CHAPTER-VI

ICE CRACKED:

ICE-CANDY-MAN
Ice-Candy-Man deserves to be ranked amongst the most authentic and best [books] on the partition of India.

-Khushwant Singh

India is divided into two nations after getting the Independence in 1947 as India and Pakistan. During this period a great violence exploded against the minorities in the borders of both the countries especially in Amritsar and Lahore. In Amritsar the minorities are Muslims where as in Lahore the minorities are Sikhs and Hindus. The novelist Bapsi Sidhwa is born and brought up in Lahore and witnessed the violence in Lahore against Hindus. So in the novel, the partition experiences of Bapsi Sidhwa are portrayed through the character named Lenny and the novel can be hailed as a semi autobiographical novel of Bapsi Sidhwa. The story begins when Lenny is five years old and ends when she is twelve. The novel deals with the awakening consciousness of Lenny a Parsee girl who is a spectator of the terrible partition. On the whole the novel is a manifestation of women’s victimization during partition crisis. The novel is first published as Ice-Candy-Man in England in 1988. Later it is published as Cracking India in USA in 1991, and the following year in India. Though the chief back ground of the novel is partition, it tackles with the struggles of women and their reactions. Most part of the story revolves around the women characters. Showkat Hussain Dar describes the novel and it’s women characters as follows:

Ice-Candy-Man is a significant testament of a gynocentric view of reality in which the feminine psyche and experiences are presented with a unique freshness and aplomb. It is tangible
in this novel that Sidhwa turns the female protagonists into the moral centre, while most of the male characters either remain passive or indulge in violence. (2)

In the novel ICM Ayah, whose name is Shanta and Lenny are microcosmic symbols of the process of mutilation and mutation inherent to violence. This chapter explores the position of Ayah within the novel, as well as her position as the representative of the lower middle class urban woman during partition crisis. It is important to note the peculiar role that Ayah plays, as a woman who, although poor, is connected with the middle class because of her job. Her role is vital because during the nationalist movement’s female side was controlled by middle-class women who are educated, and from the higher economical classes of society.

The novel records the effects of a gendered nationalism on the women community during partition crisis. It depicts the ways in which the Partition affects Ayah and makes Lenny conscious of the facts as mere spectator of the movement. Although nationalism is definitely a determining factor in Ayah’s plight, Sidhwa clearly shows this is not the chief reason for the pathetic situation of women in the subcontinent. Gender identity and concern for women is chiefly discussed in the novel. Most importantly, women in the novel such as Mother, Electric Aunt and Godmother are actively engaged in what could be considered ‘feminist’ activity without being subdued into a hegemonic nationalist discourse. Lenny, the young girl whose growing awareness frames the events in the novel, is portrayed as a model for an independent and modern Pakistani woman. She is able to sidestep the calls of nationalist fervor and sacrifice in order to show that women on the Indian
subcontinent can create reform on the basis of their own agendas. As a result, Sidhwa’s revised feminine historiography is able to highlight the roles and potentialities of real women.

Sidhwa’s choice of a young Parsee girl as the narrator of the story appears satirical. It cannot be disregarded since this character remains much indebted to Sidhwa’s own upbringing as Sidhwa herself is part of the Parsee population in Pakistan. Lenny’s consciousness of her society and national movement stands for Sidhwa’s consciousness. The whole process of the bloody partition of India and Pakistan is shown through the eyes of Lenny, growing up in a Parsee family. Ayah is the protagonist of the novel. She survives the entire struggle through female bonding and rebellion. ICM can’t be considered as a totally autobiographical novel as Sidhwa in an interview in 1992 says that “the trouble with the first-person point of view is that it is very easy to mistake it for autobiography,” going on to explain that Lenny: “is very distinct from myself. The incidents in her life are often taken from my life, but they have been totally fictionalized.” (Jussawalla and Dasenbrock 201) In order to isolate herself from her character, “Sidhwa merges her authority to speak with that of her narrator, citing both her and Lenny’s position as Parsees as integral to the ‘dispassionate perspective’ from which Cracking India, in her estimation, treats the events of Partition.” (Jussawalla and Dasenbrock 200)

In other four novels the protagonists become conscious of their situations but in the novel ICM, Lenny gets political consciousness during partition in addition to feminine consciousness. She comes across some incidents that took place primarily between the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Lenny’s Ayah, because of
her religion, her class and her admirers, makes Lenny conscious of the societal scenario of the partition. Harveen Sachdeva Mann identifies that, “initially cast as a metaphor for undivided India, Ayah - as she is genetically identified by her labour and class position - a Hindu in West Punjab, attracts Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Parsi admirers alike.” (74) Lenny recognizes that Ayah is always under surveillance because of her gender.

