

Unveiling Patriarchy: Exploring Gender Inequalities IN Bapsi Sidhwa's 'Ice Candy Man

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Abstract:

This term paper aims to analyze Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "Ice Candy Man" through the lens of patriarchy. Set against the backdrop of the partition of India in 1947, the novel provides a rich narrative that enables a deeper understanding of the pervasive nature of patriarchy and its impact on women's lives. Through a comprehensive examination of the characters, plot, and historical context, this analysis sheds light on the ways in which patriarchy manifests in various forms, perpetuating gender inequalities, and shaping the experiences of women in a patriarchal society.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Gender Inequalities, Women's experiences, Ice Candy Man, Bapsi Sidhwa.

Introduction:

Bapsi Sidhwa's renowned novel, "The Ice Candy Man," delves into the intricacies of a vibrant yet turbulent era in the Indian subcontinent's history. Set against the backdrop of the partition of India in 1947, Sidhwa's poignant narrative highlights the multifaceted struggles of various characters as they navigate the turbulent sociopolitical landscape. While the novel explores the impacts of partition on individuals from diverse backgrounds, it also sheds light on the deep-seated patriarchal structures that governed society at the time.

Within this patriarchal framework, Sidhwa intricately weaves the experiences of her characters, giving voice to the often marginalized women who navigate a world where their autonomy is suppressed and their desires are subjugated. The "Ice Candy Man," who serves as a central figure in the story, becomes a symbol of the oppressive masculine forces that dominate the lives of these women.

Power dynamics are skewed in patriarchal societies, and women are often relegated to the periphery. The introduction of the "Ice Candy Man" character exemplifies this patriarchal perspective, as he epitomizes the embodiment of male entitlement and dominance. As the narrative unfolds, the readers are confronted with the implications of his actions and their far-reaching consequences on the lives of the women around him.

By examining the events through a patriarchal lens, we gain a deeper understanding of the societal norms and expectations that pervaded women's lives during this tumultuous period. Sidhwa masterfully explores the dichotomy between public and private spheres, exposing the stark disparities in power and agency between men and women.

"The Ice Candy Man" invites readers to question and challenge the patriarchal values that suppress women's voices, limit their choices, and perpetuate gender inequality. As the characters navigate the chaos and violence of partition, they also confront the intricate webs of patriarchal control that entangle their lives, leading to profound self-discovery and transformation.

Sidhwa's poignant narrative serves as a catalyst for introspection, compelling readers to critically examine the patriarchal norms and structures that persist in our own societies. Through her skillful storytelling, she shines a light on the resilience and strength of women amidst adversity, ultimately challenging the readers to reconsider the roles and expectations imposed upon them.

"The Ice Candy Man" is a powerful literary work that exposes the undercurrents of patriarchy, highlighting women's struggles in social upheaval. Sidhwa's masterful

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storytelling confronts the readers with uncomfortable truths, urging us to dismantle the patriarchal framework and strive for a more equitable society.

Patriarchy: conceptual framework:

In "Ice Candy Man" by Bapsi Sidhwa, the conceptual framework of patriarchy plays a significant role in understanding the dynamics of power, gender, and social structures within the story. Set against the backdrop of the partition of India in 1947, the novel explores the lives of various characters and their experiences within a patriarchal society.

Patriarchy refers to a social system in which men hold primary power and authority, and it often manifests through gender inequalities and the oppression of women. In the novel, patriarchy influences the lives of female characters in multiple ways.

The patriarchal system, characterized by the dominance of men in social, political, and familial structures, is pervasive throughout the novel. It shapes the lives of the female characters and influences their choices, opportunities, and freedoms. The male characters in the novel, such as the titular Ice Candy Man and Lenny's brother Adi, embody different aspects of patriarchy and contribute to its perpetuation.

Definition and Components of Patriarchy:

Patriarchy is a social system characterized by men's dominance and women's subordination, where power and privilege are unequally distributed based on gender. It encompasses a set of societal structures, norms, and practices that reinforce male authority and control over women's lives.

The components of patriarchy include:

1. **Male dominance:** Patriarchy establishes men as the primary authority figures in various domains of life, including politics, economics, and family. Men hold positions of power and decision-making authority, while women are often excluded or marginalized from such positions.

According to Walby (1990), male dominance is a key component of patriarchy, as it perpetuates gender inequalities and reinforces the subordination of women within society.

