



08

GENDER SENSITIZATION IN FILM AND LITERATURE: AN OVERVIEW

Dr. Nagnath Totawad

*Associate Prof., Dept. of English,
Vivekanand College, Samarthnagar,
Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, MS, India*

Abstract:

Bapsi Sidhwa and Deepa Mehta are the dominant voices of women. They have tried well to focus on the women identity and their exploitation in the male dominated society in general and during Partition in particular. The women writers have adopted the fictional foregrounding of the marginal. It is writing about women's humiliation, dignity and exploitation. The novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and the films of Deepa Mehta highly represent women status and their identity. Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man scripted by Deepa Mehta into the film Earth: 1947. The narrative also celebrates the strength, spirit and sexuality of the women. The feminine voices on partition share the common experience. Thus, the partition as violated many women like Ayah, Hamida and so on.

Keywords: *Gender, Subordination, Marginal, Partition, Victim, Patriarchy, Tradition, etc.*

Gender inequality is a serious issue and women face it at various levels in day to day life. Women writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Deepa Mahta and many have exposed the women world to give justice to women and get equality at all spheres of life. The women's movement known as Feminism is commonly used to refer to all those who seek to end women's subordination. The women writers like Bapsi Sidhwa and Film Directors like Deepa Mehta have developed a new literary weapon known as 'Feminism' to counter the male domination and subsequently nullify the male exploitative attitudes. Feminism is a social force which works to change gender relations and the positions of women. It is also known as rapidly developing system of ideas into its own right. Feminism is a wide idea emerged as a thought system, approach to life and a step towards sanity in human relationship. According to them biology alone cannot account for the differences in the life and achievement of men and women. It is also a system of idea strongly opposes women's subordination to man in the family and society.

The novel Ice-Cany-Man and the film Earth: 1947 attempt to bring to the centre-stage the female protagonists. These protagonists, while on the one hand come alive on account of their realistic presentation, on the other, they serve as the means of consciousness-raising among the female segment of society. Ayah, the central character in Ice-Candy-Man and the film is a victim of inter-religious partition upheaval. Being, a Hindu, Ayah was kidnapped by the Muslim Ice-candy-man and after her marriage he has given her a new identity as Mumtaz. Thus Ayah's experience shows the injustice, oppression, suppression of women by many



adventures and struggles. Ayah, the women victim finally forced to marry Ice Candy Man and became Muslim. Ayah, later, became the member of 'Hira Mandi', dancing and entertaining the people.

Ice Candy Man has taken the communal hatred through the innocent Ayah. Lenny, the narrator of the novel and the movie, the innocent girl does not know what is mean by 'Kotha' or 'Hira Mandi'. She does not know why the very close men like Ice Candy Man hurt Ayah. Ayah, Lenny's most closed and attached is much suffered during Partition. It is Ayah's shame that the other community have imposed is really a heart-breaking-experience. Ayah completely goes away from her life which is no life for her. She says Godmother about her desire of no living, she was totally destructed. The woman like Ayah humiliated and experienced a death like experience, as she retorts, "I am past that...I am not alive!". Ayah, according to Nilufer Bharucha is a symbol of the Indian earth. Ayah represents the innocent, natural sexuality of women who became the victim of male desire. The male desire is bitterly exposed by the novelist. Ayah is according to Sidhwa a reflection of the society.

Ayah has represented India in a way of partition. The people some were strangers but many like Sharbat Khan, the butcher, Ice Candy Man, Imam Din, Cousin's cook, friend and admirers. These people who desires her so much and each one of them, finding the opportunity seduced her. The novel Ice-Candy-Man is also called a novel of education, the education of consciousness to Lenny, Ayah and Godmother. It is a consciousness against the backdrop of Partition. It is a tale of arrival, a true buildings roman. The bildungsroman has taught Lenny much. Lenny learns the world from women point of view and the male desire. The male desire brutally violated Ayah that if one heard never believes. The only her men, known men, admiring and close men humiliated her. Lenny shocked by the new consciousness of male nature is for her the animal nature. Lenny's experience which taught her the victimization of Ayah.

The women characters in the novel draws the attention on gender identity. The fate of women in the novel is the pre-fixed. The women expose the male world and the patriarchal bias. The social perceptions and the fact ensures for women victimization. The women in patriarchal world are only a sex object. Women, whom everybody treats and looks like an object of sex. Lenny, the child protagonist recognized the social pattern and the multifaceted partition trauma. The women have faced the extreme violence and multiple identities. Women who suffered as human beings, the object in the society and secondly burdened under the bond and imposition of patriarchal society.

Ayah is a flame of sensuousness and female vitality around whom male moths for sexual warmth. She acts in the novel like the queen bee that controls the actions and emotions of her male admirers. Ayah is fully aware and confident of herself as an individual, who cannot be taken advantage of Ayah, who was very loyal to Lenny's family and extremely protective. She cares Lenny like her mother, and also very much emotionally attached to her. Ayah suffered much during partition and abducted by her close Ice-candy-man. She was abducted and raped and her name also changed. She was changed and experienced as from Hindu to Muslim. In partition she was in the words of Godmother, "Used like a sewer, by drunks, Peddlers, Sahibs and Cut throats." As soon as opportunity gets she was saved. For some days she was kept in a camp of 'Fallen Women'. The innocent like Lenny and Ayah had



heard the word 'fallen women' for first time. And finally Ayah receives the 'Recovered women's Camp' and went to Amritsar.

The novelist Bapsi Sidhwa and the Film Director Deepa Mehta are equally concerned about women's violation. Besides Ayah, the novelist focuses on Hamida. Hamida, being a woman, marginal and Muslim experienced a lot in partition. The physical violence is the only way of communication to each other in partition. The women like Ayah, Hamida and so many suffered in the beginning as speaking women. As soon as the partition violence broke out women witnessed speech to silence. The abduction of married women took a new turn in partition.

In short, Bapsi Sidhwa and Deepa Mehta are women writers, writing for the upliftment of women. The women characters have the strength of passion, the tenderness of love and courage of one's convictions. The way Bapsi Sidhwa lives in her real life, her women character do the same in her fictional world. The women protagonists in Sidhwa's novels and Deepa Mehta's film are fairly beautiful, intelligent, modest and strong willed who creates an identity where there is no identity at all.

References

- Sidhwa, Bapsi. *The Pakistani Bride*. Penguin Books: New Delhi, 1983. Print.
- Mohsin, Jugnu. An interview with Bapsi Sidhwa. *The Friday Times*, July 20-26, 1989. Print.
- Tharoor, Shashi Review of *Cracking India*, *New York Times*, Book Review, October 06, 1991. Print.
- Deitrich, Gabrick. *Some Reflections on Women's Movement in India*. Horizon: Delhi, 1992. Print.
- Deepa Mehta. *Earth: 1947*. 1999. Print.



This is an Open Access e-Journal Published Under A Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

To Cite the Article: Totawad, Nagnath. "Gender Sensitization in Film and Literature: An Overview". *Literary Cognizance*, IV - 3 (December, 2023): 47-49. Web.