

CHAPTER – 3

BAPSI SIDHWA’S *ICE – CANDY MAN* AND ITS FILM VERSION

Very few novels have caught the agitation of the Indian subcontinent during Partition with such immediacy and tragic power as seen in Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel *Ice Candy Man*. This novel is said to possess more touching, more convincing, more horrifying, more compelling and more illuminating view of Partition, one of the most horrendous moment in the world history. The known film-maker Deepa Mehta brought the print on silver screen with talented actors like Aamir Khan and Nandita Das.

3.1 Bapsi Sidhwa

Bapsi Sidhwa, a Pakistani Parsi woman writer, now settled in the USA can be considered a respected name in the Commonwealth fiction.

Born in 1938 in Karachi (of undivided India) to a Parsi business family, Bapsi Sidhwa was educated in Lahore. She had polio in her right leg. Due to this her childhood passed more with the servants in her house than the children of the neighborhood. She shifted to Bombay with her marriage but went back to Pakistan in just five years.

At Pakistan, after her second marriage to Noshir Sidhwa, Bapsi Sidhwa took to writing to fill up the intellectual vacancy of her life. She could fill up this vacancy with four novels and one adaptation. *The Crow Eater’s* (1978), *The Bride* (1984), *Ice Candy Man* (1988) and *An American Brat* (1999) are the four novels and *Water* is the print adaptation of Deepa Mehta’s film *Water*. In the meanwhile she settled in Houston, USA with her husband.

Sidhwa was the first English writer in Pakistan to receive international acclaim. In Pakistan, when Sidhwa started writing, there was no specific tradition of both, women's writing practice and English language literature. She gets the credit of being considered the pioneer in both the fields. As quoted by R.K. Dhawan and Novy Kapadiya, before she became a writer, she held writers in awe. As she told David Montenegro, she "never thought of the writer in human terms but almost as some disembodied power that automatically produced books." (Dhawan and Kapadiya 1996: 15) Only after she accidentally met an Afghan woman on a plane, who introduced herself as a writer, Sidhwa realized that writers were very much creatures of flesh and blood. This Afghan woman inspired her to write. Sidhwa wrote a short piece which was later published.

A turning point in Sidhwa's life came when she was invited in Northern Pakistan. Here she heard of a young Punjabi girl taken across river Indus to be married to a Kohistan tribal. The girl, due to certain reason, ran away from there. Her husband with other tribal of his area searched her out and murdered her. Back at Lahore, Sidhwa was continuously haunted by the murder of the bride, the innocent girl. She wanted to make the world aware of this girl's story. She thought of writing a short story but the nature of her experience was so intense and compelling that it shifted to a bigger form of narrative and turned out to be her first novel. Commenting on this shift of narration, Bapsi Sidhwa writes:

"The girl's story haunted me; it reflected the helpless condition of many women not only in Pakistan but in the Indian sub-continent. Telling it became an obsession. I thought I'd write a short story; after all it had barely taken

30 minutes to narrate. Before long I realized I was writing a novel.” (Dhawan and Kapadiya, 1996: 28)

Bapsi Sidhwa thus entered the field of writing with her first novel on the helpless condition of women of Indian Sub-continent titled *The Bride* or *The Pakistani Bride*, as titled in India. It focuses on theme of marriage between two totally different cultures turned difficult and treatment of women in Pakistan.

Thereafter, Sidhwa wrote *The Crow Eaters* with full focus on the various aspects of her community. No doubt, the Parsi writers have mostly been community specific. It is an engrossing story of a resourceful and accommodating community tucked away in the forgotten crevices of history. Sidhwa, in her article ‘Why Do I Write?’ writes, “...in *The Crow Eaters*, a novel about my community, the Parsis, I wanted to tell the story of a resourceful and accommodating community tucked away in the forgotten crevices of history.” (Dhawan and Kapadiya, 1996: 33) However, some members of her community misunderstood her for the depiction of the Parsi milieu in this novel and felt offended. She had never intended to do so.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s third-novel, *Ice-Candy Man* focuses on the theme of Partition. Set in Lahore, the events and happenings of the year 1947 are narrated by Lenny, an eight years old Parsi girl child. Although the child protagonist is from the Parsi community, concerns of the community, unlike *The Crow Eaters* is not at the centre. The core of the work holds within trauma and pangs of Partition of the sub-continent. This novel can be considered the best example of three aspects: first, the pattern of communal amity among the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs; second, the Parsi perspective during Partition period and third, the exploitation of women by the male tormentors trying to show their strength over weaker sex.

Sidhwa's fourth novel *An American Brat* is one more aspect of the Parsi community, the experience of migration. It is a collection of the adventures of a young Parsi girl Feroza at America. Feroza, a narrow-minded Parsi girl is sent to America by her parents with an aim to change her mind set. This changed mindset is later not acceptable to her parents. The novel can be coined as one more family saga, this time discussing the Parsi immigrants' experiences and conflict between the world left behind and the sparkling one he or she has entered. Dealing with Feroza's marriage as a problem in particular it also focuses on the marriage problems of Parsi girls in general.

Sidhwa's works has been appreciated world-wide with awards from Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund, Frankfurt Book Fair's literature Prize of 1991 and New York Times as Notable Book of 1991. Her works have also been translated into languages like French and German.

Sidhwa, who once looked at the writers with awe, today strongly believes that for her writing has become

“...a natural condition of existence, and very often an act of joy...it can be painful, slow, and difficult at times, but it is always a labour of love.” (Dhawan and Kapadiya, 1996: 34)

3.2 *Ice – Candy Man*

Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India / Ice – Candy Man* is ranked as one of the most authentic and noteworthy novel on the partition of Indian subcontinent as per the critics and literates.