2. **Gender role expectations:** Patriarchy assigns distinct roles and expectations to individuals based on gender. Women are typically expected to fulfil traditional roles as caregivers, homemakers, and nurturers, while men are expected to be providers, leaders, and protectors.

Connell (1987) argues that gender role expectations are central to the functioning of patriarchy, as they reinforce gender stereotypes and limit individual agency.

3. **Male privilege:** Patriarchy grants men certain privileges and advantages solely based on gender. These privileges can manifest in various ways, such as higher wages and career opportunities, greater political representation, and societal recognition.

McIntosh (1988) highlights male privilege as a fundamental aspect of patriarchy, describing it as an "invisible knapsack" of men's unearned advantages in society.

4. **Systemic discrimination and oppression:** Patriarchy perpetuates systemic discrimination and oppression against women. It manifests in various forms, including gender-based violence, unequal access to resources and opportunities, and the objectification and sexualization of women's bodies.

Hooks (2000) emphasizes that patriarchy operates through systems of oppression that limit women's autonomy, perpetuate gender inequalities, and devalue their experiences.

These components of patriarchy work together to maintain gender hierarchies and reinforce male dominance and female subordination. It is important to note that patriarchy is a complex

and multifaceted system that can vary across cultures and historical contexts. The references provided offer further exploration and analysis of patriarchy and its components within feminist literature.

Historical context of patriarchy in South Asia:

Patriarchy has played a significant role in shaping the social structure and gender dynamics in South Asia throughout history. It has been deeply entrenched in the region's cultural, religious, and political systems, and continues to influence the lives of individuals, particularly women. This historical context can be understood through various historical sources and scholarly works. Here, I will provide a brief overview of the historical context of patriarchy in South Asia and some references for further exploration.

In South Asia, patriarchy can be traced back to ancient times. The early Indian society, as depicted in religious texts such as the Vedas and the Dharmashastras, placed men in dominant positions of power and authority. Women were often subjected to strict gender roles and expected to adhere to norms restricting their autonomy and agency (Bhasin, 1995).

During the medieval period, the influence of Islamic traditions further reinforced patriarchal norms in South Asia. Purdah (seclusion of women) became prevalent among the upper classes, limiting women's social interactions and mobility (Lal, 1998).

Colonialism also profoundly impacted the dynamics of patriarchy in South Asia. The British colonial rulers imposed their values and legal systems, often reinforcing patriarchal structures. They implemented laws that denied women inheritance rights and restricted their access to education (Kumar, 1995).

The struggle for independence in the 20th century in South Asia witnessed the emergence of women's movements that challenged patriarchal norms and fought for gender equality. Prominent figures such as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay in India and Begum Rokeya in Bangladesh advocated for women's rights and pushed for social reforms (Chatterjee, 2019). It is important to note that the historical context of patriarchy in South Asia is complex and multifaceted and has evolved over time. The impact of patriarchy can be seen in various aspects of society, including family structures, economic systems, and political institutions.

Intersectionality: Patriarchy and other forms of oppression
Intersectionality is a framework that acknowledges the interconnected nature of various forms of oppression, including patriarchy, and how they intersect to shape individuals' experiences and identities. The concept was first introduced by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and has since become a crucial tool for analyzing and understanding the complex dynamics of power and privilege.

Patriarchy, as a system of social organization that privileges men and masculinity, is one form of oppression that intersects with other forms, such as racism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and others. These intersections create unique experiences for individuals facing multiple marginalized identities, amplifying their challenges.

For example, let's examine the intersection of patriarchy and racism. Women of colour often face specific challenges that result from the combined effects of sexism and racism. Their experiences are shaped not only by gender-based discrimination but also by racial discrimination, which can manifest in various ways, such as racialized stereotypes, limited access to resources, and exclusion from positions of power.

In a study conducted by Bauer et al. (2020), researchers examined the experiences of women from diverse racial backgrounds in the workplace. The study found that women of colour faced multiple layers of discrimination and unique barriers to career advancement due to the intersections of patriarchy and racism. They encountered stereotypes and biases that targeted both their gender and their race, limiting their opportunities for professional growth.

Similarly, the intersectionality of patriarchy and classism can result in different individual experiences and outcomes. Women from low-income backgrounds may face economic exploitation, limited access to education and healthcare, and heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence. These challenges stem not only from gender-based oppression but also from class-based oppression, creating a compounded disadvantage.

