



RESEARCH PAPER

Rewriting Culture and Womanhood: A Postcolonial Feminist Study of *Ice Candy Man* and *Burnt Shadows*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to make a comparative postcolonial feminist reading of *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Burnt Shadows* (2009) by Kamila Shamsie with respect to the manner in which Pakistani culture is represented. The research is defined within themes of gender, trauma, and cultural displacement within the understanding of postcolonialism. Sidhwa and Shamsie present the socio-political breaks of Partition, migration, and war through what is central to the female experience. Their writings challenge and re-define conservative gender roles and identity in postcolonial context. Close reading approach was chosen to critically review the selected passages in the two novels. The textual meaning was informed with the postcolonial feminist theory. The results show that both writers portray women as strong individuals struggling with hybrid identities molded out of colonial history. Sidhwa gives pride of place to indigenous culture whereas Shamsie renders transnational trauma and perseverance.

KEYWORDS	Burnt Shadows, Ice Candy Man, Kamila Shamsie, Bapsi Sidhwa, Postcolonialism, Feminism, Women's Agency, Identity, Cultural Displacement, Hybridity
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Introduction

This present study aims at the postcolonial feminist literary study of Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009). The literary analysis in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) mainly focuses on female culture, illustration and cultural stereotypes. Additionally, major themes involves in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) are of gender issues, cultural values, social questions and chronological viewpoints. These subjects are perpetual, valid to situation of current day, and the language requisite to confer them is useful also for circumstances away from the literature seminar.

The main task of writers of Postcolonial period is to commemorate their local culture, language, tradition and identity. Bapsi Sidhwa, being a Pakistani Parsee postcolonial writer of the Indian subcontinent shows diverse features of her local culture and independence in her inaugurative novel *Ice Candy Man* (1988). The novel's setting is during the Indian subcontinent's partition into two self-governing states i.e. Pakistan and India, the novel chiefly observes inadequate characters, constrained language and various levels of Shanta's character.

About the Writers

Bapsi Sidhwa is an American writer born in Karachi in 1936. She was brought up and educated in Lahore belongs to Gujrati Parsi community Zoroastrian. She was a strong woman, she was a polio victim at the age of two, and she never compromised on her education. She educated at Kinnaird College Lahore. Her first marriage was unsuccessful. She feels herself as a proud Panjabi Parsi Pakistani. She was active social worker; she won the award of Patras Bukhari for the bride (1970). She was also awarded with Sitara -e-Imtiaz in 1991.

On the other hand Kamila Shamsie and Bapsi Sidhwa both are post-colonial and feminist writer. Kamila Shamsie is British Pakistani novelist and writer, who earned acclaim for her award winning novel 'Home Fire'. She belongs to a well-known literary family and it already included several female writers, together with her mother, Muneeza Shamsie, and her great-aunt, Attia Husain. So, her literary targets were encouraged very positively.

She wrote seven novels. Her first novel is 'In the City by the Sea', second is 'salt and saffron', third is 'Kartography', and the fifth one is *Burnt Shadows* (2009). Its duration is more than half a century, from Second World War to the attacks of world trade centre and the post 9/11 world. During this, it moves from when there is an attack of atomic bombing on Nagasaki, Japan to the 1947 war of independence through separation of India which was under the control of British at that time, to the creation of Pakistan and later to Afghanistan and the US.

It mainly concern with the narratives of two families who include individuals of a variety of diverse nationalities and more than a few cross-cultural relationships and interactions. Through the use of rhetorical devices and visual images she paints pictures. She describes cunningly and vividly portrays the characters and situations and cities.

Literature Review

Potter (2009) writes in her assessment, 'Burnt Shadows is a gigantic of novel, striding persistently across Japan, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and America. The characters of this novel are inexhaustible, the language multitude, the enormous time frame in which Shamsie has managed to unshackle the post-9/11 novel from its self-imposed small piece of art of the post 9/11 era only.'

There are total four sections of this novel presenting the collective histories of two families, starts from the deadly falling of atomic bomb on Nagasaki in World War II, India instantaneously prior to Partition of subcontinent in war of independence in 1947, then to Pakistan in near the beginning of 1980s, at the end the New York after 9/11 attack and Afghanistan in the resulting combat on fear.

Indian literature and Pakistani literature be different from each other in a way that it is related with the central East, Central Asia, and East Africa, and away from that constrain from its Muslim individuality as Ideology of Pakistan fosters literature to roam around likewise theme of Arab culture. The latest age group of Pakistani authors is Mohammad Hanif, Mohsin Hamid, and Kamila Shamsie Bapsi Sidhwa, Daud Kamal, Umera Ahmad and Hanif Qureshi. Their interest of writing have same thematic element, like their Indian contemporaries and generations. The concern of their writing is mainly about state, martial rule and the locality of the dignitary beneath such situation.

