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Discrimination as spring of Motivation: A Psychological reading in the Select Works of Helen Oyeyemi and Bapsi Sidhwa

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Abstract

At its core, this research tends to examine the authors' traumatic childhood experiences, cultural influences which pays off and helps to strengthen their writing. Literature reflects the cultural traditions, rituals and social structure influence the human psyche. It is alleged that this research study contributes to the archives of transnational literary sphere and visualizes in depth on Parsi Pakistani American and Black British writings with reference to Bapsi Sidhwa and Helen Oyeyemi. Further, this study provides traumatic insights in the select works of the authors and brings in the key psychological concepts such as creativity in writing, day dreaming, suppression, discrimination, transforming their pain into motivation by foregrounding the experience of the Nigerian and Parsi people. It also exposes the authors' urge to rewrite the history of their country people to attain liberation from the hypnotized thoughts in their unconscious mind interlinked with the social customs and rituals.

Keywords: racial prejudice, sexual slavery, identity crisis, gender discrimination, mental struggle, cultural and religious issues

Introduction

Literature is indeed an outpour of the author's repressed mind and free play of emotions. The study of literature enhances a rapport between the writer and the reader. In this case, the reader also finds a liberation from his/her constrained self and portrays diversity and heart-wrenching dedication to the role of women in society. The select authors for the study Helen Oyeyemi and Bapsi Sidhwa have been able to highlight the issues that women confront and make their struggles both inside and outside the family and also in their society. This is one of the prominent themes of their fictional writings because of the writer's diverse experiences.

A Brief Overview of the Novel

The select novel *The Icarus Girl (2005)* - The protagonist is eight-year-old Jessamy "Jess" Harrison, who was born to a Nigerian mother and British father. Despite her level of intelligence, Jess is emotionally vulnerable and frequently feels alienated and torn between two cultures. When she travels to Nigeria, she meets TillyTilly, a mystery imaginary girl who ends up becoming her only companion. TillyTilly first comes out as caring and protective friend, later her behaviour reflects the shadow side of Jess's racial discrimination and cultural discrimination. Jess believes that TillyTilly is a magical "abiku" spirit-a spirit-child Yoruba belief-who poses a threat to take control of her life. The narration, leads to psychological cultural conflict, alienation, and the perils of repressed trauma.

The Black British author Helen Oyeyemi's psychological conflicts relates to the writings of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man (1988)*-The story of Lenny, a little Parsi girl growing up in Lahore during the 1947 Partition of India, is narrated. (later published as *Cracking India*). The cultural discrimination breaks out between Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus shattered the lives of many people. The protagonist Ayah is kidnapped and sexually assaulted amid communal rioting, representing the terrible destiny of many women during Partition. Hatred and trauma turn the once-funny and endearing *Ice-Candy-Man* into a vicious, vindictive character. The narrative demonstrates how Partition destroys families, friendships, and identities by fusing personal grief with a national disaster.

Objectives of the Study

The main emphasis of the paper revolves around a series of critical inquiries. Foremost, it investigates Bapsi Sidhwa's portrayal of Partition and its enduring impact on individual and collective identities. The paper further explores her treatment of gender, marginalization, and minority perspectives within patriarchal and politically turbulent societies. It also evaluates how Sidhwa employs personal narratives to foreground historical trauma and cultural resilience. In addition, the discussion highlights the relevance of her work in understanding post-colonial identity formation and the socio-political realities of South Asian history. It also examines how Helen Oyeyemi reworks myth, folklore, and fairy-tale traditions to interrogate questions of identity, selfhood, and cultural hybridity. The paper further explores the representation of fragmented identities and the fluid boundaries between reality and fantasy in her narratives. It also assesses the role of gender, race, and displacement in shaping the psychological landscapes of her characters. In addition, the discussion considers the broader implications of Oyeyemi's narrative strategies in redefining contemporary postcolonial and feminist literary discourse.

Methodology

This significant idea of the paper is designed to adopt analytical and interpretative yardsticks in order to gauge the universality of the select novels. Discussion done on these two authors emerges separately as the cultural and social environment for the chosen novels are different. Proficient information is incorporated with regard to Primary sources and Secondary sources. The contents of the paper follows the

norms and procedures framed by MLA Handbook-Ninth edition.

Psychological Reading

A critical method that concentrates on the interior thoughts and feelings of characters in a literary work is called psychological reading. It aims to comprehend how characters' thoughts, motivations, desires, anxieties, and unconscious conflicts affect their behavior and interpersonal relationships. This method explores aspects including trauma, memory, repression, dreams, and identity development by drawing on psychological theories, particularly psychoanalysis. Psychological reading places more emphasis on how a character's behavior is shaped by their own experiences and emotional issues than it does on external events or narrative progression. By using this approach, literature is interpreted as a mirror of human psychology, providing a more profound understanding of the intricacies of the human mind.