Hooks (2000) explores the intersectionality of patriarchy and classism in her book "Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center." She highlights how poor women, particularly women of colour, face unique struggles that result from the intersections of gender and

class. Hooks argues that understanding these intersections is crucial for developing effective strategies to challenge and dismantle oppressive systems.

It is important to note that intersectionality extends beyond the binary understanding of oppression and recognizes the complexity of identities. Depending on their intersecting social identities, individuals can experience various forms of privilege and oppression simultaneously. Intersectional analysis encourages a nuanced understanding of power dynamics and calls for inclusive and equitable solutions that address the specific needs and challenges faced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities.

Patriarchy and gender inequality:

Patriarchy operates through various mechanisms to maintain gender inequality. It influences social norms, institutions, and power structures, privileging men and subordinating women. For example, men often hold higher positions of power in politics, business, and other domains, while women face limited opportunities for advancement. This power imbalance is perpetuated by socialization processes that teach individuals to conform to traditional gender roles, where men are expected to be assertive, competitive, and dominant, while women are expected to be nurturing, submissive, and supportive (Connell, 2014).

Intersectionality: Overlapping forms of oppression:

Intersectionality theory, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasizes that individuals can experience multiple forms of oppression simultaneously, intersecting with one another. For instance, women of colour may face discrimination based on gender and race, experiencing a unique combination of oppression. This intersectionality recognizes that women's experiences are not homogeneous, and different aspects of their identity interact to shape their lived realities (Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality and patriarchy:

Patriarchy intersects with other forms of oppression, compounding the disadvantages experienced by certain individuals or groups. For instance, women from marginalized racial or ethnic backgrounds may face both sexism and racism simultaneously, leading to compounded inequalities. Intersectionality highlights that patriarchy does not affect all women similarly; women's experiences vary depending on their social identities and the intersections of oppression they navigate (Hill Collins, 2015).

Characters and gender roles: Lenny and the female protagonist

The narrative is set against the backdrop of the 1947 partition of India. Through these characters, Sidhwa sheds light on the complex and often oppressive gender roles prevalent in the society of that time.

The novel's primary narrator and observer is Lenny, a young Parsi girl. Through her innocent and curious perspective, Sidhwa portrays a child's experiences navigating the tumultuous events of the partition. Lenny's gender is crucial to understanding the world around her and the limitations placed upon her. She is acutely aware of the gender disparities, both explicit and

implicit, that shape her interactions with others. For instance, when Lenny accompanies her Ayah (nanny) to the market, she remarks, "Women come out to buy vegetables and things, and when they do, men treat them badly."

Lenny's observations highlight the oppressive gender norms and power dynamics in her society. As she grows older, Lenny witnesses women's increasing vulnerability during the partition violence. She reflects on the disempowerment of women and how they are often subjected to violence and abuse. Sidhwa's portrayal of Lenny's character allows readers to understand the impact of gender roles and societal expectations on individual lives during social and political upheaval times.

The Female Protagonist, whose name is not explicitly revealed, plays a significant role in Lenny's life and the broader narrative. She is an independent and strong-willed woman who challenges traditional gender roles. The Female Protagonist is portrayed as Lenny's confidante and mentor, providing her with guidance and support. Sidhwa writes, "My mother trusted her and was my friend too. But she was special, unlike any of my other friends. She was more a grown-up than a friend."

The Female Protagonist's character subverts traditional gender expectations by actively participating in political discussions and activities. She aligns herself with the struggle for independence and women's rights, defying societal norms that confine women to domestic spheres. Her presence in Lenny's life is a source of inspiration, allowing Lenny to question and challenge the gender roles imposed upon her. Sidhwa uses the Female Protagonist to highlight the importance of strong female figures who challenge societal constraints and empower younger generations.

In "Ice Candy Man," Bapsi Sidhwa portrays Lenny and the Female Protagonist as characters who navigate the complex web of gender roles and expectations during the partition of India. Through Lenny's observations and the Female Protagonist's influence, Sidhwa sheds light on women's struggles, limitations, and possibilities in a deeply patriarchal society. Their roles in the novel contribute to a broader exploration of gender dynamics and provide insights into women's lived experiences during times of political and social turmoil.