Being a neocolonial novelist, Kamila Shamsie, belongs to an ex-colony which got freedom and independence after partition in 1947 but still remains as a conflict ground continually as for the world control stake holders. The grand narratives created, twisted and propagated by means of the world powerful media in the name of terrorism, intimidation and violence, *Burnt Shadows* in a manner is a cancellation and deletion of all these concepts. She represented the new face of the partition of 'us' and 'them'. The double-faced entrance of colonizers is both willingly and mandatory in colonized terrain. Secondly, the main agenda of the colonizing powers always remains influencing the cultures of natives by either destroying them completely or changing and shifting them.

Similarly the novel *Ice Candy Man* (1988) deals with the same concept which is discussed in the novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009). *Ice Candy Man* (1988) also deals with the diverse aspects of the land, culture and identity crises, but the most significant depiction is the devastation and in humiliation of human beings in the past during the wars. Both the novels represent the themes of violation of human rights and painful living conditions of human being. Clearly, the harsh tendency is greatly obvious in both novels. Herein the age of globalization, it is one of the very difficult tasks to categories some writers; Bapsi Sidhwa is one of them. In an interview she likes herself to be as a Punjabi-Pakistani-Parsee woman. Her creative writing deals with the pre-partition, pre-colonial and postcolonial era of the Indian Sub-Continent as does the novels of Kamila Shamsie.

Both novels deal with the theme of displacement on huge level. The present study also deals with the theme of partition, dislocation, world wars, bloodshed during these wars. I also consider that both novels represent Pakistani culture and tradition through their life styles. Present study reveals that Kamila Shamsie and Bapsi Sidhwa both are feminist and post-colonial writes.

Material and Methods

The present study employs the qualitative research design as it is appropriate to investigate the literary texts in the context of social-cultural and historical, characterizing elements. Qualitative research focuses on appreciation of the social and cultural phenomena within their natural contexts, enabling themes, meanings and interpretations to be explored in some depth. It also goes beyond making mere surface observations but endeavors to address the phenomena through the why and how questions, which is more than the what, where, or when question (Creswell, 2013).

The close reading procedure adopted in this study is seen as the main method of analysis. Close reading as the most commonly used aspect of deconstructive literary criticism enables the researcher to analytically explore language, symbolism and narrative techniques of the chosen novels. This approach allows drawing a subtle conclusion about the way the colonial ideologies, dislocations, gender identities, and native cultures are created and presented in texts. The paper in its thorough textual analysis focuses on *Ice-Candy-Man* and *Burnt Shadows* to explore the expression of postcolonial feminist issues through the context of postcolonial cultural conflict and historical trauma, including the representation of the native culture and identity, construction and performance of woman agency.

Theoretical Framework

The postcolonial feminist theory forms the basis of this research especially in context to the areas in which colonialism and patriarchy overlap to influence the literary representations of culture and womanhood. Postcolonial literature includes literature

based on the production of colonial era and the writings following it and enters into the themes of power, identity, resistance, and cultural recovery. The colonial texts usually tried to portray the colonized individuals as savage, intellectually inferior and submissive- in order to support the imperialist cause. There has been consequently an attempt to deconstruct such hegemonic discourse through reassertions of indigeneity, indigenous voices and histories by postcolonial writers and critics (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989).

The chosen novels in this case can be considered as the space of resistances and cultural negotiation. Based on the concepts of M.A.R. Habib in *Hegel and Empire: From Postcolonialism to Globalism* (2017), this paper thinks about four sets of structural goals of postcolonial theory. First, it makes us encounter the historical experience of colonialism as viewed by the colonized. Second, it debunks the cultural, political as well as economic imperialism of colonial powers. Third, it focuses on decolonization as a political process of struggle and, as a cultural awakening. Fourth, it encircles the building of the post-colonial self through narrative, by opposition and the claim of the self.

Also, in the theoretical perspective the theoretical emphasis is on the cultural hybridity, agency and representation with significant thinkers involved in this approach include Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. It places women beyond victims of colonial violence, and, instead, there are complex subjects negotiating the conflicting constructs of tradition, modernity, displacement and resistance. Based in this, the framework would enable to critically analyze how both *Ice-Candy-Man* and *Burnt Shadows* is being used in the carrying out of the greater discourse of postcolonial feminist literary works, through rewritings of cultural narratives and envisioning the woman.

Data Sources

The comparative study of the novels *Ice Candy Man* (1988) and *Burnt Shadows* (2009) are used as the primary source of data for this study. Moreover for the analysis of the novels, some terms of the post colonialism, identity crises, cultural displacement and dislocation, fatalities and destruction caused during war period are also included in this research.

Data Analysis

The present section is an analytical version of the text excerpts of *Ice-Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie as being representative of the straddling theme of woman, culture and postcolonial identity by both the authors. A postcolonial feminist perspective is adopted in the analysis to emphasize the issues of cultural upheavals like Partition, the war and imperialism on the female subject culminating in the re-writing of conventional gender roles and the cultural expectations.

