



RESEARCH PAPER

A Psychosemiotic Analysis of Moral Dualities in *Ice-Candy Man* and *Train to Pakistan*

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of characters' perception and their behavior that disrupted during the course of partition grounded on religious affiliations. This paper explores that how characters psychologically undergo significant transformations under the pressure of religious affiliations during Partition. Prior to partition, Hindu-Muslim was living harmoniously because of shared social fabric and culture but after partition their unity turned into animosity and created rift among them. This paper investigates how the moral binaries of good and evil are constructed, deconstructed, and psychologically internalized in *Ice-Candy Man* and *Train to Pakistan* through a psychosemiotic lens. This paper will qualitatively analyze the signs and symbols that are present in the two novels by applying Charles S. Peirce's theory of emotion. Drawing on Charles S. Peirce's theory of signs and Lacan's concept of the "uncanny," the paper examines how semiotic representations in the two novels reflect the evolving psychological states of the characters. Moreover, this paper concludes that perception of people changes due to changing social, biological, and psychological factors during the course of Partition. Religious extremism, fanaticism, and revenge are the factors behind this change in perception. This paper recommends that future research can be conducted where psychosomatic can be applied to various trauma or partition novels by incorporating psychology, history and literature to create a holistic approach towards research.

KEYWORDS Psychosemiotics, Signs and Symbols, Good and Evil, Partition

Introduction

Ice Candy Man by Bapsi Sidhwa is a partition novel that represents the trauma of 1947 through the lens of a young Parsee girl, Lenny. It provides a vivid interpretation of the communal ferocity, dislocation and fear that followed the splitting of Sub-continent. Khushwant Singh also discusses the atrocities of Partition in the same manner as Sidhwa did. The partition led to the creation of two nations relocating millions and sparking brutal rattles amid Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. These two authors' narrative draw a special attention towards the psychological and emotional toll this event had on ordinary people. The prominent themes of the novels are identity, religious conflict, loss of innocence, disintegration of harmonious communities and loss of innocence.

This research intends to analyze the two Partition narratives: *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh and *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa in the light of psychosemiotics. It brings to light the perception regarding human actions and behavior from the perspective of good and evil postures that changed in the course of Partition. People having kind-hearted natures and gentle traits turned foes to one another. It was peculiar to see that the time-tested friends became antagonists and had adversaries within their ranks as they

started migrating to unknown destinations. Such a change has been ascertained through psychosemiotics. Through the lens of Signs and Symbols how the fundamental factors contributed to the collapse of the social order. It will also delve into the transformational development that shattered the people's sociological and collective framework and structure in the course of the Partition. Moreover, it will uncover the reasons why the great believers in positivity succumbed to the negativity and will see how the Signs and Symbols work to determine the shared shock on them.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have explored these two novels with the perspective of horrors of partition, feminist criticism, and construction of multiple identities or identity crisis. Moreover, it has discussed train in perspective of witnessing the havoc of the divide. Ravinder Kaur focuses in the article "The Last Journey Exploring Social Class In 1947 Migration", on means of transport used by Hindus and Sikhs. There is no safe transport for the underprivileged class. He says that the experience of the upper class is suppressed in the Partition literature. The mode of transport provides a standpoint to witness and later recount the Partition. The speeds at which we cover distance determine how we experience and recall the terrain, plus witness daily trivial happenings. He applied Paul Virilio's concept of 'speed' as a 'determinant of one's world view and subject it to a class analysis' (Kaur, 2006, p.10). During the partition, more refugees were produced on both sides to build space for refugees. The level of danger decreases with the shorter journey. He gives an example of Khuswant Singh's novel where he immortalizes train journeys in *Train to Pakistan*. However, this paper will assess signs and symbols in the light of psychosemiotics in both novels.