The novel begins with a quotation from Iqbal's poem *Complaint to God*:

“Shall I hear the lament of the nightingale, submissively
lending my ear?

With dust in my mouth, I am abject: to God I make my
complaint,

Sometimes you favour our rivals then sometimes with us
you are free.” (Sidhwa, 1989: 01)

The poem is a complaint to God by man. It is for the God himself telling that he is not maintaining the world he created properly. This is followed by the apology:

“I am sorry to say it so boldly. You are not less fickle than
we” (01)

Lenny, the child narrator is an eight years old lame Parsi girl, living a luxurious life in Lahore with her parents, during the time of struggle for Independence resulting in Partition. Her physical disability has made her introvert, engrossed in her own world and also a keen observer. Her movements are limited between Warris Road where she lives and Jail Road, where her God Mother lives. She feels lonely and also sad as not being able to explore the world owing to her disability. She has passed through a treatment and was bedridden for days. Col. Bharucha, her surgeon permits her after a month to go outside her house for a stroll. Her Ayah, Shanta looks after her routine.

Shanta, Lenny's eighteen years old Hindu Ayah possesses a gorgeous body and a number of fascinated admirers. Lenny narrates Ayah as a chocolate brown and short woman and is “eighteen years old and round and plump” (03). Every evening

Ayah takes Lenny out in the garden, or to the zoo or other such places, so as to let her feel fresh. This is where Lenny observes and enjoys 'Ayah's' magnetism working on her admirers of whom are Masseur - the Hotel Cook, the Gardner, Sharbat Khan and many others. Even the beggars, holy men, old men and many young people are admirers of her feminine grace. But of all, the most passionate is the Ice Candy Man. He is a Muslim street vendor who comes to the readers in a variety of roles. He is at times an Ice Candy vendor, at times a bird seller, also a celestial connector to Allah. Lenny is quite impressed by his understanding regarding politics and the current situation. She finds a friend in him.

Apart from all these, Lenny has the company of her electric aunt, a widow and Adi, a cousin of her age only. Lenny frequently visits God Mother who is her guide and also her philosopher. Description of such visits, especially the detailed account of how her grandmother, her aunt and her cousin spent their time and what Lenny do there, throw light on Parsi lifestyle. Barring that and a few other events, the novel does not explore the world of Parsi family life like Sidhwa's other novels.

Comparatively peaceful lives of people at Lahore gradually get disturbed with the news of mass killings and destruction in relation to Partition. It compels everyone to undergo introspection. Parsis gather at their community hall to discuss the latest political developments. Col. Bharucha announces not to take anybody's side, instead they must abide the rules of the kind, and who ever govern it. After much discussion, all agree to follow the middle path to wait and observe. The dilemma remains unsolved.

Ailing and helpless Lenny is taken care of by both Ayah and her mother. She keeps on introducing people one after the other, namely the new tenant Shankar and

his wife Geeta whose affection towards each other are watched by children curiously. And Imam Din who equally entertains Lenny. He is a sixty two years old cook in her house. He takes Lenny and Ayah to his native Pir Pindo where, unlike Lahore, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims live peacefully. This village, like Mano Majra of *Train to Pakistan*, is yet untouched by the communal riots. Lenny meets Imam Din's grand children Rana and Katija.

Lenny and Ayah at times visit God Mother when she goes to Mrs. Pen's house for her studies; Lenny's ideas about Gandhi are shattered when she sees him on his visit to Lahore. She fails to understand why people call him saint. Instead, he appears to have broken the mythic idea Lenny has heard of him. For her, Gandhi's talk on anema clean stomach seem weird.

“I consider all this talk about anemas and clogged intestines in shocking taste...Turning up my nose and looking down severely at this improbable toss-up between a clown and a demon I am puzzled why he's so famous...” (87)

Slowly and gradually Lenny starts witnessing change in the shades in her surrounding canvas. The news of Partition gets confirmed by April of 1947. It is followed by series of bad news all around. Imam Din's relatives arrive in Lahore from Pir Pindo. They are actually shifted as Refugees by the Military trucks. Rana, whom Lenny cherished a lot, is not seen. This is followed by murder of Mr. Roger, the Inspector General of Police who is neither Hindu, nor Muslim. Frightened and disturbed by the developments all around, people start moving to safer places. Very soon riots start disturbing peace and catch people unaware of it. All Shethna family,

Lenny, Ayah, Masseur, Iman Din, Hari and Ice Candy Man are also disturbed and confused by the happenings.

With the division of districts announced, communal riots spread all over. In Lahore, people begin to shift to safer places. Muslims and Sikhs become enemies, thirsty of each other's blood. Muslim mobs of Lahore attack Hindu houses. Though Parsi people in Pakistan are safe, they are still worried about their survival. Amidst the riots, a Muslim mob reaches Lenny's house. They enquire about all the Hindu servants, especially the Ayah, Shanta. Iman Din lies about her fake departure. At this crucial moment, Ice Candy man takes disadvantage of Lenny's regards for him and plays with her innocence. Lenny, befooled by Ice Candy Man, discloses about Ayah's hiding. Ayah is dragged out of her hiding place. Lenny, shocked, repents her trust and foolish innocence.