Results and Discussion

The Female Body as a Site of Violence and National Identity

"They are dragging Ayah out... Ayah! Ayah! I run after them, shouting. My Ayah! They can't take my Ayah! She is no one's property - she is free!" — Ice-Candy-Man, Sidhwa (1988, p. 136)

This passage is the staging of both figurative and physical kidnapping of Ayah who symbolizes more than just the womanhood but also the body politic of India during the Partition. The cry of the narrator, which flows like repeated thought in the poem, - "She is no man's chattel" - brings out the objectification and commoditization of women during

periods of communal conflict. Sidhwa criticizes the fact that female bodies are the area of dispute, where girls are raped and disregarded in the name of honor, community and nationalism. Postcolonial feminist approaches remain central in breaking down the extent of erasing the autonomy of women by the forces of patriarchal and nationalistic violence at this moment.

Reimagining Womanhood and Agency in Global Conflict

"The one thing Hiroko could not run from was the shadow etched onto her back."

— *Burnt Shadows*, Shamsie (2009, p. 15)

The shadow that is still on the back of Hiroko, burned even into her skin by the atomic bomb used in Nagasaki, is quite a good metaphor of embodied trauma. It is not only a literal sign but also a rhetorical representation of historical burden women had to bear through the course of time and space. Shamsie writes history on the body of Hiroko to make her transnational and a survivor of numerous moves in life between Japan, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, unlike Ayah, Hiroko is not an unresponsive victim; she is active, lovingly and strong, and rewrites womanhood as something vulnerable and long-lived. Her trip depicts the process of female subjectivity changing under the circumstances of the global transformations, refusing the definite cultural and gendered identities.

Cultural Memory and Female Testimony

"My grandmother had told me the story of Partition... but it was always someone else's pain, until I saw it on Hiroko's face." — *Burnt Shadows*, Shamsie (2009, p. 208)

In this case, Shamsie shows a similarity between individual and collective trauma: between the recalling and writing of history through a feminine perspective. The text indicates that the pain of females, usually suppressed in the official discourse, is an intergenerational burden. Shamsie confirms the affective and emotional aspect of historical consciousness by putting Hiroko in the position of the witness of various geopolitical tragedies. This model deteriorates the masculine, state-centric form of historical discourse and makes the female testimony essential cultural archive.

Language, Localization, and Cultural Identity

"God alone knows we all are creatures of the land. Why must borders tear us apart?"

— *Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa (1988, p. 201)

The character created by Sidhwa criticises the fixed boundaries created by the colonial mapping system, and mourns over the fact that borders ruin common cultural and human interactions. Said using idiomatic language, this verse condemns the political actions which made neighbors turn to enemies. The fact that it is a postcolonial feminist issue with the place-based identity of women, whose lives are most destabilized by becoming displaced and partitioned, can also be seen in it. The language of Sidhwa is local country and oral in resonance, which affirms her eulogizing of the native culture as she also lamenting its disintegration.

Transcending National Boundaries through Female Solidarity

"She reached for the burqa without protest. The woman helped her adjust it."

— *Burnt Shadows*, Shamsie (2009, p. 308)

The assumed cross-cultural gap is breached by this scene of silent sisterhood between a Japanese woman and a Pakistani. This politicized symbol of oppression known as burqa, here, is used as a means of survival and protection. By giving the burqa back to the people as a matter of personal choice and understanding, Shamsie demonstrates a powerful way of reclaiming the burqa. The shared experience of women who crosses cultural boundaries underlines power of the postcolonial feminist point of view emphasising on the female bond over patriarchal and imperial authorities.

By using these excerpts setting out a text, it is clear manifestation that both *Ice-Candy-Man* and *Burnt Shadows* reconstruct the culture and feminine accounts by infusing the female experiences in the overarching figures of Partition, war, and the colonist history. Although Sidhwa is grieved with the destroyed harmony with the nativities, and she reveals the exploitation the women experienced during the Partition, Shamsie zooms out the argument to the entire world, in which she presents women not only as the victims but also the part of the resistance, memory, and survival. Both the authors disrupt the prevailing discourse on historical narratives and recreate the concept of culture through the lens of feminism and postcolonialism and reclaim womanhood as a very effective site of reconstructing narrative and culture.

Discussion

This analysis sheds light on the fact that *Ice-Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie tends to portray a strenuous image of womanhood that is burdened by trauma of historical events, dislocation of tradition and habits, along with patriarchal dominance. Due to the work of postcolonial feminist theory, the two novels challenge the conservative perception of nationalism by focusing on the embodied experiences and the emotional agency of women rather than traditional accounts of nationalism.

