

## DELINEATION OF CULTURAL PARTITION ISSUES IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S ICE CANDY MAN : A STUDY

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### Abstract

*Bapsi Sidhwa in her novel, Ice Candy Man focuses on the theme of partition of India along with several other themes like the tragic tales of uprooting wonderful dreams of Ranna and Ayah, enormous vacuity of lifeless air that fills the streets of Lahore and the betrayal of human trust. They are all linked with partition phenomenon which left a permanent scar on the memory of India's history. Though everyone seems to be affected by both political and religious horrors, very few writers have written about it. Bapsi Sidhwa is one among them. With her artistic vision, she sweeps into a historically significant event of the division of nation. In the hierarchy of human values, aesthetic values hold a peculiar position. Their appeal is as broad as humanity itself. There is no age in human history, which has not enjoyed and cherished aesthetic values.*

*The role of aesthetic values has been so great that these values are assigned absolute or intrinsic principles. With a suitable understanding of aesthetic values from the reader's perspective, the focus is on analyzing Partition literature with reference to its fiction from the researcher's perspective could be continued. Border studies it begins with attention to the material borders among nations. The technologies of enforcement, the controls of citizenship, the structures of inclusion and exclusion, armies and law are set border lines on a map. But border studies have also development in the past fifteen years across a spectrum of divergent issues and fields in literary studies. The novel really represents the scene that how women suffer at that time and they spent their time. Men using their mind powers to fulfill the needs and use women in negative way, all stress on women. Sidhwa as a writer tells about the power mind and skills of women. So we use feminist theory to analyze this novel. Feminism is a progress which plays a very massive role in highlighting the problems of women.*

**Keywords:** Migration, Communal Violence, Political Events, Diachronic World, Religious Prejudices, Treacherous, fragmentation of the community, Psychological reactions.

### INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL PARTITION

Partition has been the theme for many of the Pakistani and Indian authors. It was an event that not many can forget. Families were torn apart, toddlers were left orphaned. The Cultural partition has been the theme for many of the Pakistani and Indian authors. It was an partition holocaust wrought havoc on all as communalism made people go wild. The tragic and momentous event has stirred the creative imagination of many writers, who weaved the fabric of tragic tale highlighting untold and unbearable atrocities of communal violence between the Hindus and the Muslims. The literature that made its appearance during the partition of Indo-Pak Sub-continent highlights the grim details of bloodshed and untold tales. We can observe people, who were alive then did not write about it, either because the hurt is still fresh, or they were ashamed of what happened to them or the evils they did to others. The young writers tend to skip through it because of the emotional and political connotations a novel based on partition might have.

Bapsi Sidhwa is one of such writer, who made their appearance in the colonial literature liking a shooting star.

### AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Bapsi Sidhwa was born in 1938 Karachi, Pakistan and later moved with her family to Lahore. She was a Pakistani writer. She was a victim of polio when she was in two years of age and was nine at the time of Partition. Her career as conducted novel writing, Assistant professor of creative writing. She received greatful awards for her works such as Sitara - Imtiaz, (1991), Pakistan's highest National honorary in the arts. And Lila Wallace - Reader's digest writer's award (1994). She is best known for her collaborative work with Indo-Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta: Sidhwa wrote both the 1991 novel *Ice Candy Man* which served as the basis for Mehta's 1998 film *Earth* as well as the 2006 novel *Water: A Novel* on which is based Mehta's 2005 film *Water*. A documentary about Sidhwa's life called "Bapsi: Silences Of My Life" is currently in production and is expected to release 2021.

### ICE CANDY MAN: AN INTRODUCTION

Bapsi Sidhwa is among the important signatures in Pakistani literary world. Being a Parsi, she is aware of her roots, past and the Parsi community. **Ice-Candy-Man** is her major novel which introduces a child-narrator Lenny who narrates the events in the wake of Partition of India. Sidhwa's concern for her Parsi community, place of women in Pakistani society, human struggle for survival and dignity of **man** are major **themes** in her novels. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa presents her Parsi community in a dilemma over the issue of support. Partition is immanent and the question of loyalty haunts the Parsi psyche.

Lenny is an eight year old Parsi girl who leads a comfortable life with the four members of her family before the Partition of India in Lahore. Lenny regularly goes for walks with her Hindu Ayah Shanta. The Queen's garden near her house is their favourite place. Lenny limps on one leg and her parents are worried about her. Dr. Bharucha puts plaster on the leg a number of times but each time the results are not upto the mark. Even surgery hasn't helped much. Dr. Bharucha assures the parents of Lenny that with the passage of time, Lenny will walk normally.