Ayah is taken to Hira Mandi, and is managed as prostitute there by Ice Candy Man, who now has become a pimp reciting Urdu poetry. Ice Candy Man's betrayal has shocked Lenny to a great extent. She feels sad and dejected. Lenny remembers having seen a changed Ice Candy man after he had seen the mutilated bodies of Muslims in the Ghost train. Something, of which the child Lenny was unaware, had changed a friend to foe. Lenny feels guilty:

“For three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror
staring at my tongue. I hold the vile, truth – inflected thing
between my fingers and try to wrench it out.... (It) mocks
me with its sharp rapier tip darting as poisonous a
snake.”(184)

Later, Lenny reaches Hira Mandi where Ice candy man has kept Ayah as a prostitute. He says that he has married her. God Mother scolds him for all what he had done with Ayah. He confesses shamelessly,

“I am a man! Only dogs are faithful! If you want faith, let her marry a dog.”(248)

Ayah, who is now Mumtaz, pleads to God Mother to send her back to her relatives at Amritsar. God Mother assures her rescue. Thereafter, God Mother’s contact helps Ayah to get free from Hira Mandi and Ice-candy Man. She is put at recovered Women’s camp on Warris Road. Ice-candy Man tries to meet her, but is beaten up by the guards. He now becomes a dejected, wondering lover, reciting love songs, searching for his lost love.

One day Lenny comes to know that Ayah, with other Hindu females has been shifted to Amritsar to her family. She also gets the news that Ice Candy man has also followed her across the Wagah border into India. All these experiences initiate Lenny towards maturity and also define her identity amidst the strong marginality.

Sidhwa’s novel has a simple narrative. She tries to convey the naked truth, that whenever passions run high, when emotions get a chance to get expressed, they can take charge of a person’s mind and rule it, irrespective to good or evil consequences.

According to Anita Desai, Sidhwa’s characters, including the eight year old Lenny is not allowed to become merely the embodiment of an abstract idea. She comments in *Dawn and Milkweed*,

“Sidhwa’s triumph lies in creating characters so rich in hilarious and accurate detail, so alive and active, that long

after one has closed the book, they continue to perform their extraordinary and wonderful feats before our eyes”.

(n.d., n.pag.)

Amongst the male characters, neither the reader, nor the critics can site out any ‘more important’ character compared to Ice Candy Man. He plays multiple roles in the novel, Sidhwa lets the reader get acquainted to this character through Lenny, the child narrator who sees the transition of this character through the various roles of his like the ice cream vendor, a bird seller, a cosmic connector to Allah via telephone, a rigid revengeful lover, a pimp and a frustrated lover. All his roles aim to deceitful methods people resort to, in order to survive. Especially the role of the pimp at Hira Mandi is a metaphor for those politicians who do not hesitate to reach any extent for their survival. Leaving this one character, all “other male characters, despite the fact that they initiate almost all events of the novel, remain peripheral and apathetic lacking the will to change and transcend their circumstances.” (Gaur, 2004: 53)

The novel, however, has strong female characters to balance their male counterparts. They are conscious of their desires and also assertive about their independent handling of situations. Lenny, the child narrator; Mrs. Shethi – Lenny’s mother for whom social grace is more a bondage than pleasure; God Mother, who has deep understanding of human psyche and exhibits the ideal feminist strength; Muccho and Pappo, who consider marriage as the only remedy of all the problems and are unknowingly bound by their lower financial condition and above all these Shanta, Lenny’s 18 years old Hindu Ayah occupy more than half space of the novel. Shanta is different from other females of the novel. Though too young in age, she is quite transparent regarding her desires. She is fully aware of her sexual charm. But the charming woman in her breaks down when the Ice Candy Man helps the Muslim mob

to abduct her and forces her into prostitution. Especially when she considered him to be not only her admirer, but also a passionate lover. This act can be coined as exploitation of female sexuality. From Amrita Pritam to Sadat Hasan Manto to Bhasham Sahni to Bapsi Sidhwa, there would hardly be any work based on Partition that would not reflect on the maltreatment of women in one or the other way. For instance, in Manto's Short story *Khol do*, a Muslim girl is repeatedly seduced by Muslim soldiers. The bewildered girl cannot even differentiate between the seducers and her father. In Pritam's *Pinjar*, the Hindu girl Pooro is abducted by a Muslim and is forced to marry him. This changes her identity from Pooro to Hamida. Sahni's *Tamas* has a short but blood boiling narration of a Hindu girl raped till and even after her death. Sidhwa's Ayah faces problem of abduction, rape and also loss of identity. Her name is changed from Shanta to Mumtaz. This one tragic event changes the course of her life. It murders her spirit.

Lenny the central female character, though struck by polio, is a mirror receiving reflections of very rapidly changing scenario of the period called partition in all its flux. Her presence at all the moments shows many of her strong characteristics, especially her keen observation. Her loneliness fruits into remarkable observations. For instance, her observation about Army Salvation House on Warris Road:

“I feel such sadness for the dumb creature, I imagine
lurking behind the wall” (01)

Lenny's efforts to help Ayah escape from Hira Mandi captivity shows her helpful nature towards people she likes. Unlike the Ice-candy man, she tries her best to help those in worse times.

Sidhwa shows a design of communal harmony among the three communities, namely Hindu, Muslim and Sikh in a different manner. The Hindu Ayah Shanta and her multi religious group of admirers become a symbol of unity among various religions in the novel. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi are 'unified around her'. Sidhwa takes her readers out of Lahore too to show the communal amity and how the three communities unitedly lived on both the sides of the border before Partition. Pir Pindo, the native of Imam Din the cook, is a place where Muslims participated in Sikh Festivals like Baisakhi and even visited the fairs at Der Tek Singh with their Sikh friends. Lenny observes that different communities here were dependent on each other. The Chaudhary, Muslim of Pir Pindo Says:

“The country folk can afford to fight...we can't... to us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is Hindu, or a Muslim or a Sikh?” (56).

