

## Power and Gender Relations in *Ice-Candy Man*: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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### Abstract

*This paper analyzes power abuse and gender relations in Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man (2000) using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Fairclough's model. Set during India's Partition, the novel vividly depicts patriarchal oppression, with men, particularly the character Ice-Candy Man, exercising authority over women. Female characters, especially Shanta, experience emotional, mental, and physical exploitation, becoming victims of male chauvinism. The study emphasizes how linguistic manipulation and societal norms confine women to submissive roles, stripping them of their vitality. It also finds out that language is highlighted as a means to reinforce power dynamics, with English representing colonial and male dominance. The study reveals the marginalization of women and how the Partition devastated their aspirations, reducing them to powerless, mechanical beings.*

**Key words:** Power Abuse, Gender Relations, Patriarchal Oppression, Linguistic Manipulation, Marginalization

### Background of the Study

In the 21st century, power abuse and gender relations continue to evolve, with a global focus on gender equality and women's empowerment. Despite progress, patriarchal structures still perpetuate gender inequalities, impacting women's rights and opportunities. Pakistani novels often reflect these issues, portraying the impact of traditional power dynamics on women's lives. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* explores power abuse and gender relations in a patriarchal society, highlighting the exploitation of women, particularly during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as per Fairclough, is applied to examine how language in the novel reinforces and challenges power relations and gender norms. The paper reveals how discourse constructs patriarchal authority while also critiquing societal power dynamics.

### Problem Statement

This study seeks to examine how language plays a fundamental role in shaping and reinforcing power abuse and gender relations within the patriarchal setting of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1998). Despite the increasing focus on gender and power in literature, there remains a gap in exploring how linguistic choices actively uphold social hierarchies in patriarchal societies. Addressing this gap, the study utilizes Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate how specific language use within the novel mirrors and perpetuates unequal power dynamics. Through this analysis, the research aims to provide deeper insights into how patriarchal norms influence both the construction of social power structures and their effects on domestic life.

### Literature Review

Previous studies on *Ice-Candy Man* (1998) have focused on themes of power and gender relations, particularly during the partition of India in 1947. The novel portrays the

suppression of women's rights in a male-dominated society, showcasing how women were marginalized and victimized. Bapsi Sidhwa's work has been praised for shedding light on these issues, and the 2005 film *Earth*, based on the novel, further highlighted the struggles faced by women during this period, gaining international acclaim.

The novel's young narrator, Lenny, experiences the brutal realities of the partition, particularly through her bond with Ayah, her caretaker. This relationship exposes the violence and exploitation faced by women, with Ayah being treated as property by men. The novel thus reflects the broader theme of women's powerlessness and marginalization during the partition, which continues to be relevant in contemporary discussions on gender-based violence.

Scholars have examined *Ice-Candy Man* from feminist and postcolonial perspectives. For instance, Hai (2000) discussed women's exploitation, while Gidda (2006) explored the socio-political divisions between Hindus and Muslims, emphasizing survival and gender issues. Kleist (2011) and Waghmode (2011) analyzed the agency of female characters like Lenny and Ayah, highlighting their resilience despite societal constraints.

Other researchers, including Ahmed (2009) and Ehsan et al. (2015), emphasized the broader political consequences of partition on women, with Ayah symbolizing the marginalized women who suffered due to patriarchal and colonial forces. These studies suggest that Sidhwa's characters represent the collective trauma experienced by women across different backgrounds.

While much research has examined *Ice-Candy Man*'s portrayal of power and gender, further exploration through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) could offer deeper insights into how language, power, and gender intersect, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of patriarchal systems and their effects on women's lives.

### **Research Methodology**

This qualitative research investigates power and gender relations in *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa, focusing on the relationships between key characters, such as *Ice-Candy Man*, Shanta, Lenny, her parents, and Godmother, to explore issues surrounding women's suffering and marginalization. The study employs an analytic and literary approach to evaluate these themes, using Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model as a key tool to examine how language shapes ideology and identity in the novel.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is used to examine how language in *Ice-Candy Man* reflects and reinforces power structures within a patriarchal society. According to Fairclough (1995), CDA explores the interconnectedness of language, power, and society, emphasizing how discourse not only mirrors but also shapes social structures and ideologies.