The Protagonist's Trauma : A Psychological Reading

The series of unfolding the life history of writers such as Helen Oyeyemi and Bapsi Sidhwa gives a brief discussion about the history of Black British literature and Parsi Pakistani American Literature the reason for its origin and multiple incidents of contemporary times, the bio critical information about the author and the difficulties they had as a consequence of the prevailing violence taken for study and the dual awareness that led to psychological damage is also emphasized.

Within fractured images or the fractured characters such as Ayah Shanta in *Ice Candy Man*, and Jess in *The Icarus Girl* exposes the psyche of dual awareness, the three levels of a mind, the formation of the human personality, and the stages of psychosexual development. An analysis of the writers taken for study take on mimetic traits that imitate real people while distancing them from the Mirror due to the tangled psychological pressures. The researcher made an attempt to draw a coincidence between the characters and their psychological conflicts, while self-realization and the attainment of our full potential are unreachable ideals, all humans should make an effort to achieve them.

The transition of Ayah Shanta from a caretaker to a decision-maker in *Ice Candy Man*, Jess in *The Icarus Girl* from the impact of double consciousness to the self-realized individuals. The prominent thought among the individuals about Black British women experience both racial

prejudice and patriarchal dominance, the female characters seem to be repressed and disadvantaged in the Parsi-Pakistani culture and they rely on men for all of their socioeconomic needs. The psychological justification for the medication can be seen in their realisation of the significance of their existence as regular humans and their appreciation of the worth of their own selves.

Bapsi Sidhwa, the Pakistani American spent her childhood in Lahore, creates the guilt-prone narration from a Parsi child Lenny. In its essence, *Cracking India (Ice-Candy Man)* is a collection of historical episodes, the complete reading of the novel illustrates the mental agony of Ayah, leading to psychological trauma for women. The fragmented society, the imbalance psychic community props up between Ayah and the dead victims of partition and non Parsi people. The thematic extraction of the novel quite apparently reveals that Sidhwa intends to elevate the concern for women facing the clutches of marginality and further explains the existence of female subjectivity as well. The psychological cultural discrimination of the novel seems to deliver Sidhwa's crafty approach to deal with history, culture and religion by positioning them at crossroads. In spite of discrimination of culture, gender the worst sufferer is Ayah, who transformed as the mentor for the suppressed women.

Similar to the psychological reading of *The Icarus Girl* may seem to be an experimental subject of reading racial discrimination through the protagonist Jess. However, Jess is caught between the real and reel life, wherein she gets affinity with TillyTilly. The psychological traumas begins with the exposure of TillyTilly naming her as twin sister Jess is involved in a chat with TillyTilly about spiritual world affairs, which represents the real time and space of Jess in her routine life. But Jess feels disrupted because no other person can see TillyTilly except Jess:

'And even when Jess was with TillyTilly the most noticeable thing was that they couldn't see TillyTilly.' (158)

Oyeyemi has incorporated multiple dimensions of psychoanalytical features. She believed that a psychoanalytical framework would enable to study abnormal expressions of her female characters. This is furthered by the conflicting behaviors of Oyeyemi's women characters, which exert a deep impact on the fictional discourses. Thus, readers are enthralled with unusual experiences through the traumatic characters. The

mental disorders occur due to listening to unusual voices, distressed emotions, and the feeling of alienation. Helen Oyeyemi says in an interview that

"-I think a good modern writer has range-stylistic, thematic, but also in their borrowings from elements of the genre-I think (hope) it's part of a growing appreciation for the various ways in which a story can be told" (Throwing voices 2013).

The similar factors on both the author's select works such as Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girls* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* are identity crisis and gender discrimination, mental struggle such as racial prejudice, sexual slavery, cultural and religious issues. Both the writers are able to challenge the British interpretation of history that was enforced upon that subcontinent. This study provides psychological insights to the select works of these authors and brings in the key psychological concepts exposes the authors' urge to rewrite the history of their country people to attain liberation from the hypnotized thoughts in their unconscious mind interlinked with the social customs and rituals.

Summation

Both the authors Bapsi Sidhwa and Helen Oyeyemi engage in delineating their women characters by bringing out the bitterness, frustrated mind, isolated livelihood, mental agony and unbearable despair. Simultaneously, the authors display the might of these characters in their effort to assimilate and integrate their fragmented self. Based on these deliberations, this article explored in transforming the discrimination to self-motivation.

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