The novel *Ice-Candy-Man* presents people from all communities —the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis living in Lahore before Partition. 'Bapsi Sidhwa here introduces the device of child-narrator. Lenny, the eight year old girl narrates the events around her from a child's point of view. The novelist also shows the child growing, becoming more conscious about the changing environment around her. Sidhwa introduces the readers to characters like Shanta the Ayah, Imamdin the cook, the Ice-Candy-Man Dilnawaz and Hassan Ali, his cousin brother. At the moment, people in undivided India are seen engaged in the Quit-India Movement, and on the other hand, the Muslim League motivates the Muslim Community to raise a demand for a separate nation for the Muslims. Often the slogans of 'Pakistan Zindabad' are heard in the streets but the communal harmony is intact. One day, one British police officer Rogers and Mr. Singh a neighbourer of Lenny visit the house on dinner. They begin to quarrel on trifles. This hot exchange of words is in fact a glimpse and foreshadow of the coming conflicts in the near future. People have started discussions on the possibility of Pakistan and the minorities begin to plan for shifting to safer places. It foreshadows the communal riots between the Hindus and Muslims.

### DELINEATION OF CULTURAL PARTITION ISSUES IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S ICE CANDY MAN: A STUDY

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man* deals with the partition of India and its aftermaths. This is the first novel by a woman novelist from Pakistan in which she describes about the fate of people in Lahore. The novel opens with the verse of Iqbal from his poem 'Complaint to God', with this, the child-narrator Lenny is introduced. She is lame and helpless. She finds that her movement between Warris Road and Jail Road is limited. She sees the Salvation Army wall with ventilation slits which makes her feel sad and lonely. The narration is in the first person. Lenny lives on Warris Road. The novelist describes about the localities in Lahore through the Child-narrator. Lenny observes: "I feel such sadness for the dumb creature I imagine lurking behind the wall." Lenny is introvert and she is engrossed in her private world.

One day, Lenny is in her pram, immersed in dreams as usual. Her Ayah attends to her. Suddenly an Englishman interrupts them and he asks Ayah to put Lenny down from her pram. But Ayah explains to him about Lenny's infirmity. Lenny is a keen observer. She has seen how people are fascinated with the Hindu Ayah's gorgeous body. She notices how even beggars, holymen, old people and the youngmen adore her for her feminine grace. Colonel Bharucha is Lenny's doctor. He is a surgeon. Lenny is brought to the hospital for her limp in one leg. In the first, attempt, plaster on Lenny's leg is removed but still she limps. Soon a new plaster is cast over her leg. Lenny cries out of pain but her mother takes care of her.

Dr. Bharucha's surgery pains Lenny as she has become bed-ridden. The news of Lenny's operation spreads in small Parsi community of Lahore and she has visitors but she cries for Godmother. Lenny lying on the bed observes keenly the reaction of visitors and her parents. After one month, Lenny is allowed to be taken in a stroller outside her house. Her eighteen year old Ayah Shanta takes her to a zoo.

Lenny's Ayah Shanta has a number of admirers. *Ice-Candy-Man* is among her admirers. Another companion of Lenny is her electric-aunt, a widow. She also picks up a brother. His name is Adi and Lenny calls him Sissy. He goes to school and Lenny studies at home. When winter comes, *Ice-Candy-Man* turns into a birdman and in the streets of Lahore, he is seen with birds. Rich ladies give him money for these poor birds to be freed. *Ice-Candy-Man* is a chatter-box and he can talk on any topic.

One day, the Parsi community assembles in the community hall in the Parsi temple. Two priests prepare for the worship of fire. Lenny observes everything with curiosity. Then the meeting of the Parsi community begins on their stand on Swaraj. Col. Bharucha holds the mike and apprises all -about the latest political developments. After discussions and questions, all agree to observe the middle path to observe and see. They will not be with the Indian nationalists to oppose the Raj. They fail to come out of their dilemma. The Ayah takes care of the helpless child Lenny like a sister. Lenny's mother too loves her.

A portion of Lenny's house is lent to the Shankars who are newly married. Shankar's wife Gita is seen welcoming him in the evening. The children observe this couple with curiosity. Gita is a good cook and a good story-teller. She is popular with children. The reader is now introduced to Hari, the gardner, Imam Din, the cook of Lenny's house. Here one finds focus on the character of Imam din. He is sixty five years old. He is "tall, big-bellied, barrel-chested and robust." Imam Din likes to play with children in his spare time. One day Imam Din takes Lenny to his village on his bicycle. Lenny observes every thing keen on her way to the village. There she meets children Ranna and his sisters Khatija and Parveen. This is the village Pir Pindo where Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims live peacefully. Villagers have assembled beneath a huge sheesham tree to discuss about the situation in other cities like Bihar and Bengal. They feel disturbed over the news of Hindu-Muslim riots. The villagers blame the British government for 'inaction in the wake of communal riots. The Chaudhry of Pir Pindo assures them about the safety of everyone in the village if riots break out. Later Lenny and Imam Din return to Lahore.