The analysis applies Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model, comprising Textual Analysis, Discursive Practices, and Social Practices, to examine power and gender dynamics in *Ice-Candy Man*. Textual Analysis identifies linguistic features like vocabulary and syntax that construct power relations (Fairclough, 1995). Discursive Practices explores how discourse is created and interpreted within the novel's socio-historical context, reflecting or challenging gender norms. Social Practices interprets how language in the novel mirrors broader patriarchal structures, highlighting how societal power dynamics influence characters and reader perceptions. This approach contextualizes *Ice-Candy Man* within larger discussions on gender, power, and societal critique.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework is used to analyze Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* (2000). The analysis is divided into three sections: A, B, and C, each focusing on specific aspects of the text. Section A examines the experiential values of words, their relationships, and the use of metaphors. Section B examines the grammatical features and their roles in conveying experiences. Section C examines the formal organizational properties of the text. This approach provides a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of *Ice Candy Man*, revealing the intricate relationships between vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures in conveying meanings, ideologies, and the interplay of language, power, and social identities.

### Vocabulary Analysis

The investigation of vocabulary at Section A probes into the dimensions of meanings; these dimensions are indicated diagrammatically below:

#### Words Showing Social Experience of Power Gone Through by Various Characters

In *Ice-Candy-Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa uses language to explore the profound impact of social and gender power dynamics, especially in relation to the subjugation of women and the disintegration of multicultural harmony during the Partition of India. The protagonist, Lenny, serves as a vessel through which Sidhwa communicates the traumatic social experiences faced by individuals, especially women, during this period. Through Lenny's perspective, Sidhwa delves into the experiential values of characters, revealing how their interactions with society are influenced by power relations (Sidhwa, 1998).

Lenny, afflicted by polio, symbolizes both personal and national frailty. She is portrayed as physically weak, socially marginalized, and sexually exploited, reflecting the suffering of an entire country under colonial rule. The repetition of terms like "Freaky Mousey" and "Lousy Mousey" underscores Lenny's powerlessness and her diminished position both within her family and society (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 88). Her experiences mirror those of a nation on the brink of collapse, as India struggles to maintain its multiculturalism amidst the chaos of Partition. Lenny observes firsthand the fragmentation of a once-harmonious society, and her internal struggles reflect the external disintegration of social order.

Sidhwa emphasizes Lenny's sexual exploitation through lexical repetition, particularly in the descriptions of her encounters with her cousin, who takes advantage of her vulnerability. Words like "lick" and "honey" are repeated to highlight the cousin's continued abuse, drawing attention to the broader theme of female subjugation (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 172). Lenny's experiences, though intensely personal, serve as a microcosm for the violation of women during Partition, where violence against women was rampant and underscored their societal powerlessness. Similarly, the recurring use of "trembles" during these moments reinforces her vulnerability and the psychological impact of such violations (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 253).

In addition to Lenny's personal experiences, Sidhwa uses repetition to expose the societal hierarchies that further reinforce female subjugation. For instance, Lenny's dark complexion is repeatedly contrasted with her brother Adi's fair skin, reinforcing the cultural preference for lighter skin and Lenny's resulting inferiority complex (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 90). These contrasts, driven by physical differences, also serve to highlight deeper gender and societal biases.

The tension between gender and power relations is further explored through Sidhwa's depiction of *Ice-Candy Man* and his interactions with Ayah. *Ice-Candy Man*'s obsession with Ayah and his eventual betrayal of her after Partition reveal how gender roles shift based on political and social upheavals. Before Partition, *Ice-Candy Man* is depicted as a devoted admirer, but his character transforms into one of exploitation and control as he forces Ayah into prostitution (Sidhwa, 1998). The repeated dialogue in which *Ice-Candy Man* tries to

persuade Ayah, such as “Talk to me for a while... just for a while,” reflects his attempts to manipulate her, revealing the darker side of gender relations in a patriarchal society (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 264).

Sidhwa’s use of repetition throughout the novel highlights key themes, particularly the vulnerability of women and the breakdown of social order. The repetition of words like “Ayah” (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 273) and “Hai! Hai! Hai!” (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 274) draws attention to the emotional and physical suffering of women during the communal riots. These linguistic techniques underscore the helplessness and trauma that women experience, serving as a critique of the patriarchal structures that enable their continued oppression.

By examining Lenny’s relationships with characters such as Ayah and Godmother, Sidhwa reveals the strength of female bonds in the face of male violence. Lenny’s unwavering devotion to Ayah, despite her kidnapping and exploitation, reflects the deep emotional ties that transcend societal chaos. Similarly, Godmother’s role as a protector and mentor for Lenny exemplifies female resilience in the face of a male-dominated society (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 266).