Deepika Bahrainin (2006) in her article "Women and the Trauma of Partition" argues that the novel confronts both prospects and restrictions of literary representation. She sees the novel from the feminist point of view. She says that Sidhwa attempts to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. The woman's body is objectified for desire and punishment. The actual trauma that Ayah faced is lost or not properly explained. It may not be voiced for the worry of a social death. The study will discuss how Ayah as a symbol reveals the good and bad sides of the other characters using psychosemiotics.

Dr. Paromita (2011) argues in *Religion, Partition, Identity, and Diaspora: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man* that the subcontinent's communal life is destroyed and new multiple identities are reconstructed due to the Partition. She says that Sidhwa's stress is on the historical nature of issues experienced by the Diaspora in the process of acquiring a new nationality. Lenny herself has multiple identities like her own Diasporic identity, her realization of her feminine status, and her hybridity-representation of multi-lingual texture in her language. Owing to her Diasporic status, Lenny's story is more about the rehabilitation of trauma and tackling with life after the Partition rather than the fracture and loss faced during the episode. The language is seen as a metaphor for the rich plethora of India's vast culture. Lenny appropriates Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh words in vocabulary throughout the novel owing to their distinct character. He highlights some metaphors like godmother and Lenny's doll but does not describe them from the perspective of good and evil.

Pawan Kumar (2015) in his thesis *A Postcolonial Study of Ice-Candy Man* argues that the effect of colonialism does not end with the withdrawal of British rule in their native land. History demonstrates that British rulers always wed the policy of divide and rule to overpower Hindu-dominated countries. This unity was disintegrated by their policies. This disunity can be traced in the relationship between Ice-Candy Man, Masseur, and Ayah.

Thousands of innocent people were killed without consideration of who was responsible. According to him, Sidhwa used native words in the text to show her anti-colonial attitude.

This paper will explore how the unity among characters changes, and how the perception of characters changes towards one another. Dr. Vipul B. Godhaniya (2016) in his thesis "A Representation of Solidarity" in Khushwant Singh's novel *Train to Pakistan* says that the novel deals with harmony among three main communities Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim of the village Mano Majra, who have been living together for many years regardless of their religions. The people follow the quote 'live and let live' which was the basis of their integration. The train is an important aspect of the lives of the people of Mano Majra. Vipul gives different examples of symbols, which show harmony among the people. However, this research focuses on analyzing train as a key element of uncanny that causes change in the perception of Icecandy man towards Ayaah. Furthermore, it analyzes other inanimate objects that play fundamental role in altering the perception of characters in the novel.

Material and Methods

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in the theoretical framework of semiotics and psychoanalysis. Through close textual analysis and comparative reading, the research examines how symbols, language, and narrative structure in *Ice-Candy Man* and *Train to Pakistan* represent and complicate the binaries of good and evil. The psychosemiotic approach enables a nuanced understanding of how trauma, moral ambiguity, and cultural memory are encoded in the literary texts. Psychosemiotics is an amalgam of two words- psychology and semiotics. Psychosemiotics is the study of signs and symbols, and how we perceive signs in the light of human psychology. These Partition novels have not been interpreted in this context. This paper will contribute to revealing the mental makeup of the victims and survivors at the time of migration. It can also relate to bringing out the psychology of the people whenever they witness a massacre.

The paper qualitatively examines signs and symbols by applying Charles S. Peirce's theory of emotion, which states that "Emotion has a central role in the development of signs" (Liszka, 1996, p.7). The characters as well as their actions are regarded as signs and symbols. Ayah, Train, Lenny's dreams, Lenny's toys, and Lenny's truth are interpreted as signs and symbols throughout the chapter. These signs will highlight character's good and evil traits and explain that this mindset changes due to social, biological, and psychological factors. The rationale as to the characters' changing perspectives in both works can be found by qualitatively assessing the signs using Lacan's concept of Uncanny.