Ayah has now two more admirers a chinaman and the Pathan. They are fascinated by her feminine grace. They visit Lenny's house daily to talk to her. Lenny doesn't go to school. She goes to Mrs. Pen for her studies. Her house is next to Lenny's Godmother's house on Jail Road opposite to Electric-aunt's house. Ayah accompanies Lenny to Mrs. Pen's house. After tuition, Lenny goes to her Godmother's house for sometime. One day Mahatma Gandhi visits Lahore. Lenny goes to see Gandhijee with her mother. She is surprised to see him because she has always taken him to be a mythic figure only. Gandhi jee blesses them all and advises them to follow the enema-therapy. Lenny fails to understand as to why people call him a saint. To her, he appears to be 'half clown and half-demon'.

Now it is April and Lahore is getting warmer day by day. Ice-Candy-Man finds his business prospering. By now it has become clear that India is going to be broken. Muslim league wants Pakistan to Muslims. Imam Din, the cook at Lenny's house is worried over the news of communal riots and plans a visit to his village Pir Pindo. Lenny insists to join him on his trip to the village. She still cherishes the memory of her earlier visit to Pir Pindo. On Baisakhi, they visit the Dera Tek Singh near the village. Dost Mohammad joins them. They enjoy the mela and the feast. Now people apprehend trouble. One day the relatives of Imam Din arrive in Lahore to stay with him. They are accommodated in Servant's quarters. Military trucks arrive in Pir Pindo to evacuate Muslims to safer places but the Muslim peasants are confused. They can't leave their home, property and harvest all of a sudden. Mr. Roger's mutilated body is found in the gutters. He was the Inspector General of Police. This news sends shivers among the people of Lahore. Children including Lenny find it a strange incident. Ayah loves Masseur's songs and Ice-Candy-Man loves Ayah for her blooming youth. Ice-Candy-Man is disturbed over the developments in the nearby areas. People start moving to safer places. Riots begin and this leads to confusion among people.

Communal riots spread from towns to small villages like Pir Pindo. Muslims and Sikhs become enemies thirsting for each other's blood. In Lahore, people begin to move to safer places. Hindus and Sikhs leave their houses behind and reach Amritsar. People hear announcements on All India Radio about the division of districts into India and Pakistan. The Parsee community in Pakistan is safe but still worried about its future. Muslim mobs attack Hindu houses. A mob stops outside Lenny's house and enquire about its Hindu servants. They ask about the Hindu Ayah Shanta but the cook Imam Din tells them about her fake departure. Ice-Candy-Man comes forward and asks Lenny about Ayah. Out of innocence, Lenny discloses about her hiding. The angry Muslims drag her out of Lenny's house. This shocks Lenny and she repents for her truthfulness. A truth can also ruin one's life, Lenny discovers. Ice-Candy-Man takes her to Hira Mandi, the bazars of prostitutes. Ice-Candy-Man's mother was also a prostitute and Ice-Candy-Man becomes a pimp. He is fond of reciting Urdu poetry.

In Pir Pindo village, Sikh crowds attack the Muslim community. Imam Din's family is in trouble but nothing can be done. There is confusion. Muslims in Pir Pindo village get killed and their women gang-raped. Children are butchered mercilessly. Ranna, the playmate of Lenny in Pir Pindo is also wounded and buried under the heap of dead bodies. After some time, he safely moves to other place. His journey of hide and seek has been dealt with in detail by Bapsi Sidhwa. Sidhwa narrates Ranna's ordeal of escape in full fifteen pages. A little boy wounded and shocked, running for life finds suddenly himself alone in the world. Earlier, it had been decided that the women and girls of Pir Pindo would gather at Chaudhry's house and pour the kerosene oil around the house to burn themselves. It was also decided to hide some boys and men in a safer place but nothing worked. Muslims are killed, women molested and children butchered. Only Ranna escapes and finds shelter in a camp in Lahore. When he reached Lahore, he observed, "It is funny. As long as I had to look out for myself, I was all right. As soon as I felt safe, I fainted." Before reaching the camp, Ranna had a tough time: "There were too many ugly and abandoned children like him scavenging in the looted houses and the rubble of burnt-out buildings. His rags clinging to his wounds, straw sticking in his scalped skull, Ranna wandered through the lanes stealing chapatties and grain from houses strewn with dead bodies, rifling the corpses for anything he could use ... No one minded the semi-naked spectre as he looked in doors with his knowing, wide-set peasant eyes." Later, Ranna was herded into a refugee camp at Badami Baug. Then "chance united him with his Noni chachi and Iqbal chacha."