Sidhwa’s use of repetition and rewording in *Ice-Candy Man* serves to explore themes of power, gender, and societal disintegration. The novel highlights the vulnerability of women in a patriarchal society, particularly during periods of political turmoil. Through the experiences of Lenny and other characters, Sidhwa critiques the social structures that marginalize women, using language as a powerful tool to reveal the human cost of Partition.

### **Grammatical Analysis**

This study examines the themes of power abuse and gender relations in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1998) through the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Fairclough's model. It highlights how the narrative, set against the backdrop of India's Partition, reveals significant issues such as sexual harassment, cultural and religious violence, and the devastating impacts of division on society.

### **Grammatical Analysis and Sentence Structure**

The grammatical analysis focuses on the experiential, relational, and expressive values conveyed through the text's grammatical features. It particularly addresses how the narrative centers on the harsh realities of partition, which include sexual violence and the pervasive oppression of women. The story reflects a dominant patriarchal framework, showcasing the brutality and violence arising from the division. Sidhwa's careful selection of sentence structures unveils the harsh realities of relationships and power dynamics between genders—the oppressors and the oppressed.

### **Positive Sentences Illustrating Male Chauvinism**

The protagonist, Lenny, provides a poignant perspective on male domination within her family dynamics. Despite her disability, she feels inferior compared to her brother, which reinforces her low self-esteem. For example, societal comments highlight this comparison: “It’s a pity Adi’s fair and Lenny so dark. He’s a boy. Anyone will marry him” (p. 90). Lenny's father's authoritarian presence also silences her mother, impacting Lenny's mental health as she feels the need to compensate for their silence through excessive chatter (p. 88). Furthermore, when Lenny visits a doctor, he defines her future solely in terms of marriage and motherhood, effectively stripping her of her individuality (p. 25). She grapples with feelings of degradation and exclusion during interactions with male authority figures, emphasizing her vulnerability (p. 125).

Lenny also faces sexual advances from her cousin, illustrating the objectification of women (p. 172). Ayah, another pivotal character, embodies the exploitation of women; her beauty captivates men, yet it ultimately leads to her downfall, reducing her to an object of desire (p. 41). Her victimization culminates when she is forcibly taken by men, highlighting the brutal realities women endure in a patriarchal society (p. 194).

The analysis illustrates the communal suffering of women across various religious backgrounds, who are historically portrayed as victims of violence, signifying shared experiences of sorrow and degradation (pp. 273-274). Sidhwa's narrative encapsulates the grim realities faced by women during partition, presenting them as the primary victims of male violence and societal upheaval.

*Ice-Candy Man* powerfully critiques the misogynistic structures that persist within society, demonstrating how the horrors of partition exacerbate the marginalization and objectification of women. Through vivid language and evocative imagery, Sidhwa effectively highlights the intersections of gender, power, and violence, shedding light on the profound impact of patriarchal norms on women's lives during this tumultuous period.

### Textual Analysis

In the analysis of the text, the narrative is examined on a larger scale to explore the interactional norms and reveal the power dynamics between characters. Specifically, the theme of powerlessness, both physical and emotional, is explored in the character of Lenny. Lenny is depicted as physically unstable due to her disability, which diminishes her self-esteem and positions her as an unworthy female figure. From a young age, she experiences gender discrimination and compares herself to her brother, leading to feelings of inferiority. She views herself as "skinny, wizened, sallow, wiggly-haired, ugly" in contrast to her brother, who is "beautiful" (p. 32). These feelings of inadequacy are exacerbated by derogatory comments from those around her, causing her both physical and emotional pain, especially in relation to her dark skin tone: "It's a pity Adi's fair and Lenny so dark. He's a boy. Anyone will marry him" (p. 90). These examples underscore the patriarchal values that devalue Lenny, while her brother is treated with respect and considered a favorable match due to his gender and complexion.

Lenny's marginalization is further deepened by the hurtful remarks from her own family, such as when her uncle questions why she has "such an unfortunate pair of eyes" (p. 180). Such comments lower her self-worth, leading her to blame herself for the strained relationship between her parents, as she struggles to fill the emotional void in their silences: "As the years advance, my sense of inadequacy and un-worth advances" (p. 88). This familial instability adds to her emotional suffering.