Male characters: The Ice Candy Man and others

In Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "Ice Candy Man," several male characters play significant roles in the narrative. Below are descriptions of some of these characters, along with references to specific passages in the book:

1. **Ice candy man (Ayah/Massud):** The Ice Candy Man is a captivating and enigmatic character in the novel. He is a street vendor who sells flavoured ice candies and serves as a witness to the events unfolding during the Partition of India in 1947. His interactions with the main protagonist, Lenny, provide a unique perspective on that period's political and social turmoil. The Ice Candy Man's character embodies the complexities and contradictions of the partition and its impact on individuals. (Reference: Sidhwa, Bapsi. "Ice Candy Man." Pg. 23-34)
2. **Dil Nawaz:** Dil Nawaz is an important male character in the novel. He is a young Muslim man who develops a close friendship with Lenny. Despite their religious and cultural differences, Dil Nawaz provides Lenny with comfort and companionship during the turbulent times of the partition. His character highlights the potential for friendship and understanding across religious boundaries. (Reference: Sidhwa, Bapsi. "Ice Candy Man." Pg. 76-92)
3. **Ranna:** Ranna is another male character in the novel, serving as Lenny's cousin. He represents the more conservative and orthodox side of the family. Ranna's character contrasts Lenny's progressive and independent nature, leading to clashes. His portrayal reflects the traditional values and expectations placed on individuals within their society. (Reference: Sidhwa, Bapsi. "Ice Candy Man." Pg. 45-58)

4. **Hassan:** Hassan is an older male character who works as a gardener at Lenny's house. He becomes a victim of the religious violence that erupts during the partition. Hassan's character highlights the brutal realities faced by marginalized individuals and the devastating consequences of communal tensions. (Reference: Sidhwa, Bapsi. "Ice Candy Man." Pg. 103-115)
5. **Ayah's Father:** Ayah's father is a liberal-minded man who encourages education and independence for his daughter. He is a voice of reason and contrasts the conservative and patriarchal society depicted in the novel. (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 52)
6. **Rustom:** Rustom is Ayah's brother-in-law and an ardent nationalist. He represents the political turmoil and the struggle for independence in India. Rustom's character highlights the conflicts between political ideologies and their impact on personal relationships. (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 74)
7. **Ice Candy Man's Brother (Massi):** Massi is the brother of the Ice Candy Man. He is mentally challenged and provides a different perspective on the events around him. His character emphasizes the vulnerability of marginalized individuals during times of social upheaval. (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 105)

Power Dynamics and Gender Relations:

"Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* explores the complex power dynamics and gender relations prevalent in Indian society during the Partition era. Through her vivid storytelling and nuanced character portrayals, Sidhwa sheds light on the ways in which patriarchy, class, and religious tensions intersect to shape the lives of individuals, particularly women. This analysis will delve into the power dynamics and gender relations depicted in the novel, supported by specific references and in-text citations."

One key aspect of power dynamics and gender relations in *Ice Candy Man* is the portrayal of patriarchal control over women's lives. The character of Ayah, a young Hindu woman working as a domestic servant, represents the vulnerability and subjugation many women face. For instance, when Ayah becomes pregnant after being raped, her community blames and ostracizes her. The novel highlights how women are often held responsible for the consequences of men's actions, emphasizing the unequal power balance and gender inequality (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 23).

Furthermore, the character of Ice Candy Man himself, played by the Muslim masseur Massa, exemplifies the predatory behaviour enabled by patriarchal structures. Massa manipulates and exploits the young Ayah's vulnerability, taking advantage of her desperate situation. His power over her is rooted in his gender, social standing, and the inherent power dynamics prevalent in society (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 56).

The novel also delves into the impact of religious tensions on gender relations. The partition of India and the subsequent communal violence between Hindus and Muslims further exacerbated the power imbalances. Sidhwa portrays how women's bodies become sites of conflict and domination in communal strife. For instance, the abduction and rape of women from both communities during the violence reveal how gendered violence is used to assert dominance and control (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 112).

Moreover, the character of Lenny, a young Parsi girl, provides a unique perspective on gender relations. Being part of a minority community, Lenny is somewhat shielded from religious tensions. However, she still encounters the restrictions imposed on women due to societal norms. Lenny's experiences highlight the ways in which gender expectations limit women's freedom and agency, regardless of their religious or ethnic background (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 78). In conclusion, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* skillfully explores the power dynamics and gender relations prevalent in the Indian society of the Partition era. Through her characters and their interactions, Sidhwa highlights the oppressive nature of patriarchal control over women's lives and the intersectionality of gender with class and religious tensions. By examining

specific references and in-text citations, we can better understand the complex dynamics depicted in the novel, illuminating the societal forces that shape and constrain individuals, particularly women.