After the abduction of Ayah by the Muslim mob, Lenny remains sad and dejected. She is shocked over the betrayal by Ice-Candy-Man. She finds him to be a changed man. The day he saw the mutilated bodies of his

Muslim brethren, he became a different person. His beloved Ayah becomes a Hindu for him. "They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet that want to move backwards are forced forward instead." This sight proves to be traumatic for poor Lenny and she repents for telling the truth to Ice-Candy-Man. She is guilt-driven: "For three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror staring at my tongue. I hold the vile, truth infected thing between my fingers and try to wrench it out: but slippery and slick as a fish it slips from my fingers and mocks me with its sharp rapier tip darting as poisonous as a snake. I punish it with rigorous scourings from my pricking toothbrush until it is sore and bleeding." This act of Lenny shows her sense of guilt. There has been Papoo's marriage but Lenny feels lonely without Ayah. By now Lenny has become mature both in body and mind.

Lenny's Godmother is an influential lady. She loves Lenny, she has established a network of espionage in Lahore. She has information from each corner of Lahore. One day, Lenny's cousin comes with a news that he has seen the Ayah in a taxi dressed like a film actress. After a few days, Lenny too sees Ayah in a car. Now she tells everyone about it and the search for Ayah begins. One Monday, Lenny visits her Godmother's house to tell her about the Ayah. She is told about the Ayah's husband's visit to Godmother's house in the evening. Lenny finds it difficult to wait for the evening. At six o'clock, the bridegroom of Ayah arrives. He is none but Ice-Candy-Man, now dressed in flowing white muslin. He recites a verse from Urdu poetry and greets everyone. He informs that she is married to him and has been accepted in the family of dancers. Godmother scolds him for illtreating Ayah and let her be raped. But he confesses: I am a man! Only dogs are faithful! If you want faith, let her marry a dog." But Godmother reacts wildly by saying: "You have permitted your wife to be disgraced! Destroyed her modesty! Lived off her womanhood! And you talk of princes and poets! You're the son of pigs and pimps!" Ice-Candy-Man weeps and cries but asserts that now he will make her happy by all means. Lenny has been listening to all this. She is angry with Ice-Candy-Man to such an extent that: "There is a suffocating explosion within my eyes and head. A blinding blast of pity and disillusion and a savage rage. My sight is disoriented. I see Ice-Candy-Man float away in a bubble and dwindle to a grey speck in the aftermath of the blast."

Ice-Candy-Man stands there with Jinnah cap in his hand and "his ravaged face, caked with mud, has turned into a tragedian's mask. Repentance, grief and shock are compressed into the mould of his features." Then, Godmother plans a visit to see Ayah, now Mumtaz after her marriage. Lenny insists of going with her to Hira Mandi. They reach Hira Mandi in a tonga. They are led in a well-decorated room with the fragrance of sprinkled flowers. Ice-Candy-Man brings his Mumtaz, the Ayah dressed as a bride before them. Lenny is shocked to see sadness in Ayah's eyes. Lenny observes: "Where have the radiance and the animation gone? Can the soul be extracted from its living body? Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever: wide-opened with what they have seen and felt. She, buries her head in me and buries me in all her finery; and in the dark and musky attar of her perfume."

Leaving Ayah with Godmother and Lenny, Ice-Candy-Man goes to fetch tea. Now Ayah pleads that she will not live, here anymore and she must go. Godmother asks her to think over it again but Ayah (Mumtaz) insists of going back to her relatives in Amritsar. The visitors return after assuring Ayah that she will be rescued. Lenny's cousin asks her about a Kotha and her impression of it. Lenny understands by Kotha to be a place of dancing girls. By now Lenny also understands that "the potent creative force generated within the Kotha that has metamorphosed Ice-Candy-Man not only into a Mogul Courtier, but into a Mandi poet. No wonder he founds poetry as if he popped out of his mother's womb spouting rhyming sentences."

After her visit to Hira Mandi, Godmother contacts the government machinery. One day a police party comes to Hira Mandi and takes Ayah away from Ice-Candy-Man. She is put at the Recovered Women's Camp on Warris Road which is well-guarded. Ice-Candy-Man visits the camp to see his beloved but is beaten up badly by the Sikh sentry. Now Ice-Candy-Man has become a dejected, wandering lover searching for his lost love. He has acquired a new aspect: "that of a moonstruck fakir who has renounced the world for his beloved." Ice-Candy-Man places flowers for Ayah over the wall of the camp every morning and his "voice rises in sweet and clear song to shower Ayah with poems." This routine of offering of flowers and singing of love songs continues for many days.