The obvious picture of domination and resistance is evident in Lenny’s observations about her experiences in her family and community. In *ICM*, the narration starts with the Lenny’s statement, “My world is compressed.” (1) She then outlines the borders of her gendered world, both geographically and economically: “Warris Road, lined with rain gutters, lies between Queens Road and Jail Road: both wide, clean, orderly streets at the affluent fringes of Lahore.”(1) Her world seems to be compressed, by the colonial rule, though it is urban and affluent.

From the outset of her novel, Sidhwa represents Lenny as internalizing a sense of inferiority because she is a girl. One of Lenny’s major preoccupations is the difference she perceives between her brother and herself. Physically, she compares herself adversely to her brother: “I am skinny, wizened, sallow, wiggly-haired, and ugly. He is beautiful. He is the most beautiful thing, animal, person, building, river or mountain that I have seen. He is formed of gold mercury.” (22)

Adi’s world is not compressed; in contrast to Lenny, his life seems limitless. While Lenny still fits into her childhood cot at home, Adi, her younger brother, outgrows his by the time he is four. About this same time, Adi moves out of the domestic space but as a girl, Lenny is denied to go to school. Lenny becomes
conscious of women’s role in the patriarchal society through the statement of her
doctor Bharucha as her doctor states:

‘She’s doing fine without school isn’t she?’ says the doctor. ‘Don’t
pressure her ... her nerves could be affected She doesn’t need to
become a professor... She’ll marry - have children - lead a carefree
happy, life. No need to strain her with studies and exams.’(15)

The doctor’s assumption is that no choice means no pressure; no freedom
means that Lenny will have no choice but to be happy with her carefree, simple life
in the home. For him the work at home is no work at all. Lenny becomes conscious
of her gender as a restriction on her freedom of movement. Even her skin colour
restricts her options for the future, creating what appears to be a doubly enforced
margin of gender and race.

Lenny teases Adi by showing him a sari-clad doll and calls it by his name.
Eventually Adi gets angry. This scene exemplifies Lenny’s internalized hatred of
her gender identity. Her sense of inferiority in relation to her brother is compounded
by her racial identity: Lenny’s skin colour is noticeably darker than her brother’s,
who is able to ‘pass’ as ‘British’ in the playgrounds around Lahore. Ayah
demonstrates pride over this fact, calling Adi her “little English baba” and enjoying
the assumptions that strangers make about his racial heritage being White. Lenny
notes:

Ayah is so proud of Adi’s paucity of pigment. Sometimes she
takes us to Lawrence Gardens and encourages him to run
across the space separating native babies and English babies.
The ayahs of the English babies hug him and fuss over him and permit him to romp with their privileged charges. Adi undoes the bows of little girls with blue eyes in scratchy organdy dresses and wrestles with tallow-haired boys in the grass. Ayah beams. (25)

This quotation highlights the racial and patriarchal privilege that Adi shares with the White boys when he literally and metaphorically crosses “the space separating native and English babies.” Operating on assumptions about his racial heritage, he is able to harass the young White girls without reproach and compete as an ‘equal’ with the “tallow-haired boys.” (25) Lenny, on the other hand, expresses anxiety about the consequences of her dark skin. She recounts the ways:

Every now and then Slavesister serves Godmother strong half-cups of tea which Godmother pours into her saucer and slurps. I too take an occasional and guilty sip. Drinking tea, I am told, makes one darker. I’m dark enough. Everyone says, ‘It’s a pity Adi’s fair and Lenny so dark. He’s a boy. Anyone will marry him.’(81)