Lenny also experiences degradation on a societal level, such as when a Hindu Brahmin's disdainful gaze falls upon her and her servant Yousaf for being Parsi and Muslim, exacerbated by her sense of inferiority as a woman. Years later, she faces similar humiliation when a Parsi priest recoils from her touch, assuming she is menstruating, despite not knowing for sure (p. 125). These moments highlight the societal and religious conventions that treat women as unclean, perpetuating Lenny's sense of being an outcast.

Her medical treatment further reflects the marginalization she faces. Her disability, compounded by gender discrimination, limits her intellectual development. Her doctor's statement that "She doesn't need to become a professor" (p. 25) seals her fate, reinforcing societal expectations that women are destined for marriage and motherhood rather than personal achievement. The doctor discourages her pursuit of education, stifling her potential and individual growth.

Lenny's sexual awakening is also explored through her interactions with Ayah and Masseur. She experiences jealousy towards Ayah, feeling both envy and attraction towards Masseur, a passionate admirer of Ayah. Lenny's feelings for Masseur grow stronger, and she admits to preferring him over her cousin, who desires to marry her (p. 230). This sexual exploration reveals Lenny's complex emotions as she grapples with her attractions and the societal limitations placed on her as a woman.

Her cousin's sexual advances, which border on assault, leave her uncomfortable and distressed, as seen in instances where she defends herself from his inappropriate behavior (p. 172; p. 244). This dysfunctional relationship underscores Lenny's vulnerability and the lack of agency she has over her own body. Hence, Lenny's physical, emotional, and sexual powerlessness is shaped by societal and familial forces that confine her identity and limit her self-worth. From her disability to her experiences of gender discrimination and sexual exploitation, Lenny's journey is marked by an ongoing struggle against the oppressive structures that seek to control her life. This analysis illustrates the patriarchal and societal influences that contribute to her marginalization and emotional suffering

### **Influence of Gandhi on Lenny as a Powerful Gender**

In *Ice Candy Man* (1998), Lenny is deeply influenced by Gandhi when she meets him before the partition. She perceives him as a non-violent, peaceful leader and appreciates his gentle, angelic nature. Lenny feels comfortable in his presence and holds him in great esteem, lowering her eyes in shyness when Gandhi touches her face. She observes, "He touches my face, and in a burst of shyness I lower my eyes. This is the first time I have lowered my eyes before man" (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 96). Lenny considers Gandhi a protector of women and a lover of marginalized groups, including disabled children. However, her trust in him falters when she learns of the political manipulations surrounding the partition. Lenny reflects, "It wasn't until some years later...that I comprehended the concealed nature of the ice lurking deep beneath the hypnotic and dynamic femininity of Gandhi's non-violent exterior" (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 96). This realization about Gandhi's complex character strengthens Lenny's sense of self and leads her to face society's challenges with renewed confidence.

The relationship between Ayah and Masseur, another central dynamic in the novel, reflects Ayah's emotional attachment to Masseur, contrasting with the non-physical relationship she shares with Sharbat Khan. When Sharbat Khan offers dry fruit to Ayah, she prefers the paan given by Masseur, signifying her deeper affection for him. Sidhwa illustrates this moment: "Ayah looks at the succulent paan, plump with cardamom, and then at Masseur's mouth. Her face reflects an answer" (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 162). The tragic end to their love comes with Masseur's death, which leaves Ayah devastated. Lenny narrates the intensity of Ayah's grief, noting, "Masseur's death has left in her the great empty ache...there is an added dimension to her loss I cannot comprehend" (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 188). Ayah, deeply affected by this loss, compares her love to tragic romances like Heer-Ranjha and Sohni-Mahiwal.

Ayah's forced marriage and subsequent exploitation as a prostitute serve as a symbol of the violence and betrayal of partition. Initially, Ayah represents a united India, where people coexist peacefully, and she captivates her male admirers with her beauty. Her physical charm is described in vibrant detail: "Her rolling bouncy **walks** that agitates the globules of her buttocks under her cheap colorful saris" (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 13). However, the partition transforms her admirers into aggressors. In a chilling scene, Ayah is dragged away by her former friends: "They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut...Her lips are drawn away from her teeth" (Sidhwa, 1998, pp. 194-195). Eventually, Ayah is forced into prostitution by *Ice-Candy Man*, who even changes her name to erase her identity. Lenny laments Ayah's tragic fate, stating, "They have shamed her...Not those men in the carts—they

were strangers—but Sharbat Khan and *Ice-Candy Man* and Imam Din and Cousin's cook and the butcher" (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 266). This reflects the profound betrayal Ayah endures at the hands of those she once trusted, symbolizing the deeper socio-political rupture caused by partition.