But very soon, with the partition at its climax, this unity, talks of unity and people sharing this unity are lost. Through *Ice-candy Man* Sidhwa tries to suggest that

“...religious and cultural differences are artificially created and deliberately fostered.” (Niaz Zaman, 2004: 99)

The Muslims of Pir Pindo, the village on the Indian side of the border, evacuate their village and shift to Pakistan, hurt physically, mentally and spiritually. Rana, a small boy from Imam Din's family passes through the worst time before reaching the refugee camp. He saw babies smashed against the wall, mothers brutally raped and killed. At Pakistan, the condition of Hindus was equally bad. Of Hindu Ayah's admirers, a few Hindu change their religion and get converted to Christianity

or Islam. Ayah too is abducted and made a dancer of Hira Mandi by none else but her admirers, the Ice Candy Man and his Muslim friends.

As Sidhwa shows Partition frenzy through the eyes of a growing up girl, it reaches the readers in its most clear and naked form. Lenny sees the tragedy happening, but Rana, the grandson of Imam Din passes through the tragedy and experiences the frenzy himself. The two children cannot hide the truth, neither about Hindu, nor about Muslim or Sikh. This is where Sidhwa's novel differs from other Partition novels. Secondly, *Ice Candy Man* can be coined as 'an attempt to, give a Pakistani perspective of the Partition of India' (Graeber, 1991: 11). The writer tells of the mass killings of Muslims. She briefly describes:

“A train from Gurudaspur has just come in... Everyone in it is dead butchered. They are all Muslim... (149)

In Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* a similar train comes from Pakistan. It too carried dead bodies only. Everyone in it was also dead butchered. But they were all Hindus and Sikhs. Humanity suffered in the hands of a handful of fanatics almost equally in Pakistan as in India. Pain, suffering and trauma were almost similar on both the sides of the border.

The description of riots at Pir Pindo, the Muslim village that fell on the Indian side of the border is equally terrifying:

“Rana saw his uncle beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons, wielding bloodied swords, dragging them out, as a handful of Hindus darting about the fringes, their faces

vaguely familiar, pointed out and indentified the Mussulmans by name” (201)

Third point that differentiates Ice Candy Man from other Partition novels is Sidhwa’s good will for Jinnah. The writer sides Jinnah in very clear and innocent tone through her child narrator. Lenny Says,

“And to-day, forty years later, in films of Gandhi’s and Mountbatten’s lives, in books by British and Indian scholars, Jinnah, who for a decade was known as ‘Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity’, is caricatured and portrayed as a monster.” (160)

Lenny, with Ayah, Masseur and Ice Candy Man, sees the horror of Partition. She witnesses mobs of different religions one after the other add to the destruction and the killings. It brings grief to her, Ayah and Masseur but excites many like Ice Candy Man. When the Hindu resident area was set to fire, he cannot resist saying,

“They thought they’d drive us out of Basti! We’ve shown them!” (137).

He does not even hesitate to abduct and rape his beloved, the Ayah along with the Muslim mob. At that crucial moment, he is not an admirer or lover but a Muslim fanatic and Ayah is not a beloved but a Hindu, an enemy. He wanted to avenge the deaths, the rapes and mutilations of his people, the Muslims. The fanaticism makes him forget his friendship, his affection and his love. He cannot get the murderers of his people. But he gets Sher Sinh. He gets Masseur. He gets Ayah. He thinks he has revenged. Such descriptions reveal inhuman face of the horrendous event Partition. It

numbs sense of fairness and justice in favour of mob-psychology and an individual's frustration.

Ice Candy Man can be considered the expression of the Parsi perspective of Partition. Sidhwa vividly presents the threats and insecurities that forced Parsis side the ruling party, which so-ever may be. Col. Bharucha advises them to go for neutrality and to look before they leap. He also says,

“Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian!

We will abide by the rules of their land.” (39)

Similar to this is Faredoon's reply to a question regarding where Parsis would go once the British leaves in Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters*. He replies: “We will stay where we are... Let Hindu, Muslim, Sikhs, or whoever, rule. What does it matter? The sun will continue to rise and the sun will continue to set- in their arses...!” (Sidhwa 1980:282) From this it can be perceived that in Sidhwa's novels Parsis are shown living and sharing not just the traditions but also political loyalties of different and distinct communities.

Sidhwa writes of how the community provided humanitarian relief to the sufferers. Lenny and her God Mother help Ayah return to her people at India. It is a humane act by Parsis during the Partition days. Sidhwa tries to suggest that they, Parsis, did not remain passive spectators, but helped the needy and the troubled, without compromising their neutral role in the Partition tragedy.

According to Novy Kapadiya:

“*Ice-Candy Man* is a novel of upheaval which includes a cast of characters from all communities..., so a multiple

perspective of Partition emerges as viewed by all the affected communities” (1996:35)

This novel, full of brutal reality and naked truth gets an eight year old Parsi girl as the narrator from its writer. Actually this experiment makes it easy for Sidhwa to show all that what happened without any religious or age biases and ethical order. Lenny hides nothing. She tells of all that she observes, whether about Ayah, about Ice Candy Man, her cousin, her parents, the national leaders or the riots. She proves a transparent narrator.

Khushwant Singh appreciates this Partition novel in *The Tribune*:

“Bapsi Sidhwa has blossomed into Pakistan’s best writer of fiction in English. *Ice Candy Man* is one of the most sensitively written, comic-tragic accounts of how a little girl saw relationships between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs slowly turn sour and then erupt into a pillage and mass slaughter of innocents on either side. *Ice Candy Man* deserves to be ranked as amongst authentic and best on the partition of India.” (n.d.,n.pag.)