As a girl, Lenny’s dark complexion is considered a double liability. Her inferior status in a racist and patriarchal society places weight on her to negotiate with patriarchal patronage through marriage and recognition with the White colonizer. Despite this marginalization of colour and gender Lenny’s narrative suggests that she learns how to exercise indirect methods to negotiate power from her relationship between her parents. Lenny’s father dominates in all matters
including finances, favour and family harmony. In spite of his domination over her mother, Lenny carefully records the way her mother negotiates her needs with her father on several occasions. On one particular morning, for example, Lenny reports:

Father is in a good mood. So, Mother too is in a good mood. She gives me a hug. She puts toothpaste on Father’s toothbrush. She tells me to take Father’s empty cup and saucer to the pantry. But Father latches on to me with such a show of speechless anguish and consternation at the thought of being parted from me that Mother says, ‘Let it be. Yousaf will take them.’ She smiles indulgently: as if she could cross my father if she had a mind to. (66-67)

This scene is an example of Lenny’s awareness that depending upon her father’s mood her mother’s mood changes. In general, it appears that Lenny’s mother uses her agency in a careful way without disturbing patriarchal practices. “Patriarchies” are defined by Kumkum Sangari as:

Patriarchies are resilient not only because they are embedded in social stratification, divisions of labour, other political structures, religious/cultural practices, institutions and categories, but also because of the contractual and consensual elements in them. (868)

Instead of confronting her husband about the various inequities in their relationship, Lenny’s mother uses indirect agency to get what she wants without
seriously challenging the basis of her subordination. It becomes evident; however, that even these privileges are not without their costs. The negative effects of this unequal but mutually constitutive relation of subjection are not lost on Lenny who represents the ‘games’ her mother and father play over the distribution of the family finances appears playful, but they are degrading activities. She depicts how her mother chases her father around the bedroom attempting to get money from him for some household expenses and comments:

Mother’s voice teeters between amusement and a wheedling whine. She is a virtuoso at juggling the range of her voice and achieving the exact balance with which to handle Father. Father has the knack of extracting the most talented performances from us all— and from all those who work for him. (67)

Lenny’s perception of the different positions her parents occupy deriving this negotiation is that her mother is the performer and her father is the director. Though the game is playful and difficult to make out who dominates, ultimately it is her father who occupies the dominant position. Lenny’s understanding the way the game is played where her mother like an animal “scrambles across the mattress on all fours.” (68) As she tries to catch her father is figured as her mother exercising sexual agency to get things done without displacing the patriarchal power that governs her marital relationship.

Lenny is aware of her mother’s struggle for favour from her father when he is involved with another woman and beats his wife. Lenny says that “But there are
other things they fight about that are not clear to me. Sometimes I hear Mother say “No, Jana; I won’t let you go!” The sensuousness Lenny associates with these actions between the parents other than the playful scene, makes her realise the inferior status of a girl in a patriarchal society. Her mother’s subordinate position in the marriage makes her turn to story-telling. Lenny too in a retrospective and self-respective mood asks herself “Is that when I learn to tell tales?” (80)

Lenny’s lower-class servants, take her out of the domestic space into the public space. Lenny’s consciousness is achieved through these two of the family’s servants, Ayah and Imam Din. They make her aware of the political changes going on in the world outside her own compressed circle. Jill Didur confirms that “Lenny’s intimate relationship with her Ayah and her visits to the Sikh/Muslim village of Pir Pindoo take her outside the bourgeois circle of the Parsi community and make her aware of the heterogeneous cultural context of her society at large.” (47) Ayah often takes Lenny to Queen’s Park, a public space that serves as a microcosm that unfolds the nation’s situation and politics. At first, the park is a community composed. The Indians of all religions sit in the shadow of the statue of Queen Victoria, an obvious metaphor for the colonial era. The circle that surrounds Ayah is composed of the servants and lower merchant class whose conversation is always either about Ayah or Indian politics. Political talk before Partition is often discussed outside of the domestic sphere; it is discussed in different places like park, wrestler’s restaurant and Parsee Temple. As Partition nears, the conversations enter home, with political arguments taking place at the dinner table in Lenny’s house. These arguments prophesizes the violence that will soon break through the domestic space. Lenny gets a chance to notice differences and boundaries among
the religious categories as is exposed to the political debates among Ayah’s admirers.