Using the background knowledge of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), specifically her terms concerning a sub altern woman, it becomes noticeable that both Sidhwa Ayah and Shamsie Hiroko live in a world where their voices are labeled as alternative and unacceptable. Nevertheless, as opposed to the utter silence that Spivak describes in her interpretation of the subaltern, both characters, in particular, Hiroko, regain voice, mobility and agency in narration. Spivak would go on to assert that colonial and patriarchal discourses tend to subsume bodies of women to nationalist signifiers and the same obtains in the case of the abduction and rape of Ayah something about which Sidhwa would remark that it represents a symbolizing of the violence directed against partitioning and dismembering the body politic of India.

In addition, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) also criticizes the Western feminist discourses in other parts of the world, portraying Third World women as passive victims. Both Sidhwa and Shamsie deconstruct such a construction by depicting women who despite being traumatized walk through their socio-political terrain with valor. The fact that through several wars, Hiroko survived and could never rebuild her life as it used to be in her familiar cultural environment corresponds to the idea expressed by Mohanty that women have to be read against the backdrop of their historical and geopolitical particularities.

From the side of trauma theory, Cathy Caruth (1996) indicates that trauma is not an occurrence of events but incapability to adequately process any such event at the time when

it happens. It is especially seen in *Burnt Shadows*, when the actual embodiment of the atomic bombing in the form of the physical scar is borne by Hiroko, and it symbolically and literally follows her throughout enough of her transnational crossing to have it be deemed haunting. Her trauma is stratified in the sense that it occurs not only through the memory but through the repetitive history of displacement and cultural losses. Failure of countries to learn the lesson of the past violence leads to new rounds of annihilation, and the novel places it on the personal background of Hiroko.

The theme of cultural and linguistic reclamation is also quite strong in *Ice-Candy-Man*. Postcolonial literature, claims Homi K. Bhabha (1994) is working in the third space in which hybrid identities are constructed. It is this hybridity which is reflected by Sidhwa in her style of narration and use of localized idioms. She makes English a cultured medium full of rhythms, cadences, and spirit of the subcontinent. This is not only a linguistic option that supports resistance to the colonial linguistic domination but one that values indigenous knowledge systems and oral heritage as well.

These interpretations are supported by the previous research. According to Jajja, the presentation of Partition as a female experience is what makes Sidhwa stand out of the crowd (2012). In much the same vein, Vitolo (2011) states that Shamsie works out in her *Burnt Shadows* the performance of identity by shifting characters in transnational sites where the cultural borders are erased and the gender positions are re-staged. Both writers, hence, pull the patriarch and the colonial myths by letting their main female characters talk with a sense of emotional and cultural supremacy.

Moreover, Leela Gandhi (1998) offers to stress not only ethical duty of postcolonial literature but also an ability to provide voices to marginalized. The landscapes of emotions of the two protagonists in the two novels, including, longing, loss, and resistance, represent a feminist ethics of care and memory. These narratives cannot be tied down to any official versions of history; they rest in the personal, the emotional and intimate and make a new way in understanding culture as experience of being in the world, gendered experience.

The present study is therefore a contribution and an addition to the current canon of postcolonial feminist criticism, in that it provides a comparative framework within which not only South Asian but also universal tales of war, migration and cultural survival are told. By so doing, it confirms that rewriting culture and womanhood is an act of resistance, reclaiming of space, voice and history.

Conclusion

Conclusion The themes of displacement and dislocation have become the most important in the *Burnt Shadows* (2009) written by Kamila Shamsie but when viewed in the framework of the major historical traumas, the Partition of Indian sub-continent, the atomic bombing of Tokyo and Hiroshima during World War II, and the post-events effects of the War on Terror after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, it gains even more emphasis. A story of emotional and physical displacement is interwoven by Shamsie with the help of characters, including a Pakistani prisoner, his Japanese mother, his Indian father, and his Afghan friend, whose lives reflect the heritage of colonialism and identity fragmentation in a postcolonial world. The novel crosses huge geographical and historical landscapes, starting with wartime before proceeding to the Partition of India before ending with the geopolitical fears of the 21st century. Quite the contrary, the *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) by Bapsi Sidhwa emphasizes a festooning of local culture, language and belief systems. Sidhwa at once rejects the pompous historical discourse beyond the Indian and the British historians through her eloquent description of communal flairs and values and highly sensitive

characters. Her novel adaptation of localized phrases and cultural idiom adds the native timbre, and accent to the English language. The story, especially the voice of the Muslim people, is weaved by immense compassion because the Muslims suffered the biggest violence in the Partition. The use of rooted and local identities in the novel as well as the lack of violence and chaos that the novel displays represents the desire of the author to find peace, stability and human dignity. Sidhwa stands against oppression and sympathetic to those in the judgmental fringe, thus demonstrating her adherence to an indigenous and humanitarian vision of literature.

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