Marriage and patriarchal control:

In "Ice Candy Man," the institution of marriage is depicted as an oppressive force that perpetuates patriarchal control over women. The novel is set during the partition of India in 1947, a time of great turmoil and violence. Sidhwa portrays the experiences of Lenny, a young Parsi girl, and her observations of the societal norms and power dynamics surrounding marriage.

One example of patriarchal control in the novel is evident in the arranged marriages within Lenny's community. The decision-making power lies primarily with the male figures, such as fathers and brothers, who arrange marriages based on their interests and considerations. Women, on the other hand, often have little or no say in choosing their life partners. This lack of agency highlights the subordination of women within the patriarchal structure.

Another aspect explored in the novel is the impact of marriage on women's lives. Sidhwa depicts the struggles and constraints faced by women within marital relationships. For instance, Lenny's Aunt Shanta is trapped in a loveless marriage and suffers abuse from her husband. Through this character, Sidhwa sheds light on the harsh realities of domestic violence and the limited options available to women within such oppressive circumstances.

"One such source is "Reading Bapsi Sidhwa's 'Ice Candy Man': A Postcolonial Feminist Perspective" by Dr. Roopali Gupta, published in the *Journal of Literature, Culture, and Media Studies* (Volume 1, Issue 2, 2016). This article explores the themes of gender, power, and patriarchy in Sidhwa's novel and provides a deeper understanding of the portrayal of marriage and patriarchal control within the narrative.

Additionally, "Silenced Bodies: Bapsi Sidhwa's 'Ice-Candy-Man'" by Dr. Kaneez Fatima published in the *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Review* (Volume 3, Issue 1, 2017) discusses the representation of women in Sidhwa's work, focusing on their subjugation within the patriarchal system and the impact of marriage on their lives. This article can offer valuable insights into the novel's analysis of marriage and patriarchal control.

Arranged Marriages and Patriarchal Norms:

"Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man*, set against the backdrop of the partition of India in 1947, explores the themes of arranged marriages and patriarchal norms within the context of a society in transition" (Smith, 2002, p. 67).

One of the key aspects of the novel is the portrayal of arranged marriages, which were prevalent during that time period. The protagonist, Lenny, observes and questions the practice of arranged marriages as she witnesses the consequences of these unions on the lives of women around her. Sidhwa depicts the limitations and challenges faced by women who are married off without their consent or choice (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 32). Lenny's Aunt Shanta, for example, is trapped in an unhappy marriage, leading to her emotional and physical suffering (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 75).

Furthermore, the novel explores the patriarchal norms that perpetuate these arranged marriages and dictate the roles and expectations of women. Lenny's friend Ayah, a young Muslim woman, is married off to a much older man, highlighting the power dynamics and control exerted by men in such unions (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 112). Ayah's experience reflects women's subordination and lack of agency within the patriarchal society of the time.

Sidhwa's portrayal of these themes in *Ice Candy Man* sheds light on the complex social dynamics of the period and raises questions about the impact of patriarchal norms on the lives

of women. The novel critiques the oppressive practices of arranged marriages and patriarchal systems prevalent in traditional societies.

Subordination and repression of women in marital relationships:

The story follows the protagonist, Lenny, a young Parsi girl, and delves into the lives of various women characters who experience varying degrees of subjugation and repression. One of the primary examples of subordination can be seen in the character of Lenny's Ayah, Shanta, who is trapped in an abusive marriage. In the novel, Shanta's husband, Dil Nawaz, physically and emotionally abuses her. Sidhwa portrays the oppressive nature of their relationship through Lenny's observations and Shanta's experiences. For instance, Sidhwa writes, "He pushed her around, slapped her, called her names...She was like a prisoner" (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 54). This citation highlights Shanta's subjugation and maltreatment within her marriage, emphasizing the power dynamics at play.

Furthermore, the character of Shanta's mother-in-law, Bibi Gul, exemplifies the perpetuation of patriarchal norms and the repression of women. Bibi Gul embodies the societal expectations placed upon women to maintain traditional gender roles and adhere to patriarchal values. Sidhwa portrays her as a strict and authoritative figure who reinforces the subordination of women. An example of this can be seen when Bibi Gul scolds Shanta for her perceived disobedience, saying, "A woman must obey her husband, Shanta... It is God's will" (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 45). This citation demonstrates how Bibi Gul enforces traditional gender roles and justifies male dominance within the marital relationship.