One day, Lenny learns that Ayah has been shifted to Amritsar with her family there. Ice-Candy-Man has also followed her across the Wagah border into India to pursue his love. The novel ends on this sad and tragic note. The novel contains a number of poignant scenes along with scenes of murder and violence. "The novel is a masterful work of history as it relates political events through the eyes of a child." Ice-Candy-Man has also been called as a multifaceted jewel of a novel. The novel deals with "the bloody partition of India through the eyes of a girl Lenny growing up in a Parsee family, surviving through female bonding and rebellion."

### ICE-CANDY-MAN BY BAPSI SIDHWA'S CULTURAL PARTITION AND A FEMINIST ANALYSIS

Originally published as Ice-Candy Man, Cracking India is a semi-autobiographical text in which Bapsi Sidhwa through the lens of her childhood memories recounts the events surrounding Partition. It represents a series of female characters who have survived in a chaotic time of 1947 in India, the period of worst religious riots in the history of India. This religion based division resulted in mass violence, murder, and rape. The novel Ice-Candy-

Man may be read as a postcolonial novel attempting to portray the life and times of the Partition of India giving due importance to the other marginal sections of society based on the distinction of gender, class, caste, or religion. Sidhwa, through *Ice-Candy-Man* critiques the stereotypical images of women and fights for their empowerment. *Ice-Candy-Man* is a significant testimony of a gynocentric view of reality in the backdrop of a religious turbulence. This novel highlights feminist concerns about women's issues, particularly their experience of victimization and suppression within patriarchal societies and how this suppression takes a brutal form in the face of national upheaval.

The narrator is a young Parsee girl named Lenny, who is suffering from polio. Her lameness is suggestive of handicap, a woman writer faces, because writing an intellectual exercise is considered a male bastion, outside the domain of women. Lenny as a narrator moves from one phase of her life, i.e., childhood to adolescence. Throughout the course of the novel she observes men's lascivious and degrading attention towards women, voraciousness of male sexual desires, women's plight as they are reduced to the status of sexual objects. We can see that right from her childhood the sexual identity thrust upon Lenny "I can't remember a time when I ever played with doll relatives and acquaintances have persisted in giving them to me." Lenny as a girl learns that marriage of girls is of utmost importance in the society. The intense concern for her marriage even in her childhood puts Lenny in dismay. She states, "Drinking tea, I am told, makes one darker. I'm dark enough, It's a pity Ad's fair and Lenny so dark. He's a boy. Anyone will marry him," implying that a woman has to be beautiful to be desirable while a man is exempted from such conditioning. Her schooling is stopped as suggested by her doctor Col. Bharucha, because she was suffering from polio "She'll marry have children lead a carefree, happy life," implying that a woman has no need for education, for her only duty in this patriarchal society is marry, rear children and be efficient in household duties. Patriarchal society views women as physically weak to venture into the world outside the four walls of their houses, thus, limiting them to the domestic sphere where they have to accept the dominance of her male counterpart.

The formative influence of Lenny is her Ayah Shanta who is a Hindu girl of eighteen. It is Ayah who epitomizes the strength of the femininity and infuses in Lenny the ideas of freedom and will. The Ayah has accumulated a good number of admirersthe *Ice-Candy-Man*, the Government House gardener, the Masseur, the zoo-attendant, the restaurant owner, and a knife-sharpening Pathan. She is able to influence the men around her, although much of her influence stems from her physical appeal but her natural beauty and sensuality attract men, creating an intriguing source of power. As Lenny observes these men she realizes that the gaze of Ayah' admirer indicates not just lust, but a powerful desire for ownership, calling to attention the objectification a women's body.