Instead of expanding their identities, these religious categories are condensing the people that Lenny thought she knew. The segregation is identified by Lenny, she notices the change in the Queen’s Garden. Lenny soon realizes that there are divisions in the park that are not existed before: Muslims, Sikhs and Brahmins all sit apart from each other in their own areas. Lenny observes that “only the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee are, as always, unified around her.” (97) Gradually even Ayah’s circle of admirers is reduced to accommodate the ever-narrowing definitions surrounding various groups in Lahore. The receding British is symbolized by the disappearance of the Queen’s statue in the park. It is replaced by the cloud of violence that falls upon the country. Lenny’s access to knowledge of how national politics affect various groups is expanded by her exposure to the rural perspective through her family’s cook, Imam Din.

Lenny comes to note that human relationships in the villages differ from that of city. Imam Din goes to his village to discuss the violence that has been erupting in the cities between various factions, including Sikh-Muslim trouble, a concern of the Muslim village and their nearby Sikh village. When he mentions the Sikh-Muslim trouble, the villagers of both religions protest against it. They consider it as a false division: “‘Brother,’ the Sikh granthi says when the tumult subsides, ‘our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?’” (56) In the view of these villagers, the lines that divide are those of the urban and the rural, not the religious.
Their definitions of ethnic community are based primarily on their blood ties and their communal, agricultural needs, and less on their religious affiliations. As chaudhry states:

‘our relationships with the Hindus are bound by strong ties. The city folk can afford to fight... we can’t. We are dependent on each other: bound by our toil; by Mandi prices set by the Banyas - they’re our enemy - those city Hindus. To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Sikh?’ (56)

The division primarily affects their lives economically as they belong to the community of the rural peasant. The only battle of these peasants is how to survive from the land with the restrictions placed upon them by the urban Banyas. Both the Sikh and Muslim leaders pledging to protect the chastity of their women and the lives of their men.

Lenny is once again a party to these conversations of the villagers through the affiliations of her servant, making herself a part of men’s discussions of politics. When she returns to the village with Imam Din nearly a year later, Lenny goes with the men to a fair, and in fact is at the head:

I ride on Imam Din’s shoulders, Ranna on his father’s – at the head of a procession of nephews, uncles, cousins, brothers, grandsons and great grandsons. The women and girls - except for me, because I am insistent, and from the city - stay behind as always. (104-105)
Lenny’s place in the village as a ‘city girl’ is somewhat transformed. She is allowed into the public spaces that are not for village women, exposing a kind of class hierarchy, as well as a rural and urban hierarchy. The village women do not go with the men to the mosque, they do not go to the fair, and they do not speak. They don’t even attend the village meetings where the men discuss because it appears to them as ‘city’ politics. The increasing discussion about the violence, between religious groups is nothing but a growing push towards Partition. Jill Didur provides a description of the female characters’ actions in ICM: “their actions are generally isolated, in the private sphere and mediated by restrictive social discourses that are not necessarily ‘self-conscious’ in enlightenment terms.” (50) Lenny, as upper-class, urban female, is more mobile and her identity is above than the village-dwelling female, as seen in the increasing ease with which she moves about.

Lenny’s visit of the village destabilizes the usual connections of men with public spaces and women within domestic space as she moves through social spaces of the both. As a young upper-class girl, Lenny’s journey through the world is connected with several different factors, including the religion and class of whom she accompanies and where they go. This gives her scope to know of partition and life in the Lahore, allows her to witness the effects of Partition on different religious groups. Lenny crosses boundaries and catches a glimpse not only of life outside the home, but also of life in other people’s homes.

Lenny, before the Partition adventure and the threat of violence, has lived quietly with her Parsee family and her Hindu and Muslim servants. She is not
disturbed though there is a great amount of diversity within her household and in the neighborhood in general, religious and ethnic differences. This peaceful coexistence is more evident in the circle of Ayah and her admirers. All the admirers of Ayah who are from different religious groups strive for Ayah’s attention and favours. Ayah is able to draw all of the various religious groups together. During the political discussion, the narrator hears the names of various leaders mentioned more and more frequently so she becomes increasingly aware of the religious differences within and outside of the group: “It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves—and the next they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah—she is also a token. A Hindu.” (93) The same figure who aroused the feelings of British and Indian men alike stands as a token of Hindus.