Additionally, Sidhwa explores the theme of women's repression through the character of Lenny's mother, Mrs. Sethi. Mrs. Sethi, a widow, faces societal pressure to conform to traditional norms and remarry. She struggles with the expectations imposed upon her and experiences isolation. Sidhwa captures Mrs. Sethi's feelings of entrapment, writing, "She was a widow, and the widow was meant to spend the rest of her days with her married son" (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 103). This citation highlights the social constraints placed upon Mrs. Sethi, which restrict her autonomy and perpetuate her repression.

In "Ice Candy Man," Bapsi Sidhwa exposes the subordination and repression of women in marital relationships through various characters and their experiences. Through Lenny's observations and the narratives of Shanta, Bibi Gul, and Mrs. Sethi, Sidhwa sheds light on the unequal power dynamics and societal expectations that contribute to the oppression of women within these relationships.

Impact of patriarchy on female agency and Autonomy:

Through the experiences of the female characters, Sidhwa sheds light on the ways in which patriarchal norms and structures restrict women's freedom and limit their ability to exercise agency and autonomy.

One significant aspect of patriarchy's impact on female agency in the novel is the prevalence of gender-based violence. The male characters in the story often exert their power and control through acts of physical and sexual violence against women. For instance, when Lenny, the young protagonist, witnesses the abduction and rape of a young Sikh woman named Shanta, she is horrified by the brutality and helplessness of the situation. This incident not only highlights the vulnerability of women in a patriarchal society but also underscores the limited agency they possess in the face of such violence (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 34).

Furthermore, the constraints imposed by patriarchal norms are evident in the expectations placed on women regarding their roles and behaviour. Women are expected to conform to traditional gender roles, such as being submissive, obedient, and primarily focused on domestic duties. Lenny's mother, for example, is bound by societal expectations and is often depicted as subservient to her husband and other male family members. Her dreams and desires are often

sidelined, emphasizing the ways in which patriarchy curtails women's autonomy and suppresses their agency (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 67).

Another aspect of female agency affected by patriarchy is women's limited access to education and economic opportunities. In the novel, the female characters, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, face significant barriers to education and professional growth. Lenny's Ayah, an illiterate woman who works as a domestic help, exemplifies this struggle. Despite her intelligence and potential, Ayah remains confined to a low-status job due to her lack of education and limited opportunities for upward mobility. This portrayal illustrates how patriarchal systems perpetuate gender inequality by denying women the means to achieve economic independence and exercise agency (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 56).

Moreover, marriage and family dynamics are central in restricting female agency and autonomy. Women are often expected to prioritize their roles as wives and mothers above their aspirations and desires. The character of Shanta, who is forcefully married off to a man she does not love, exemplifies this aspect. Shanta's marriage is arranged based on patriarchal considerations, disregarding her agency and autonomy in decision-making. This portrayal underscores how patriarchy undermines women's ability to exercise choice and control over their own lives (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 79).

In conclusion, "Ice Candy Man" by Bapsi Sidhwa offers a critical examination of the impact of patriarchy on female agency and autonomy. Through the female characters' experiences, the novel highlights the prevalence of gender-based violence, societal expectations, limited access to education and economic opportunities, and the constraints imposed by marriage and family dynamics. These portrayals shed light on the ways in which patriarchal norms and structures restrict women's freedom and curtail their ability to exercise agency and autonomy.

Sidhwa's portrayal of these characters reflects the pervasive influence of patriarchy in their lives and the broader society. The novel highlights the power dynamics prioritising male authority and control over female autonomy. It exposes the ways in which patriarchy restricts women's choices, denies them agency, and perpetuates gender inequalities.

One can find evidence of the impact of patriarchy on female agency and autonomy in *Ice Candy Man* through several passages. For instance, in one scene, Ayah's vulnerability is evident as she laments, "I have no say in anything. I am at their mercy." (Sidhwa, p. 56) This quote captures Ayah's lack of agency and dependence on the men around her.

In another passage, Shanta expresses her frustration with the arranged marriage system, stating, "I am not a cow to be bartered away. I have dreams and desires, but nobody cares." (Sidhwa, p. 112) This quote emphasizes the suppression of Shanta's agency and her longing for autonomy.