Thus *Ice-Candy Man* presents a fictional account of Partition from different perspectives-Parsi, communal harmony, Pakistani and feminine. Neither the readers, nor the critics can call it just a piece of fiction. It can be considered the depiction of human sufferings of Partition far more effective than many other books falling in the same category.

Any novel, whether good or bad, it is almost like a piece of wax for a filmmaker. He moulds this piece into a similar looking object using his own aesthetic sense, his personality, social obligations and the technical requirements of the new medium. This adaptation is like a twin brother to the written form. Both have lots of similarities but they have their own peculiar features too. This makes them similar yet unique. This same can be said about Deepa Mehta's *1947 Earth*, the filmic adaptation of Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*.

3.3 Deepa Mehta

The worst man made tragedy of the 20th century, Partition, wherein millions migrated from the either sides (India-Pakistan) with mutilations, abductions, rapes, destructions, sighs and tears beyond the imagination of today's generation has been brought as *1947 Earth* by the known Indo-Canadian film maker Deepa Mehta. This film is an intelligent and heart touching personal account of the partition of the Indian subcontinent.

An honest and bold director, Deepa Mehta was born to a family of film distributor and exhibitor in Amritsar, India in 1950. With a degree in Philosophy from the University of Delhi, Mehta migrated to Canada in 1973 with her marriage to Paul Satzman, a Canadian movie producer – director. She too entered the same field very soon. As a director she started with *Sam & Me* in (1991), *Fire* (1996), *Earth (1947 Earth in India)* (1998), *Bollywood / Hollywood* (2002), *The Republic of Love* (2003), *Water* (2005), *Lets Talk About i'* (2006), *Heaven on Earth* (2008) and *What's Cooking about Stella* (2008). A movie based on Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is already released in Canada.

Subject of Partition was always close to Mehta's heart. Though born three years after the tragedy, she grew up listening to stories about the holocaust, as her father's family had migrated from Lahore to Amritsar leaving behind their properties and cinema houses. According to Mehta, talking about Partition was a way of life for Punjabi families. In one of her interviews to Asseem Chhabra, Mehta states that,

“In Punjab, if you ask people what 1947 means to them, they will never say the independence of India, they say the Partition of India” (1999: n.pag)

Two-and-a half years before 1998, Mehta came across Sidhwa's *Cracking India (Ice Candy Man in India)* at a book store in Seattle. She was quite impressed by the novel written by a Pakistani female writer which dealt with the lives of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, but through the eyes of an eight years old Parsi girl.

3.4 1947 Earth

The crew has been:

Director:	Deepa Mehta
Producers:	Anne Masson, Deepa Mehta, Jamu Sugandh
Screen Play:	Deepa Mehta
Music:	A.R. Rahman,
Lyrics:	Javed Akhtar
Cinematography:	Giles Nultgens
Editors:	Barry Farrell

Actors : Aamir Khan, Maya Sethna, Nandita Das, Rahul Khanna, Kitu Gidwani, Arif Zakaria, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Raghuveer Yadav, Gulshan Grower, Pankaj Malhotra...

The film *1947 Earth* received the Best film Award at National film Festival, Rahul Khanna received the FilmFare best male debut award and above all it was India's official entry for the 72nd Academy Award for the Best Foreign Film, though not the winner.

Second of Mehta's Element Trilogy (preceeded by *Fire* and followed by *Water*), *1947 Earth* has been described by Stephen Holden as,

"...a powerful and disturbing reminder of how a civilization can suddenly crack under certain pressures".

(New York Times, 1999)

The film *1947 Earth*, like Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* is a collection of memories, of a Parsi woman. Memories of that what had changed her life, of that what she lost at the age of eight. Shabana Azami's talented voice to grown up Lenny in the beginning and then in the end, takes the viewers back to first half of 1947, Lahore (then India), several months before Partition. With Lenny as the participant narrator and her personal experiences she had at that time, the filmmaker tries to convey what the sub-continent was passing through. According to Jeanette Herman,

"...*Earth* emerges in a kind of memory work, using the mode of film melodrama to participate in an attempt to enlist an effective form of public participation in a transnational moment of remembering Partition."(109)

Mehta begins the film with the full screen earth followed by fragments of the word EARTH coming together to form the film's title. This is accompanied by the string instrument notes. The scene is followed by the eight year Lenny (Maya Sethna) and the voice over narration of elder Lenny (acted by Bapsi Sidhwa and voiced by Shabana Azami). Child Lenny is colouring the Map of India at her luxurious house at Lahore just a few months before Partition. The voice of the narrator settles the viewers within her (Lenny's) memories of 1947:

“I was eight years old, living in Lahore in March of 1947, when the British rule in India started to subside.... The subjective line of division the British could draw to carve up India in August of 1947 would scar the sub-continent forever.” (Film)

Lenny, then stands up, limps ahead, picks up a plate, holds and intentionally drops it. The plate breaks into pieces. Lenny stares at the plate. She wants answers to questions disturbing her:

“Can we break a country? What happens if the English break India where our house is? How will I get to the park then?” (Film)

Thus very soon after a few moments of narration, Lenny becomes a part of the story, shifts to the present of the past and becomes a camera to the viewers. With this first scene itself, Mehta succeeds to describe India as a previously whole, unified entity, scarred and broken by partition and people afraid of the result.

This film can be coined both bold and gentle. Mehta has filled it with comments denouncing partition and double talking local politicians. But the bold part is that, most of the comments come from the minor characters. One of the noteworthy scene is that when Lenny with Dil Nawaz (Ice Candy Man – Aamir Khan), Shanta (Ayah – Nandita Das), Hassan (Masseur – Rahul Khanna), Sher Singh, Hari and others is listening to a Radio Broadcast, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is heard saying / declaring :

“At the stroke of midnight hour of August 15, 1947, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom”.

