it is obvious that she did so when she was a little child. "My world is compressed," the

opening line of the story claims. In a way, her condensed environment serves as a metaphor for how a five-year-old's life is impacted by space limitations as a result of her disease. Her only options for travel within the city of Lahore are Warris Road, Queens Road, Jail Road, and the direction of her Godmother's house. Her visits to Godmother's house are a "refuge from the confusing unreality of home on Warris Road." Additionally, she feels "squeezed" by her leather straps, steel callipers, and rolling stroller, which are all supportive aids. She can wander about gardens, restaurants, zoos, family gatherings, and streets with the help of Ayah, her primary carer, which helps her decompress. Lenny senses the world because Ayah makes it easier for her to access it; as a result, Ayah and Lenny cannot be separated.

Polio is a viral disease that typically spreads from person to person through the fecal-oral route and affects young children, as is generally known. It can also spread through contaminated food and water. The infection starts in the intestines and spreads there, where it can then enter the neurological system and paralyse a person. Polio cannot be cured, but it can be avoided by getting vaccinated. According to Lenny's account of her illness, her mother and Ayah would stretch and massage her legs with oil to build up the muscles. Lenny recalls her interactions with Doctor Col. Barucha and her parents in the early chapters of the novel. The hospital is described by her as being part of "uncharted wastes of space." She is alarmed by the sounds of the chisel and hammer. She groans as a result of being forced to act by the sight of blood. A scenario from a horror movie comes to mind as Lenny describes the hospital and its procedures. Because she has transformed into a "despicable and eerie" creature, she feels like everyone is isolating her. She experiences a condition that is similar to being disembodied, and the forced medical treatment feels like a "terrible punishment" in addition to that. Her disembodiment and "where am I" state prevent her from having a

true experience of the surgery. Because of the anaesthesia, she is unable to observe what actually happened at the hospital. "It must have ended," she feels. She has been removed from the actual surgical procedure, and the fresh plaster cast covering her legs gives her the impression that she must have been sobbing for a very long time. Her surgically repaired leg's discomfort makes her aware of what true pain feels like.

Even if a person's impairment is located in their body, its effects on families can be felt in close-knit environments. Lenny's mother feels bad, and her dad hides his disappointment by keeping quiet. In an effort to help her forget the pain, they both have an impact on and are an impact of her impairment. In an effort to soothe her down and distract her from the agony, they play games and tell stories. She hears the parable of the tiny mouse with the seven tails, who eventually loses them all and is taunted by other children. The father goes above and beyond in his attempt to embody the tragic mouse. After getting sidetracked by the narrative, she discovers that mice that lose their tails are unable to grow new tails. The story progresses from a personal account of the anguish felt during the surgery to a story of how it affected Lenny. She gets used to having a cast on her arm and living pain-free. In a stroller, she moves about. Lenny eventually understands that her suffering is the focus of her entire neighbourhood. Her post-surgery recuperation is something she believes the entire Parsee community is involved in. When others focus more on her legs, she becomes aware of them. She discovers that having polio is dreadful through their responses. She learns about her uniqueness from others and the intrigue of the public by how she is regarded. It's as if she can watch how other people react to her impairment since she is the one who is disabled. She strangely subverts the gaze and becomes the observer.

With all of this attention, she worries that the operation might have actually

fixed her foot and that she might lose her distinctive identity as a child who has had polio. She worries that the procedure may have totally changed the appearance of her legs, making her look like any other little child. "Will I have to behave like other children, slogging for my fair share of love and other handouts?" She worries. Lenny examines her "pathetically thin, wrinkly" leg as the cast is taken off. She could tell that while her limb appeared functional, it was nevertheless gratifyingly weird and far from ordinary. She becomes "surprisingly pleased." Clare Barker says, "Lenny cultivates her limp as her marker of privilege" because she views it as desirable.