Results and Discussion

Bapsi Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh have artistically projected the bloodbath scenes in their novels by using Signs and Symbols. Symbolism is a technique in literature, which is used to highlight the situation by giving it a symbolic meaning that is different from its literal sense. Signs are used to refer to a physical object whereas symbols refer to an abstract representation. Signs are physical things. Signs point to something or command someone about something. In contrast to physical signs, symbols are used to represent something else by resemblance. For example, the well-known image of a dove symbolizes peace. For instance, Singh has used 'Train' as a sign of tyranny, oppression, and helplessness. Bapsi, on the other hand, has used "Ayah" as a symbol of love and care. Morris says:

"Something is a sign of something only because it is interpreted as a sign of something by some interpreter"(Winfried,1995, pg.2).

There are several signs and symbols in *Train to Pakistan* and *Ice-Candy Man* that highlight and build the good and evil behavior of the characters. The signs reflect the inner psychology of the characters. For Peirce, emotion has a central role in the development of signs (Liszka,1996, pg.7). Emotion arises from feelings and feeling is an intentional thing. The feeling is a social thing that connects one mind with the other (Liszka,1996, pg.8). Therefore, emotions, in other words, are reflected through signs. So, we can say that the sign is emotional. Ayah, Train, Lenny's dreams, Lenny's toys, and Lenny's truth are taken as signs and symbols because they can represent people's emotions. These signs and symbols will be examined throughout the chapter.

Ayah can be regarded as a symbol for Ice-Candy Man. She is a symbol of purity and desire for Ice-Candy Man. Ayah is the protagonist of the novel. She is the center of attention of men owing to her attractive Beauty. For the Ice-Candy man, she is a symbol of longing and yearning. He is always in quest of her love, affection and attention; therefore, he always amuses her. However, after the Partition his attitude shifts towards Ayah. Now he no longer identifies her as his lover instead she becomes an evil identity for him. This transformation in the perception is owing to social aspects. Society has a great influence on molding the psychology of a person so his perception changes. When a trainload of corpses comes to Lahore, Ice-Candy Man's perception of people reconstructs. The major social factor behind the alteration is religion. Now he treats Ayah based on her religious identity. For him, she is only a Hindu and not his sweetheart. She is an individual with different socio-religious identity having dissimilar cultural norms. Her status has changed from his sweetheart to an alien person, with whom he no longer feels any sort of connection. She is no more than Hindu for Ice-candy man.

Partition has become a phenomenon that makes people of different religions enemies of one another. People are channelizing their frustration, trauma and loss by hurting people of different religion. Religion became a prominent dividing factor for either side. Before the Partition, people of different religions sat and ate together. In the novel, Mano Manjra was epitome of religious co-existence and solidarity. However, after the Partition, religion became a cause of separation and triggered hatred among lovers. In *Ice-Candy Man*, people switched religion to escape death. For instance, Moti and Papoo became Christians and Hari became Muslim in order to survive in their social sphere. However, Ayah did not convert her religion. Afterward, she has to suffer for sticking to her belief.

The train is another major symbol used in both texts. Train becomes a nexus for present and past. Train plays a major role in shifting perceptions of various characters. The train was full of Muslim corpses when it arrived at Mano Majra, so the target of revenge was Hindus and Sikhs for Ice-Candy Man. In the novel, the train becomes a medium to take out that frustration on people belonging to other religion. During the 1940s, the train was a common means of transport for the people. It was cheap and economical and people mostly traveled through it. The train is a sign of both good and evil in both novels. Before the Partition, people perceive 'Train' as a symbol of good. The train is a sign of life force for the people of Mano Majra. People and even birds and animals set their daily routines according to the arrival of the train. In *Train to Pakistan*, very few trains come to Mano Majra after partition. This makes train important for the people. After the Partition, people become to perceive "Train' as a sign of evil. This shift in perception of people is owing to social and biological factors. The first social instance is the advancing of the ghost train carrying the corpses of Muslims from Pakistan. The description of the train, which alters

the people's perception of the train, is given below: The train came to a hiatus at Mano Majra station. It was from Pakistan.