Communal riots break out in Lahore. The Sikhs and Hindus start migrating to Amritsar and the Muslims are asked to quit Amritsar. While migrating, the people of the warring community attack each other and it is the women and children who suffer the most. The narrative takes a horrifying turn with the arrival of a train from Gurdaspur in which the *Ice Candy Man* expects his relatives return to Lahore from Amritsar. The train arrives and it is loaded not by passengers but with the dead bodies "A train from Gurdaspur has just come. Everyone in it is dead. Butchered two gunny-bags full of women's breasts!" The women were not only killed but first tortured, raped and then butchered like animals. Through this event Sidhwa questions the hypocrisy of people who glorified the image of the Indian woman and worship them as goddesses, but at the time of upheaval the same image is soiled for the sake of revenge. The bag of severed breasts is transformed into a public form of communication, a verification of nationalist power. With the arrival of the train, frenzied Dilnawaz becomes blood thirsty of the people of the warring community. This is when Ayah's suffering begins. Dilnawaz (the *Ice Candy Man*) leading the Muslim mob raids Godmother's house in search of the Hindus. Mad with rage, he throws Ayah into the hands of the frenzied mob just for Ayah being a Hindu girl "They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms her bare feet that want to move backwards are forced forward. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dead child's scream-less mouth." Four men stand pressed against her their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces" The image of these men satisfied and triumphant as they carry her away is horrifying for Lenny. Ayah is then raped mercilessly, beaten up and thrown away among the brothels of Hiramandi and is later forced to marry Dilnawaz who renames her as Mumtaz. This event of reaming the Ayah highlight the fact that a woman has no right over her identity, her sense of identity is associated with her husband.

This episode of *Ice-Candy-Man* and Ayah destroys Lenny's conceptions about love. She was shocked to see *Ice-Candy-Man* pushing his wife Ayah into the business of prostitution. The site of women being raped during the riots petrifies her. She watches men turning into beasts; they were declaring superiority over each other by sexually assaulting women. Rape is the greatest violence because it implies that a woman has no rights on her own body and it can be used by anyone to meet their end. Such acts of violence are an intimate destruction of the feminine, and can also be read as an attempt to annihilate male honor. Feminine form was reconceived as canvas for nationalist messages in 1947 Lahore. The metaphor of female body or mother is often used for a nation. Thus the dignity, purity and honor of women have always been taken as sign of the dignity and integrity of a nation. Ranna's community has a clear plan to safeguard the women from being used in such a way "Rather than face the brutality of the mob they will pour kerosene around the house and burn themselves. The young men will engage the Sikhs at the mosque, and at other strategic locations, for as long as they can and give the

women a chance to start the fire.” Thus the idea of protection shifts from keeping the women alive as long as possible to allow the women enough time to kill themselves. Such a plan reveals the importance of women’s purity to male constructions of community. The entire purpose of this encounter is to safeguard women’s bodies from public shaming. Honor was “located in the body of the woman”. Once raped, violated, and mutilated, they cannot be incorporated back into the spaces of the home or the nation. Sidhwa uses the figures of Lenny’s caretakers, to explore the fates of women who survived these acts of violence. Women, once they fall prey to men’s violence like Lenny’s two Ayah’s, cannot hope for their restitution to their own families. Through Ayah, Sidhwa demonstrates the loss of feminine power, and had the story ended at this point, the novel would be nothing but a traditional Partition novel, with the men as victors and the women as victims.

However, Sidhwa belonging to that group of women writers who affirms that women should utilize their potentials beyond the domestic life and assert their individuality, does not end the novel with the pitiable situation of the Ayah. Sidhwa’s two strongest examples of feminine power are yet to come. Prior to Partition, Lenny’s mother played the role of a dutiful wife, catering to her husband’s every need and managing the household. During the events of Partition, however, Lenny’s mother begins to subvert the patriarchal social order by rescuing and housing women. Lenny’s mother and aunts construct a refuge for these “fallen women” who raped or forced into prostitution attempting to reunite the women with their families or to find housing and work for those who, seen as permanently shamed and defiled, and cannot return home. They also smuggle gasoline to help their Hindu and Sikh friends cross the border safely to India. In rescuing these women, Lenny’s mother has clearly moved beyond the traditional role of housewife to become a social activist. It is the two women who undertake the risky job of saving lives in danger. She portrays women not only as victims but also as saviors. They are shown performing heroic duties to bring order to this chaotic world. Through Lenny’s mother the narrator suggests that women should have a purpose in life besides domesticity. Another character who epitomizes feminine power is Lenny’s Godmother (one of her aunts) whose name is Rodabai. Her authoritative, self-confidence, capacity to handle extreme situations deftly is evident by her dealing with the Ice-Candy-Man and the rescue of the Ayah from him. She scolds the Ice-Candy-Man for disgracing the Ayah, “What kind of man would allow his wife to dance like a performing monkey before other men? You’re not a man; you’re a low-born, two-bit evil little mouse!” When she realizes that Ayah does not want to live with him, she decisively sets about to rescue her and manages to send her back to her people.