To get back to the polio impacts on her family, Lenny notices that her father and mother don't speak to each other very much. It seems as though her father's silence is a reaction to her mother's ongoing guilt for giving her daughter polio. Mother tries to win over the father by describing Lenny's routine behaviour, like, "Jana, you know what Lenny said. Poor Daddy works so hard for us. When he grows up, 'p, I will work in the office, and he can read his newspaper all day! When his mother shares Lenny's anecdotes, he simply smiles. Lenny is aware that her mother's remorse for giving her polio makes her father uncomfortable. In this way, Sidhwa's story depicts the typical issue of moms feeling guilty for giving their kids polio. Lenny's mother laments, 'I don't know where I went wrong.' It is my fault.' I neglected her and left her in Ayah's care. None of the other children who went to the same park contracted polio."

We cannot disregard the gendered aspect of Lenny's condition given her personal experience with polio in the end when she says, 'no one will marry me. I limp'. We as readers are immediately made aware of the consequences of that phrase as it is expressed by a young crippled lady as she expresses her pent-up emotions about everything that is happening around them in

this lament. Anita Ghai notes, "In a culture where being a girl is considered a curse, being a disabled daughter is a fate worse than death." According to her, "disabled women are marginalized much more than disabled men." She notes that the reality of a crippled daughter in India is marked by the ongoing process of blending disability and gender. A daughter with a disability getting married, especially when it's an arranged marriage, puts her in a challenging situation. Ghai goes on to analyse a crippled woman's situation in light of the social roles that are expected of women. Lenny can imagine her sexual self, which is interesting, but she finds it harder to imagine herself as a married woman. The fear of marrying a disabled person was partly based on the notion that all disabilities were inherited and would be genetically passed on to offspring. "It was a worry that threatened procreation more than it was a fear that threatened relationships."

The polio metaphor is used in the novel as a kind of prop to discuss the effects of the division, which include community paralysis, amputation through political surgery, agony on both a group and individual level, and development through a new national body. In some ways, the polio parallel appears to be an effective literary device, but it does heighten the terrible connotations of having polio. We must, however, be more careful in how we interpret the use of polio as a prop, given that the novel was written by someone who lived with the disease. One example is how Ice-Candy-Man uses his own experience with polio to offer a different viewpoint. We can classify this novel as a disability narrative once we realise that viewpoint—the description of persons based on their leg motions, understanding, and learning from secret sexual acts—has been hidden.

The experiences of disabled people are also contextualized. It may be because of what it means to have polio as an upper-middle class condition in the pre-partition subcontinent if the novel employs polio as a narrative

device and, in some ways, emphasises the challenges inherent in the lived experience of polio. Lenny has an indissoluble bond with Pakistani society because of the timing of her 8th birthday and the establishment of the new Pakistan. On the same day that Pakistan was created, it was also her birthday. But what matters in Sidhwa's writing is that we first gain an understanding of what it means to be born and raised in a prosperous middle-class home as a polio-affected child. Her parents' conflicted reactions serve as a good lesson in how people generally feel about Pakistan's birth. There was a strong desire to make Pakistan's birth "normal," like the delivery of a polio child to a family with strong socioeconomic foundations. All attempts would be made to make the kid as comfortable as if it were a child without a disability, and the utmost care would be taken to prevent the new-born from feeling undesired.

Overall, Sidhwa's book serves as a fantastic example of how we cannot view disability as a category that is unrelated to class, caste, gender, and national dynamics. The literary uses of disability make meaning in such context-sensitive ways, always in connection to what is being portrayed, by whom, and under what circumstances. This also applies to the metaphorical, analogical, or prop-like presence of disability in a story. Similar to this, partition fiction frequently uses the metaphor of amputation to allude to partition. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, terms like "dismembered," "mutilated," "severed," "butchered," "cracked," "scarred," and "disfigured" are repeated. However, the narrative benefits from a form of fragmented telling, and in this sense, the metaphor of breaking or fragmentation is reinforced by the employment of a fragmented kind of story-telling method. Lenny's story is one in which she recounts her memories of the partition as they come to her, rather than in a linear fashion. He uses literature to convince the reader that there is only one way to tell the partition story. No single narrative exists. Or, even if there is just one story,

it can only be remembered in fragments. Importantly, her child perceives the word "breaking," which is always used metaphorically in the context of a barrier, as a concrete act. Lenny describes having nightmares where she fears breaking or being amputated on one occasion:

I recall another childhood nightmare from the past. Children lie in a warehouse. Mother and ayah move about solicitously. The atmosphere is business like and relaxed. Godmother sits by my bed smiling indulgently as men in uniforms quietly slice off a child's arm here, a leg there. She strokes my head as they dismember me. 'I feel no pain. Only an abysmal sense of loss- and a chilling horror that on one is concerned by what's happening

The illustration of cutting off the child's arms and legs in a "business-like" yet "related" setting suggests that there is a severe aversion to surgical amputation. The nightmares depict the brutal separation of Pakistan from India and Lenny's personal experience of being operated on. As she was being dismembered, her most beloved godmother gave her a passive head strike. Two of her carers, Mother and Ayah, are around her. She doesn't realize that she has actually experienced the elements of surgery that include cutting; therefore, they remain in her consciousness as visions. The discomfort she feels both before and after the surgery, while the cast is being broken apart, reflects this perception of the national body. Her suffering enables her to endure the traumatic accounts of Shanta and Hamida's kidnapping incidents.

She uses her polio experience as a window to the outside world rather than just a tool to win others' affection or understand their suffering. By observing how legs move, she discovers the universe. In Sidhwa's account, many people find Ayah's walking to be sexually alluring, and Lenny picks up on this through these incidents. Ayah has a "rolling, bouncy walk that

agitates the globules of her buttocks under her cheap, colourful aris." Lenny's infirmity, which requires her to use a stroller and callipers, is contrasted with Ayah's always lovely walking. The story highlights how a person's walking gait affects their appearance and reveals popular definitions and standards of physical appeal. Lenny becomes fixated on examining everyone's legs while she is in such a difficult setting and focuses her attention back on them.

For example, she becomes fixated on seeing her playmates Papoo and Ranna's legs and walking. Ranna imitates Lenny's limp when she visits her village, where they romp and play in the fields. "Ranna, fascinated, copies my limp. 'I know, then, that like Papoo, he really cares for me. "Let him limp without comment". She believes that by emulating her limp, Papoo and Ranna learn something about limping and how to navigate the world. Lenny observes the legs of others, notably the ones of Ayah's suitors, to understand sexuality. Lenny's remark that "Ice-candy Man's and Masseur's toes are always in need of caressing ayah" prompts her to take a close, watchful glance at the toes of everyone she encounters. Through Ayah's suitors in the garden, she has been observing and learning about all of these lustful sexual actions, which she has been keeping a secret from everyone and her family. She was aware of the repercussions of Ayah's actions if her relatives found out.

She takes advantage of Ayah's suitors since she is a dependent, crippled girl. She receives a massage from a masseur. The different ways of coping with a physical disability in challenging circumstances of partition are depicted in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel. She throws into sharp relief discussions of the binary constructs of capacity and disability in relation to the biological body and the nation-state. 'It prompts us to reevaluate the point at which bodies became "us" and "them," as well as how they evolved into

Indian bodies and Pakistani bodies. The way partition histories were produced, as if they related to narratives of a national body that was fundamentally complete and not necessarily riven by divides, is challenged by Ice-Candy-pervasive Man's focus on disabled embodiment, particularly pain and resistance articulated through the body.

The research paper has examined the role legs play in Lenny's life, how she perceives others, and how she comes to comprehend sexuality while viewing the novel as a polio narrative. Lenny appears to be overtly self-conscious about the fact that her limp makes her unattractive to others. She frequently fixes her gaze on her legs, and she appears to be learning how to walk by watching how others imitate her limp. This article's key finding is that the study of partition literature might benefit from taking a disability studies approach. Post-colonial studies, women's studies, and trauma studies have all been used to study partition literature. By utilising the disability trope as a metaphor and a storytelling device, this paper aims to close a knowledge gap by illuminating partition literature.

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