In *Ice Candy Man* (1998), the influence of patriarchy on the character of Godmother, despite her powerful and influential position, is evident through her harsh treatment of her unmarried sister, known as Slave Sister. Godmother follows patriarchal norms in her conduct, treating her sister as an unwanted and insignificant figure within the family. This patriarchal dominance is particularly highlighted in a scene where Godmother prevents Slave Sister from donating blood at a hospital, stating, "No, she says, you may kindly not donate your blood! I can't afford to have you go all faint and limp on me." As a result, Slave Sister appears utterly deprived and dependent, unable to live according to her own choices (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 222). This passage encapsulates the helplessness and submission enforced by patriarchal structures. The analysis also portrays the maltreatment of women during the partition, particularly through the actions of Sher Singh and his gang. Lenny, the narrator, observes this mistreatment when Sher Singh's group of male relatives, including *Ice-Candy Man*, harasses women in the absence of their male tenants, shouting, "pretty ladies: don't hide. We have something to show you" (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 122). This group's actions, including exposing themselves to the women, reflect the exploitation of women as a means to retaliate for the humiliation of Sher Singh's own family, whose women were similarly abused (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 156). This cycle of revenge illustrates how women on both sides of the conflict were victimized by men to settle their rivalries.

Through the story of Jinnah and his wife, the novel also reflects the gender power dynamics. Jinnah's wife, who defied societal norms by marrying outside her Parsee community, eventually faced a tragic fate. Although she demonstrated boldness in her choices, her defiance was "humbled" and her "energy extinguished," signifying her eventual submission to the oppressive forces around her (Sidhwa, 1998, pp. 170-171). Her story highlights how even bold, independent women could not escape the clutches of patriarchal dominance.

The violence, marginalization, and oppression of women during the partition are further depicted in the novel. As Lenny learns, women were often forced into extreme measures, such as committing suicide, to escape dishonor. When Ayah is rescued from her abductors, the cries of the "fallen women" reflect the collective suffering of generations of women who chose death over dishonor (Sidhwa, 1998, pp. 273-274). The novel also presents gruesome instances of violence, including the brutal mutilation of women's bodies, exemplified by the horrifying discovery of "two gunny bags full of women's breasts" in a train (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 149). This violence drives *Ice-Candy Man* to seek revenge by abducting and prostituting Ayah, a symbolic retaliation against the Hindus and Sikhs responsible for these atrocities (Sidhwa, 1998, p. 166).

### Discussion

The research applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore power dynamics and gender relations in *Ice Candy Man*, utilizing Fairclough's three-dimensional model. CDA connects language to societal power structures, examining how discourse maintains certain interests and influences social relations. The analysis focuses on the portrayal of oppressed individuals, particularly women, in the text.

In the first stage, the text reveals the conditions of powerless individuals, particularly women. The second stage investigates the processes that lead to their oppression. The third stage examines the social factors contributing to women's marginalization, analyzing how male dominance sustains their powerlessness.

Through *Ice Candy Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa paints a vivid picture of the oppression of women in underdeveloped societies, highlighting the role of tradition in reinforcing their subjugation. The novel showcases the way patriarchal norms devalue women, confining them to their homes and denying them their rights. Sidhwa exposes how men monopolize power and treat women as inferior beings, sometimes even as victims of violent rivalries. The character Shanta, for instance, is unable to resist male brutality due to her vulnerability as a woman.

### Conclusion

*Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa provides a stark depiction of power and gender relations in an underdeveloped society, with a strong focus on male domination. The novel portrays how men, represented by characters like *Ice-Candy Man*, exercise control over women, exploiting them emotionally and physically. Shanta, a key female character, becomes a victim of this patriarchy, suffering brutal mental and emotional abuse. *Ice-Candy Man*'s manipulative behavior drains her of vitality, turning her into a lifeless object. Sidhwa illustrates the harsh reality where women are forced into submission, confined by societal boundaries. The findings emphasize that *Ice-Candy Man* presents a realistic view of patriarchy, where men rule over women without regard for their feelings. Sidhwa uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Fairclough's model, to explore the impact of the Partition on women, highlighting their marginalization and transformation into mere tools for male power. The novel illustrates how patriarchy erases women's aspirations and individuality, leaving them as mechanical beings devoid of life's colors and joys. It also underscores the role of language and cultural power, such as the use of English, to establish dominance and perpetuate control, especially during the socio-political upheaval of India's Partition.

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