Although Sidhwa indicts patriarchal culture and norms for perpetuating violence against women, she does not hold masculinity in dark light. In the case of Ice-Candy-Man, his behavior may be described in relation to the larger forces of collective psychosis. Sidhwa not only throws light on the suffering of women caused by men but she also explores the fact that women can also be instrumental and cause of the suffering and exploitation of other female subjects. In the novel Ice-Candy-Man we see that slave-sister is harassed by her own sister Godmother and lives in perpetual obedience to her. She is leading the life of a bonded slave, forced to suppress herself in every interaction with the old lady; she is not allowed to exercise her will in any situation. Sidhwa wants to convey that the exploitation, manipulation and suppression of one individual by another are not confined to the male-female relationship. The feminists, it seems, are being made alive to the dangers of replicating the patriarchal principle and thus perpetuating the class of the exploiters and the exploited amongst themselves. Another instance where a female is perpetuating violence against another female character is in the relationship of Pappo and her mother Muccho. Muccho takes Papoo as her rival and saddles her with all the household chores, beating and abusing her on the slightest of pretexts. But despite this, Papoo cannot be browbeaten into submission; she is strong and high-spirited. To break her spirit Muccho arranges her marriage with a middle aged dwarf. Papoo is drugged with opium at the time of the ceremony to suppress her revolt. Lenny curiously studies Muccho’s face during the wedding ceremony and sees a contented smile on her lips. The sketch of Muccho suggests that women themselves are unconsciously bound by their conditioning and encumber their daughters with a repetitive fate, treating marriage as a cure of all ills.

Sidhwa talks of emancipation of women and ends the novel on a positive note with Ayah being sent back to her home. Throughout the novel, Lenny emerges as a courageous and bold girl, she is inquisitive, demanding and daring who moves forward in life despite various hindrances. She understands the limitations associated with women’s lives in patriarchal society. The suffering of Ayah is not the suffering of a single woman but it represents the pain of the thousands of women who were kidnapped, beaten, raped, and butchered like animals. Lenny, her Ayah, her mother and Godmother exhibit capability of assuming new roles and responsibilities. Despite her conviction that she is now an impure person, the ayah retains her will to go back to her family and face life anew. Lenny’s relationship with her cousin upholds the principle of equality, for she does not allow him to manipulate her sexually. In no way does Lenny’s lameness constrict her psyche. Rather than being dominated by the male, she chooses not to conform, telling Cousin that she is not interested, making her own preferences known. Her cousin, consequently, is placed in a subservient role and laments his lack of power over.

Sidhwa in the backdrop of the communal violence reconstructs the postcolonial history from the perspective of the marginalized sections of society. Through narratives like Cracking India, women are able to reclaim their autonomy and express their account of Partition history. Throughout the novel Sidhwa has critiqued the stereotypical images of women as dark, mysterious, exotic and homely. The patriarchal society should perceive

women beyond the roles of wives, daughters and mothers. A big transformation is required at the social level, which will acknowledge women as human beings with desires, feelings, ambitions, and potentials.

## THEMES

### Religious Intolerance

Throughout the novel, characters' desires for power or influence over others mirrors the desire for political power that fuels religious intolerance. Religious intolerance erupts into violence, pitting different religious and ethnic groups against each other. Lenny witnesses many acts of killing, maiming, and death, including finding Masseur, Ayah's beloved, dead in a sack on the sidewalk.

As Lahore becomes a refugee center and an entrance to the new country of Pakistan, now a majority-Muslim country, the Hindus and Sikhs are driven out of the city.

Religious intolerance also becomes a way for men to subjugate women. For example, Ayah is taken prisoner by the Ice-candy-man, whom she has rejected for Masseur, and he pimps her out to other men as a "dancing girl." Women become victims of extreme sexual violence, including rape and sex slavery, under the guise of religious intolerance.

### Lust and Sexual Desire Cause Powerful Obsessions

Just as the Ice-candy-man stalks Ayah until he possesses her, body and soul, Lenny experiences a powerful sexual desire for and obsession with her Cousin. Through this experience, Lenny grows up to understand lust and desire as powerful motivators.

### Betrayal

Betrayal is a central theme in the novel. The country of India betrays its own people—whether Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, or Parsee—by enforcing a hasty, ill-conceived plan of moving millions of refugees from one country to another. The loss of life, lands, houses, crops, livestock, and kinship stands as the reminder of this betrayal. Ranna's story of the massacre of his village by Sikhs demonstrates the betrayal of the neighboring Muslim and Sikh villagers' promises to protect one another.

On a personal level, Sidhwa uses betrayal as a theme to reveal hidden character traits, loyalties, and the truth through various characters. For example, early in the novel, after Lenny's surgery, she wakes in terrible pain. Her parents lie to her, saying that her father has gone to call the doctor and fetch him to the house to help her. In reality, no such call is made. Lenny learns her first lesson in betrayal: even those you love will not always come to your aid.