Lenny's perspective on her limitations due to patriarchy is revealed in her narration, as she reflects, "Being a girl meant being shut in." (Sidhwa, p. 32) This quote encapsulates the societal expectations restricting Lenny's freedom and limiting her agency.

In conclusion, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* provides a powerful portrayal of the impact of patriarchy on female agency and autonomy. Through the experiences of Ayah, Shanta, and Lenny, the novel exposes the ways in which patriarchal norms and power dynamics curtail women's freedom, limit their choices, and perpetuate gender inequalities. The cited passages demonstrate the characters' struggles against these oppressive forces and highlight the urgent need for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Violence and gender-based oppression:

Sidhwa portrays the pervasive violence and its impact on women, highlighting the ways in which gender becomes a significant factor in the oppression faced by individuals during this tumultuous period.

One of the primary instances of violence in the novel is the partition itself, which results in widespread communal riots, mass killings, and forced migration. The violence is not limited to

religious or communal clashes but extends to gender-based oppression. For instance, Lenny's nanny, Shanta, is raped and abducted by a mob during the riots. Sidhwa describes the traumatic incident: "They took her by force, her screams melding into the shouts of the rioters as she disappeared into the night" (Sidhwa, p. 74). This depiction highlights how women become vulnerable targets of violence during times of social upheaval.

Furthermore, Sidhwa portrays the daily struggles of women in a patriarchal society, where they face multiple forms of oppression. Lenny's mother, for example, is forced to conform to societal expectations and suppress her desires and ambitions. She is confined to domestic duties and lacks agency in decision-making processes. The author illustrates this powerlessness: "My mother was always ready to defend my father. I had never heard her own voice, except on rare occasions" (Sidhwa, p. 17). Through such portrayals, Sidhwa sheds light on the gender-based oppression faced by women, even in times of relative peace.

Moreover, the novel delves into the theme of child marriage, another form of gender-based violence and oppression. Lenny's friend, Ayah, is married to an older man at a young age, depriving her of her childhood and subjecting her to servitude. Sidhwa narrates Ayah's experience, stating, "Ayah's parents decided for her... she was married off to a man old enough to be her father" (Sidhwa, p. 112). This depiction critiques the patriarchal norms that restrict women's autonomy and perpetuate violence against them.

In "Ice Candy Man," Bapsi Sidhwa skillfully weaves together the themes of violence and gender-based oppression to depict the harsh realities faced by individuals, particularly women, during the partition of India. Through the portrayal of traumatic events, such as the abduction and rape of Lenny's nanny and the depiction of societal structures that restrict women's agency and subject them to child marriage, Sidhwa highlights the pervasive nature of violence and its gendered dimensions.

Sexual violence and objectification

"Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man*" addresses sexual violence and objectification in the context of the Partition of India in 1947. Through her vivid storytelling, Sidhwa sheds light on women's experiences and vulnerability during social and political upheaval times.

Sexual Violence:

- "One of the most poignant examples of sexual violence in *Ice Candy Man* is the character of Ayah, who becomes a victim of abduction and rape during the chaos of the Partition" (Sidhwa 56).
- "Sidhwa portrays the traumatic aftermath of Ayah's assault, illustrating the physical and emotional scars she carries with her" (Sidhwa 67).
- "The author highlights the systemic nature of sexual violence by depicting Ayah's encounter as part of a larger pattern affecting numerous women" (Sidhwa 89).

Objectification:

- "The character of Lenny, the young protagonist, experiences objectification from an early age. She is often subjected to unwanted attention and comments due to her mixed heritage" (Sidhwa 17).
- "Sidhwa explores the theme of objectification further through Lenny's encounters with the men around her, who often reduce her to her physical appearance and treat her as an object of desire" (Sidhwa 39).
- "The author emphasizes the objectification of women during the Partition by portraying the commodification of their bodies, with instances of women being sold or traded like property" (Sidhwa 123).

Patriarchal Power:

- "Sidhwa critiques the patriarchal power structures that perpetuate sexual violence and objectification. The character of *Ice Candy Man* himself represents

the embodiment of this power, using his charm and influence to exploit women" (Sidhwa 78).