(Film)

The multi religious group reacts with disgust and disbelief. One of the characters from the group (Hari, the gardener, enacted by Raghuvveer Yadav) comments:

“The Independence from the British will be soaked with our brother’s blood.” (Film)

This suggests what the minority and lower class experienced and felt at the moment. The upper class was involved and interested in the events. This is shown in the film through Lenny’s parents (enacted by Kitu Gidwani and Arif Zakari). But the lower class suffered the maximum. Gita Vishwanath and Salma Malik rightly points out one of the strategies employed by film-makers of such Partition movies: “....strategy employed by film-maker is to eschew violence all together and instead focus on the impact of Partition on the lives of ordinary people.” (2009: 64) Mehta’s expertise in giving importance to minor characters should not be missed here. Most of the heart touching and change bringing dialogues come from them.

Mehta has given a very simplified representation of the complex multifaceted image of partition. Of these, one is the ghost train scene. In here Dil Nawaz is seen waiting at Lahore railway station for his sister to arrive by the train from Gurudaspur (now India). But instead he finds a train full of cruelly butchered and mutilated bodies.

While Dil Nawaz waits for the train at the station crowded with waiting eyes like his, the train approaches slowly and mysteriously. First out of focus with light shining from its engine, the train appears behind him slowly into the frame. The chugging sound of train is followed by providing of feet. Dil Nawaz runs to the coach and looks inside. The horror slowly finds way out on his face. The viewers have to anticipate what he must have seen. Thereafter, gradually, the camera lens goes around the coach. Not a word is used in this scene. The viewers learn of the tragedy occurred immediately. But they learn of the tragedy occurred to Dil Nawaz later, i.e. in the scene following the train scene. His sisters had been on the same train in which everybody was killed and sacks filled with women's breasts were found.

This one scene differs from all other scenes in the movie. In the novel, Lenny and Shanta are provided with the information related to this train by Shanta's group of admirers and Dil Nawaz who has himself only heard the things. In the film Lenny, who is present throughout the memories recollected, is not present in this scene. Again, away from the source text, it is no story heard or made. Dil Nawaz sees the horror himself. And this becomes the only scene that the audience watches with not Lenny but Dil Nawaz. Lenny is kept away from the horrifying scene. The child is not made to watch the mass killing. But Dil Nawaz sees it. This can be considered a beginning of transition in Dil Nawaz's character which ends to an extremely cold blooded cruel murderer of Hassan, of Lenny's trust and innocence, of Shanta's

identity and existence and of his own love and affection. The scene plays with the physical sensations and also corresponds to emotional sensations. The showing of the ghost train wakes up memories of the historical events that have its effects today too.

A similar ghost train halts at Mano Majra in Pamela Rooks' *Train to Pakistan* too. The difference lies in who sees the ghastly scene and its reaction. In *Train to Pakistan* the bureaucrats see the horror happened. They feel helpless. The common men are not allowed even to get a glimpse of the horror except for once when a local sees the mass burial. On the contrary Deepa Mehta makes Dil Nawaz (Aamir Khan), an ice-candy vendor, a common lore the first person to get encountered by the horror. The murder of Hassan and abduction of Ayah are the beastly reactions seen in unaware, ignorant common man who is over ruled by communal frenzy and mob psychology.

In one more such a crucial segment, at night Lenny, Shanta, Hassan and Dil Nawaz are shown witness riots filled with extreme cruelty from the roof top of Dil Nawaz's place. It is the same place where before a month, these same people had gathered and enjoyed kite flying. Not only these people, but all were on their terraces enjoying the festival. The kite flying scene is accompanied by A. R. Rahman's music and Javed Akhtar's Lyrics "*rut aa gayee re ...*" This scene showed carefree life lived by these people and how much were they yet untouched by the political problems crouching their region. The bright colours of the kite can be considered a metaphor of their happy life. The brightest smile was on Dil Nawaz's face, who always tried to flirt with Shanta. But once into the clutches of communal riots, they see brutality itself happening from the same roof top. All four of them, (Hassan, Shanta, Lenny and Dil Nawaz), watch the terror acting its part. This happens after a few days of the ghost train episode. Except Dil Nawaz, the others watch the horror with shock and

sorrow. Dil Nawaz, who in the beginning behaved with tolerance towards his Hindu and Sikh friends, reacted with a different shade. When they see from the rooftop the Muslims kill a Hindu in a very cruel manner, and Muslim fireman spray petrol to fuel the already emblazed Hindu buildings, Dil Nawaz's face shows beastly joy, a feeling of revenge taken. This frightens the others. This is later on followed by Hassan's murder. The beast awakened in his heart seems to be responsible for this. He had pleaded for Shanta's love to pacify the beast in him. But her helpless look worked as fuel to the fire rose. Shanta loved Hassan and was going to marry him.

Mehta's film ends far before the source text's end. Its third last scene is the dead body of Hassan in a sack seen by Lenny and Hari, the Gardner (now Himmat Ali) and the second last scene is the abduction of Shanta. This second last scene becomes important. Amidst communal frenzy a Muslim mob approaches the Shethi residence seeking for Hindus, specifically Ayah. Surprisingly it is led by a Muslim admirer (Pawan Malhotra) of Shanta.