'There are no lights on the train.'
'The engine did not whistle'
It is like a ghost.' (60)

At first, the train carried both people and goods; now it carries corpses. Here applies the concept of uncanny by Lacan. Uncanny may describe incidents, for example, where an everyday object or act is experienced in an unsettling and alienating manner. It is familiar rather than mysterious. According to Jacques Lacan, the uncanny places us "in the field where we do not know how to distinguish bad and good, pleasure from displeasure," (Stuartelden, 2021) resulting in an irreducible anxiety. In the text, the train creates that uncanny situation in the minds of people which results in distress and disbelief among people. The train is a factor that causes people not to distinguish between good and bad. After the arrival of the ghost train, two officers in the jeep came to Mano Majra. One was Sikh and the other was Muslim. The Sikh had come after the ghost train arrived. The Sikh is also symbolic of something going to happen. It is a symbol of disunity, which is going to happen. It indicates the change that the people of Mano Maja are disunited and Muslims are evacuated from Mano Majra.

Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* discusses the pleasant as well as shocking events and incidents before and after the Partition. The novel shows the neutrality of people towards politics and religion before Partition. They were unaware of the nasty fact until a trainload of corpses approached Mano Majra. People got charged and exasperated to the extent that the violent riots set off and hell was let loose in the whole city. Some people flew into a fit of rage over the all-consuming train and started killing even their friends and next-door neighbors. Towards the end, a train crossed the borders of Pakistan safely.

Dr. Vipul B. Godhaniya in his thesis *A Representation of Solidarity in Train to Pakistan* says that there is harmony among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Before Partition, the train is a sign of integration among the people, connecting them together. The local deity is considered an embodiment of harmony. All the people take blessings from it irrespective of their religion. Similarly, morning prayers of different religions are held at the same time in Mano Majra. Gurdwara is also a symbol of unity. This unity is indicated through the following reference, "This is a Gurdwara, the Guru's house- anyone may stay here" (Sidhwa, 2012, pg.37). The path turns its narrow track over the mud huts to the opening in the center where the moneylender's house, the mosque, and the temple faced each other. This imagery shows the coexistence of people of all religions (Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs) without any dispute. But this unity is shaken by the visit of the head constable. He planted seeds of mistrust among the people. The head constable is also regarded as another social factor, which causes people to alter their perception about their fellow beings. "The head constable's visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter" (Sidhwa, 2012, pg.127). This reference clearly shows the disunity and mistrust created among the people of varied religions. Such a religious division is also substantial in developing the biological factor. Biologically, a person defends himself, his own family, and then the people of identical values, caste, and creed. Hence, people naturally get inclined towards people of the same social group. In the novel, all Muslims intend to get revenge for their Muslim sisters and brothers killed and all Hindus and Sikhs aim to get vengeance for their community.

There are numerous social instances in the text which provoke people to change their perceptions. First, a train of dead Sikhs was led to Mano Majra by Muslims. The

second cause was that Ram Lal was assassinated and no one knew the murderer and doubt was on Sultana and his gang who had absconded to Pakistan. Now they mistrust Muslims on these grounds. Consequently, people's perceptions transformed based on doubt and mistrust.

Lenny's dreams are also symbolic in the novel. In *Ice-Candy Man*, Lenny's dreams can be interpreted through Freud's theory of displacement of dreams. Displacement takes place when we transform the person or object we are concerned about to someone else. She dreams about the roar of the zoo lion tracking her to whatever point of the world she goes. She cannot keep herself out of sight from him. According to Freud's theory, in the process of displacement, the objects we see in our dreams are someone else. We are unconsciously dreaming about them in the face of others. In her dream, the zoo lion may be symbolized as Ice-Candy Man while she may be represented as Ayah because Ice-Candy Man chases her everywhere. The lion is considered an evil and harmful thing. In other words, Ice-Candy is portrayed as evil for Ayah. He is the one who abducted her and forced her into prostitution. Lenny's nightmares may also signify the incident when Ice-Candy Man abducted her with his gang fellows. Also, Lenny's nightmares are symbols of the pain, guilt, and suffering of the people owing to partition. Her nightmares depict every single person who has suffered at the hands of other people during the partition. That is to say, she connects with the other people through her dreams. Her dreams link with the pains of people. She can sense the pain and sorrow of other people. Her nightmares are representations of the collective shame of those who raped the women and those who escaped and did not look back to save them. Her nightmares characterize all the sufferings of the people including fallen women and the death of the old man, women and children after partition. Here applies the theory of Peirce that emotion has a central role in the development of a sign. As feeling is a social thing that connects one mind with the other, so Lenny's mind connects with the people around her. Nightmare is a sign that exhibits the psychology of the people, which reflects the anguishes of people during the partition.