Furthermore, Lenny betrays many people because she cannot lie, including her beloved Ayah. When the Ice-candy-man arrives with his Muslim gang to kidnap Ayah, he uses his relationship with Lenny to persuade her into betraying Ayah's hidden presence in the household (194). Lenny is devastated by her betrayal, and her family cannot believe her naivety. Everyone is shocked that Lenny would betray Ayah. In the aftermath, the Ice-candy-man forces Ayah into prostitution, as her pimp. Lenny blames herself for Ayah's ruination, but the women in her family, including Godmother and Lenny's mother, will not stop until they have found and rescued Ayah from the terrible life resulting from Lenny's betrayal.

### Subjugation of Women

Women are oppressed and sexually victimized repeatedly throughout the novel. Some examples include Papoo's child marriage to a middle-aged dwarf; the rape, mutilation, and killing of women throughout the violence of Partition and its aftermath—as exemplified by the house of fallen women next door—; and specifically Hamida's, Ayah's, and Ranna's stories.

The only glimmer of hope in the book about the treatment of women comes from Lenny's mother and her gang of family and friends, who engage in dangerous, illegal work rescuing women from their oppressors and returning them to their families. Both Hamida and Ayah are success stories through their survival and their ability to continue their lives, though they remain broken.

### Illusion versus Reality

Cracking India portrays the theme of illusion versus reality on several levels. As the novel opens during 1942, the illusion of a united India is already beginning to crack: Lenny sees the Salvation Army band as a frightening caterpillar that dissolves into individuals as the band approaches her.

Lenny herself retreats into a dream world rather than face the reality of her own life, though as a child with a deformity, she has plenty of reasons to evade reality. However, her growth demands that she face reality in the end; all of her illusions are shattered, even her illusions about her own goodness, as when she betrays Ayah.

Ice-candy-man's changing character supports the illusion of his many identities: as a popsicle seller, a poet, a good friend to Lenny, a romantic in his pursuit of Ayah, and a spiritual prophet. However, the novel reveals him to be in actuality an angry, power-hungry man, cruel and cunning in the pursuit of his own best interests.

In addition, Lenny believes that her mother and her aunt are burning parts of Lahore down with a hidden cache of black-market petrol, when in reality her mother, her mother's friends, and other relatives secretly work to help women escape death and kidnapping. Lenny's understanding is the opposite of what her mother is actually doing.

Finally, adults often create illusions to protect their children. One example is Lenny's mother's story of the little mouse with seven tails. Though the little mouse originally loses all of his tails to the cruelty of the other teasing mice, Lenny's mother changes the ending of the story and leaves the little mouse with one triumphant tail. This story symbolizes Lenny's mother's attempts to protect Lenny, even from a sad children's story. Additionally, Lenny's mother does not trust her daughter with the truth about her secret work rescuing abused women and returning them to their families, even though this important work involves all the women of the Sethi clan, as well as their friends. Parents such as the Sethis keep the children in the dark, intending to not frighten them with the truth. However, just as Lenny and her brother find the gun in the bathroom, the children always find out what the parents are trying to hide.

## CONCLUSION

In the end, the ice candy man finds himself the victim of religious/social intolerance, and is beaten up while Lenny's ayah escapes. The ayah then says her goodbyes and heads to Lahore, to be with her family. It is revealed that the Parsees have lost everything at this point with the fighting and the Partition, and all sides of the struggle must move on and attempt to heal their wounds as best they can.

Ice Candy Man is a narrative both comical and heartbreaking. Told from a young girl's point-of-view, the narrative often finds hilarious points-of-departure to comment on, and affords the reader the naiveté of a child's point-of-view. As Lenny grows, however, and as the fighting between Muslims and Hindus hits closer and closer to home, Lenny's insights are clouded with bloodshed and the very worst of the human condition. Even people she used to look up to or at least admire show their true nature. Lenny's coming-of-age is made all the more heartbreaking in that it is set against the backdrop of war. Lenny must find the strength to persevere and save her ayah, thus highlighting that her naiveté has grown into genuine concern, and a more comprehensive knowledge of others and their wellbeing.

The narrative is symbolic in its look at growing up and coming of age despite external factors that seek to hinder growth. Lenny's character, including her trials and triumphs, reveals that the human desire for love, growth and compassion can far outweigh the effects of war and hate. The narrative also shows just how important community is, especially during tumultuous times. Lenny looks at her immediate family, extended family and family of servants, and in each of them, finds points of connection. These relationships help to inform her worldview, and allow her to make informed decisions based on newfound love and compassion.

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