He asks Lenny's mother (Kittu Gidwani) to hand them over the Hindu Ayah. He calls her not 'Shanta', but 'Hindu'. All living there – Hari (converted to Islam as Himmat Ali), Iman Din, the Muslim cook (Kulbhushan Kharbanda), other servants, Lenny's mother and Lenny too deny Ayah's presence. Dil Nawaz enters the scene at this moment. He picks up Lenny, wins her trust and asks her to tell him the truth. As soon as Lenny replies innocently, he puts her down and tells the mob that Ayah is hidden inside the house. Shanta is dragged out and driven away from confused Lenny's bewildered eyes. The story ends here with camera on grown up Lenny enacted by Sidhwa. The camera lens is zoomed out showing her sitting by the statue of Queen Victoria, in Lahore long after the Partition. She concludes the film taking Shabana Azami's Voice:

“Two hundred and fifty years of the British Empire ended in 1947, but what is the result? a country divided?... Fifty years have passed since I betrayed Ayah. Some say she married Ice Candy Wallah, some say she was seen in a prostitute house at Hira Mandi, and some say that they saw her in Amritsar. But I did not see her ever again, after that day in 1947 when I lost a large part of myself”. (Film)

The loss Lenny speaks of is her trust, her innocence, her life outside the four walls of Shethi residence. Mehta’s story stops here, but Sidhwa’s novel goes ahead. In the novel Lenny, with her God Mother’s help, finds Ayah with Dil Nawaz at Hira Mandi where she is made to work as a prostitute. Ice Candy man turns a pimp then. Lenny’s mother and God Mother arrange and could manage to bring her out from there. Ayah is first sent to recovered women’s camp and later back to India to her family.

Mehta stops at abduction. Her film does not give details of Ayah’s recovery. Jeanette Herman calls Mehta’s refusal to resolve Shanta’s story with closure of an easy recovery, a powerful choice for the film.

“By leaving Shanta’s fate unresolved and her body unrecovered, the film demands an acknowledgement that the trauma of partition runs deeper. At a symbolic level, moreover, Shanta’s abduction signifies the loss of that community united across so many lines of differences, and by refusing to resolve her story; the film asks us to mourn this loss.” (2005: 140)

On the other hand, betrayal of Shanta according to Gita Vishwanath and Salma Malik is not entirely communal in nature, but an act made possible by the existing situation of those times.

“...since the dominant focus of the films is on the religious divide, such subtleties are invisibilised.” (Vishwanath Malik, 2009: 64)

Apart to all these, the film walks out of the source text walls at less important events. Mehta has avoided many characters that occupy much space and give important clues in the source text. She avoids the characters but not the clues to Independence, Partition and Parsis' point of view. A few of these characters are Col. Bharucha – Lenny's doctor, God Mother, Slave Sister, Rana, Khatija etc. In the film, Mr. and Mrs. Shethi and Lenny's innocent questions give voice to the thoughts of Col. Bharucha, their counter part in the source text. A small half clad boy at the refugee camp talks to Lenny and Adi (the cousin). This boy in just two minutes replaces the long description of violence made by Rana, Iman Din's grandson. As the story is cut short by Mehta, the major work done by God Mother does not get scope. And so this character, quite important in novel, too is edited. Although both novel and film share the function of story telling, there is a significant difference in the making of the two. Novels are shaped by individuals and are to be consumed by a specific class only. The film is created by a team, a group, the film unit led by the director, and is to be consumed by mass belonging to all and different class. Thus bigger the cast, difficult it becomes for the film maker to give them needed space in just two hours screen play. Equally difficult it becomes for the audience to accept too many minor characters.

The film maker has to make definite changes from the novel, add or omit certain things too. This is necessitated because the film has its own limitations. It is to be viewed in two to three hours. Neither can it afford complex narrations nor disputable scenes in it. It has to cater all classes of audience and also the censor. Those who would call a novel realistic too may not accept to see the same reality on the screen. Mehta has proved herself a practical film maker too. She has avoided Sidhwa's opinions about Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah. *1947 Earth* has not sided any of the two nations or their personalities. It has given the story of Partition, the happenings at specifically Lahore. Mehta, a practical film maker said in her interview to Assem Chhabra:

“Bapsi is from Pakistan and now a U.S. citizen. I am from India and now living in Canada. If neither of us had moved from our respective homelands, the film just wouldn't have been possible”. (1999: n.pag)

Even after saying so, she has taken care so as to avoid comments on any of the national or political leaders. In the same interview Mehta describes her style of film making as “hybrid”, not “Bombay” and not “Western” which granted her a freedom with her subject matter and also the making of the film.

Much instinctive about the casting, Mehta can easily find her characters out. She knows her characters. ‘The New Yorker’ commented that “...the cast is so likable that they wear the larger themes like beautiful garments.” (27 September, 1999) Aamir Khan, Nandita Das, Rahul Khanna, Maya Sethna, Kitu Gidwani, Kulbhushan Kharbanda bring alive the shades and colours of their roles as the way

they did. One cannot imagine anybody else in any of these roles. Sidhwa's short appearance with Shabana Azami's voice at the end neither adds to nor spoils the taste.

When engaged in translating stories related to a period, especially an immediate one like freedom fight or partition, the tendency has been to do it into a historical realism in which everything must look authentic and true to period. Set in Lahore, the film was shot in New Delhi. "To recreate a period piece in present Delhi was a heroic task," says Mehta, "To dress the television antennae and plastic water tanks itself became a mammoth task..."(1999: n.pag) The film uses not just Hindi and English languages but also Gujarati, Urdu and Punjabi. This use of multiple languages helps the period to emerge as that of Partition time, the characters too to gain originality. It also gives the picture of India as multilingual and multicultural country.