Lenny's doll is another sign of change in perception. Children have authority over their toys. They can demonstrate their authority and power over them. As a child, Lenny has control over her dolls. Lenny witnessed a massacre and violence in the Lahore riots. She saw people spread-eagled like dolls. On returning home, she enacted the same play. She picked up her giant life-like doll with a china face, blinking blue eyes and black curls, pulled apart her legs, and broke her. Before this, she never played with her dolls. The doll implies the brutality perpetuated by the heartless people on the innocent ones during the Lahore riots. It made a noise when Lenny broke it. It denotes the pain and cries of people. Moreover, Lenny's choice of the doll is symbolic in the sense that she chooses a 'life-like doll', which looks like a living being. It may also signify the women, who were raped and captured during partition.

Truth is considered a supreme virtue and regarded as a symbol of good. In *Ice-Candy Man*, Lenny learns throughout her life that truth always ends on a good note. If you speak the truth, you will gain a reward in the end. She speaks the truth and her mother praises her for her bravery. Her mother praises her truth-speaking skill, "I love you. You spoke the truth! What's broken plate? Break a hundred plates!" (Sidhwa, 2012, pg.82). The advice in the statement by her mother encourages Lenny to speak the truth under any circumstances. Her mother conditions her to speak the truth, as it does not create any harm to anyone. However, after partition, the truth became a symbol of both good and evil. It represents both sides of the coin. This truth no longer remains a virtue; rather, it becomes an evil thing. It becomes a symbol of evil. Ice-Candy Man encourages Lenny to speak the truth about Ayah's hideout. As she was conditioned by her mother to speak the truth, she was unable to lie, keep silent, and keep a secret. She unconsciously states the facts and she

knows that her facts will harm Ayah. Her certainty proves to be a death sentence for Ayah. Sharbat Khan's attitude towards Lenny changed because of the truth spoken by her. Then he shakes his head and bitterly says, "Children are the Devil... They only know the truth." (Sidhwa, 2012, pg.188) Now the truth turns into a sign of evil. Sidhwa in her novel uses 'Truth' as a sign of both good and evil. The sign is good or evil depending upon the context of the situation. In this regard, reference to context is Partition and Truth turns out to be an evil. Sidhwa herself in an interview confesses this notion. "Truth, nothing but the truth can lead to a lot of harm, too", as Sidhwa explains in her interview with David Montenegro (Montenegro, 1990, pg.32).

The situation emerges in the novels that crestfallen and miserable refugees and settlers, whose family members and next of kin had been massacred and butchered, received heartbreaking news employing signs and symbols like 'Train', 'Religion', Ayah and Ice-Candy Man. The Partition not only changed the lives but also the whole region. The grand narratives of nation, race, and faith go on, as the characters psychologically perceive signs and symbols. Both sides in the bloodbath have a narrative of being victimized and abused. The key protagonists of the movement were hunted down and executed and the characters launching heroic fights in the novels, on the other hand, become enemies of one another. The people from each side turned to accept transformation, relocation, and resettlement with a heavy heart and found no other way out. Mass departures and transformation were based on psychosemiotics.

Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* describes the situation of Lahore before, during, and after the Division. It deals with the sensitivity and kindness of the people before the Partition, and how real empathy changed in the course of Division. Ice-Candy Man and Ayah became the perfect embodiment of psychological change during the relocation and resettlement, whereas, Ice-Candy Man became the sign of malice, spite, and hatred for Ayah. Their perception of each other transforms during the partition. There is perpetual change in the mindset of Ice-Candy Man towards Ayah. Before Partition, Ayah was a sign of good for Ice-Candy Man, and during Partition, she became a sign of evil. There is again a shift in perception of Ice-Candy Man. She again becomes a symbol of lust, desire, and good for Ice-Candy Man. He wants to gain the attention and love of Ayah and psychologically wants to redeem himself for his past actions.

The biological and psychological factor behind the change is Revenge. Everyone wants to take vengeance for his or her fellow beings. This mindset disturbs the relationship between Ice-Candy Man and Ayah, Nooran and Juggut Singh, and the people of Mano Majra. Revenge becomes dominant over love, unity, and fraternity among the people. In *Train to Pakistan*, a Sikh priest, Meet Singh's perception of the people of Mano Majra does not transform. He still believes in unity and harmony between Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus. When the people of Mano Majra decide to kill Muslims, he prompts them of their unity and brotherhood but they reject his idea of not telling Muslims. Factors like religion, revenge, caste, and creed are dominant over Meet Singh's advice if not harming their brothers. In *Ice-Candy Man*, Ice-Candy Man takes Revenge by putting fire in Lahore and getting Ayah abducted and raped by the men of his community. The fire he puts on the building is a symbol of destruction and evil in which the buildings, the human beings, the heritage, the relationships, and the human values are burned to the ground in the course of Partition. He exploits her to gain satisfaction for the women raped in his community. When things settle down, Ayah becomes no longer targeted for retaliation. Another psychological factor behind Ice-Candy Man's shift in perception of Ayah is the relationship between Ayah and Masseur. As Ayah was the love interest of Ice-Candy Man but she loved Masseur, so he had evil intentions for her and sees Ayah as a symbol of evil in the novel.

Conclusion

This paper based on a comprehensive and extensive study of the novels written by Bapsi Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh has proved that characters psychologically perceive signs and their perception changes with partition.

The perceptions of characters are analyzed in two ways, first, the characters' perception about things, they perceive their surroundings, get impact from it, and then reveal it through their actions like the train, Lenny's dreams, Lenny's toys, and Lenny's truth. Secondly, the characters' perceptions of the other characters like Ice-Candy Man's perception of Ayah, Juggut Singh's perception of Nooran, Meet Singh's perception of Muslims, and people's perceptions of Iqbal are analyzed. This perception changes due to changing social, biological, and psychological factors during the course of Partition. Religious extremism, fanaticism, and revenge are the factors behind this change in perception. People negated the human morals and ethics, and consideration for the social and moral norms in the course of the Partition. The matter in hand has investigated the true picture of symbolism in both novels, which gives a new understanding of the objects around and the human beings living together for a long. The study proves that characters in the novels undergo a variation of actions generating different signs, symbols, and imagery, highlighting the changing attitudes of people towards one another. These signs show the mental makeup and thoughts of the character undergoing trauma, fear, and distress as in the case of Lenny. These symbols in the case of Lenny (Lenny's dreams and Lenny's doll) show the impacts of Partition on the mind of a child. All this symbolism and social and biological factors (Religion and Revenge) contribute to the development of the perception of the characters of the two novels. Factors change the perception and psychology of the characters while Signs and Symbols reveal that change in the two texts. It also scans the good and evil sides of the characters due to their changing perception. Thus, this paper justifies its main argument by exploring signs and symbols present in both novels.

Recommendations

This study provides multiple perspectives for future research. Researchers can expand the topic of Psycho semiotic by incorporating it with South Asian partition novels to investigate how signs and symbols function in different cultural and linguistic contexts. Charles S. Peirce triadic model of icon, signs, index and symbols can provide an authentic framework for understanding how emotional and trauma transformation are encoded in literature.

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