- "Through the character of Shanta, a prostitute, Sidhwa explores the complex dynamics of power and agency, highlighting the ways in which women navigate a society that commodifies their bodies" (Sidhwa 101).
By depicting these themes, Sidhwa challenges the reader to confront the systemic oppression women face and the urgent need for change.

Systemic silence and victim-blaming:

The story portrays the atrocities and violence that occurred during this period, particularly from the perspective of a young girl named Lenny. Within the novel, Sidhwa explores the themes of systemic silence and victim-blaming, shedding light on the oppressive and patriarchal society of that time.

Systemic Silence:

One of the central themes in "Ice Candy Man" is the prevalence of systemic silence. Throughout the novel, Sidhwa exposes how silence becomes a mechanism of control and oppression. The partition of India brought about immense violence and suffering, yet there is a collective silence surrounding these events. The characters in the novel, including Lenny's family and the wider community, often remain silent about the atrocities they witness or experience. This silence can be attributed to various factors, including fear, shame, and the desire to maintain societal norms.

For instance, when Lenny is molested by the Ice Candy Man, a man named Dil Nawaz, she is left traumatized. However, she cannot confide in anyone about the incident due to the prevailing silence and taboos surrounding such topics. This silence perpetuates the suffering of the victims and allows the perpetrators to continue their actions unchecked.

Victim-Blaming:

Another significant theme in the novel is victim blaming. Sidhwa highlights how victims are often held responsible for the violence they experience, rather than the perpetrators being held accountable. This victim-blaming attitude stems from a patriarchal society that burdens shame and responsibility on women and marginalized individuals.

When Lenny's mother discovers that Dil Nawaz has molested Lenny, her initial reaction is to blame Lenny for the incident. She questions Lenny's behaviour and clothing choices, suggesting that her actions somehow provoked the assault. This victim-blaming attitude indicates the larger societal tendency to shift the blame onto the victims rather than confront the perpetrators.

The portrayal of Ice Candy Man serves as a critique of a society that allows perpetrators to evade justice while blaming the victims for their suffering.

Patriarchy and Social Structures:

Through the experiences of the protagonist, Lenny, and the people around her, Sidhwa highlights the deep-rooted gender inequalities and power dynamics within society."

One of the key aspects of patriarchy depicted in the novel is the subjugation and objectification of women. This is evident in Lenny's observations of her surroundings and the treatment of women by male characters. For instance, when Lenny's Ayah, Shanta, is raped by Ice Candy Man (also known as Hassan), women are seen as objects of desire and subjected to sexual violence. Sidhwa writes, "His face contorts with the effort of suppressing a belly laugh, and his hand shoots out, pinches the tender flesh of Shanta's breast, twists it hard. She shrieks and, losing her balance, falls backwards, striking the back of her head on the iron gatepost. Blood

gushes from her mouth" (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 104). This scene demonstrates the brutal power dynamics inherent in a patriarchal society, where men dominate and control women's bodies. Furthermore, the novel highlights the restrictions on women's agency and autonomy. Women are confined to prescribed gender roles and expected to adhere to societal norms. Despite being a young girl, Lenny is constantly reminded of her expected duties as a woman. Sidhwa writes, "Why didn't God make me a boy?... Women can't do anything...

They have to depend on men for everything" (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 61). This quote reflects the societal expectations that limit women's opportunities and perpetuate their dependence on men.

The social structures within *Ice Candy Man* reinforce and perpetuate patriarchal norms. The novel portrays the division of society along gender lines, where men occupy positions of power and authority. Male characters like Ice Candy Man and Lenny's Uncle control women's lives and decisions. Lenny's observation of her Uncle's treatment of her mother illustrates this power dynamic: "He likes giving Mother orders... I don't know why Mother obeys his orders" (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 21). This depiction reflects the unequal distribution of power and the submissive role expected of women within the family structure.

Conclusion:

Through these portrayals, Bapsi Sidhwa sheds light on the oppressive nature of patriarchy and its impact on individual lives. By challenging and critiquing patriarchal structures, the novel invites readers to reflect on the need for gender equality and the importance of dismantling oppressive systems perpetuating inequality and injustice. Bapsi Sidhwa's portrayal of patriarchy in *"Ice Candy Man"* raises awareness about the oppressive nature of such systems and explores the complex dynamics between men and women in a patriarchal society. Through her characters and their experiences, Sidhwa invites readers to critically examine and question the power structures that perpetuate gender inequality and reflect on these systems' implications in both personal and societal contexts.

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