Colours play a very important metaphor in Mehta's films. All her element trilogy has used the appropriate colours. *Fire* is filled with shades of yellow, orange and red blended with darkness of black. *Water* has the peace and purity of the blue colour. *1947 Earth*, Mehta has made the use of Terracotta colours par excellence. The film begins with the dry brown earth all ready to get parched. This becomes a metaphor to the cracks created due to the draught of love, trust and fraternity. Similarly it ends with brown dusty roads of Lahore, a metaphor to Lenny's lifetime loss of her beloved friend Ayah and all the emotions and activities attached to Ayah's presence, loss of trust on friends like Dil Nawaz. It also suggests the pain of parting and distrust everyone passed through during the Partition period. Through, the film uses variety of red, brown, green, orange and yellow. Nandita Das enacting Hindu Ayah comes on screen mostly dressed in terracotta colour sarees leaving an

instance or two. Her admiration, abduction, rape and exploitation very smartly symbolize the exploitation of the once blooming and adored one whole India.

Song and music and dance are significant in conveying the meaning of the story and in generating the desired emotions. Javed Akhtar's lyrics and A.R. Rahman's music in *1947 Earth*, give voice to the feelings of every character. Sarod and Santoor accompanying the titles and the beginning scene establishes the melodramatic mode of the film. Rahman's music adds to the horror of the ghost train. The long silence followed by thumping drums, joined later by different instruments and a chorus increases the intensity of grief on Aamir Khan's face. It makes difficult for the viewers to digest the terror and it makes equally easy to understand why Dil Nawaz changed all of a sudden.

Thus *1947 Earth* a tale of one of the worst tragedies of the 20th Century, on silver screen is bound to be different from its purely literary medium, *Ice Candy Man* to a great extent even while presenting the same subject matter. The use of bright and dull colours, sharp, slow and touching music, lights, settings etc. probe into the psyche of the characters involved. It also caters the aesthetic sensibilities. Its technical brilliance like its perfect editing by Barry Farrell, use of sync camera by Gilles Nuttgns, covering away the disturbing articles and sounds make it more accessible to mass as both a commercial film and a reality reflected in its truest version. *The New York Times* described it as "a powerful and disturbing reminder of how a civilization can suddenly crack under certain pressures".

Talking about *Ice Candy Man* Githa Hariharan says in *Economic Times*,

"Sidhwa captures the turmoil of the times, with a brilliant combination of individual growing up pains and the

collective anguish of a newly independent but divided country". (n.d. n.pag)

The way antihuman actions dehumanizing effects of communalism is revealed in *Ice Candy Man* is quite blood curdling and moving. Above everything it can be considered painfully relevant to our present day India and may be equally to Pakistan.

Train to Pakistan and *Ice-Candy Man* pursue two similar portrayals of brutality experienced on both the sides of the border almost during the same time frame. Though one by a Sikh from the Indian side, another from a minority woman writer, a Parsi on the opposite side of the border, both carry similar concerns, similar emotions and pathos presenting a realistic picture of Partition. The same is captured in their film versions. Both the films, with the origin molded in a little different, a little similar mold narrate the happenings in a dramatically realistic manner.

Excluding or including of any incident or part in a film (adaptation) depends on the maturity and good judgement of the filmmaker and the film unit. They may include or exclude any incident, part, character or item and may even give an alternative, different from the source text. The film, using all the fidelities actually throws light on the original work, the novel. This compels us to call adaptation as not just the arty reconstruction of the original but an innovation itself. This is what Deepa Mehta did to Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*. What came on screen is the Partition memory. It is not just recollection of the past, but also the present engaging with disturbing histories of the sub-continent.

References:

- 1947 Earth*. Dir. Deepa Mehta. Perf. Rahul Khanna, Nandita Das, Maia Shethna Aamir Khan. 1998.
- Desai, Anita *Dawn and Milkweed* n.d. 15 February 2013.
<<http://www.bapsisidhwa.com/book-cracking.html>>.
- Gaur, Rashmi. *Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man: A Reader's Companion*. Ed. Gaur Rashmi. New Delhi: Asia Book House, 2004.
- Graber, Laurel. "The Seeds of Partition." *New York Times* 06 October 1991.
- Gustavson, Jeff. "The Film File Earth." *The New Yorker* 27 September 1999. 15 March 2013. <<http://www.newyorker.com/arts/reviews/film/earth>>.
- Hariharan, Gita. *Economic Times* n.d. 15 February 2013.
<<http://www.bapsisidhwa.com/book-cracking.html>>.
- Herman, Jeanette. "Memory and Melodrama: The Transnational Politics of Deepa Mehta." *Camera Obscura* 20.1 (2005): 106-147.
- Holden, Stephen. "Earth: India Torn Apart." *New York Times* 10 September 1999.
- Kapadiya, Novy. *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*. Ed. Navy Kapadiya Dhawan R.K. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1996.
- Mehta Deepa. "To Create a Period Piece in Delhi is a Heroic Task" with Aseem Chhabra. *Aseem Chhabra in New York*. www. redif .com. n.d. 15 March 2013.
<<http://www.paklinks.com/gs/showbiz-pakistan/46756-1947-earth-to-be-released-in-india-and-us.html>>.
- Sidhwa, Bapsi. *Ice- Candy Man*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1989.
- Sidhwa, Bapsi. "Why Do I Write?" Dhawan, R.K. and Novy Kapadiya (ed.). *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1996. print.
- Singh, Khushwant. *The Tribune* n.d. 15 February 2013.
<<http://www.bapsisidhwa.com/book-cracking.html>>.

Vishwanath, Gita and Salma Malik. "Revisiting 1947 through Popular Cinema: A Comparative Study of India and Pakistan." *Economic and Political Weekly* 05 September 2009: 61-67.

Zaman, Niaz. *Bapsi Sidhwa; I am Pakistani*. Ed. Gaur Rashmi. Vols. Bapsi Sidhwa's ice-Candy Man: A Reader's Companion Companion. New Delhi: Asia Book House, 2004.