The foregrounding of Ayah’s Hindu identity does not immediately disband her group. Ayah encounters a particularly heated discussion about the ways in which the Hindu and the British have used the Sikhs, Ayah gets up with anger and shouts, “‘If all you talk of nothing but this Hindu-Muslim business, I’ll stop coming to the park.’” (92) Only the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee always unified around her, but the growing political conflict shows it’s effect in the park. Communities start remaining within their own circles, no longer talking with any other communal people. For this reason, the frightened Lenny dives into Ayah’s protective lap, refusing to leave it.
The logic of women’s actions portrayed in Sidhwa’s novel can be better understood if women’s experiences are represented as interpretations rather than mere reflections of reality. As Kathleen Canning points out:

This emphasis on construing, reframing, and re-appropriating experience implies that subjects do have some kind of agency, even if the meanings they make depend on the ways of interpreting the world and on the discourses available to them at any particular moment. Indeed, experience, as the rendering of meaning, is inextricably entwined with the notion of agency, with a vision of historical subjects as actors who put into practice their necessarily structured knowledge. (377)

Despite this internalized sense of inferiority or subordination, Lenny’s narrative suggests that she learns how to exercise indirect agency by witnessing and participating in the negotiations of power between Ayah and her suitors. Where Lenny’s mother’s actions often result in “overly individualized private resolutions.” (Kumkum Sangari 867) to her subordination, Ayah’s use of indirect agency becomes a source of encouragement for Lenny. Lenny’s and Ayah’s relationship stems from its socially ‘unregulated’ history. They both relatively spend more time together which allows them to build a strong bond of intimacy that challenges patriarchal, racial and bourgeois conventions. Lenny admires Ayah’s sensuality as she comments when she is pushed in her pram along the jail road as:

The covetous glances Ayah draws educate me. Up and down they look at her. Stub-handed twisted beggars and dusty old beggars on
crutches drop their poses and stare at her with hard alert eyes. Holy men, masked in piety, shove aside their pretenses to ogle her with lust. Hawkers, cart drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes, pushing my pram with the unconcern of the Hindu goddess she worships. (3)

The affectionate relationship between Lenny and Ayah is unmonitored by her parents. This relationship gives Lenny insight into the contradictions and the potential for resistance to her society’s dominant codes. Lenny becomes aware of the link between the power relations as she grows up in a patriarchal, minority community. It also displays Ayah’s negotiation as a female Hindu servant living in colonial India and postcolonial Pakistan. Ayah’s ability to displace the codes of chastity and her desire to maintain the respect of her community suggests an alternative to the patriarchal relationships that direct Lenny’s mother’s life. Lenny equates Ayah’s hold over the men in her social circle to “the tyranny magnets exercise over metals.” (20) From the naive perspective of a child, Ayah’s negotiations with Ice-candy-man and others take on the impression of a military action in which Lenny learns to participate in order to extract attention:

Things love to crawl beneath Ayah’s sari. Ladybirds, glow-worms, Ice-candy-man’s toes. She dusts them off with impartial nonchalance. I keep an eye on Ice-candy-man’s toes. Sometimes in the course of an engrossing story, they travel so cautiously that both Ayah and I are taken unawares. Ice-candy-man is a raconteur. He is also an absorbing gossip. When the story is extra good, and
the tentative toes polite, Ayah tolerates them. Sometimes a toe
snakes out and zeros in on its target with such lightening speed that
I hear of the attack only from Ayah's startled ‘Oof!’ Once in a
while I preempt the big toe’s romantic impulse and, catching it
mid-crawl or mid strike, twist it. It is a measure to keep the candy
bribes coming. (19)

This passage depicts how Ice-candy-man’s seduction of Ayah through
narration is attached with a military-like strategy that occasionally leads to the
mutual expression of desire between them. As Lenny points out, Ayah sets
conditions on the manner and circumstances in which she is willing to entertain Ice- 
candy-man’s advances: “When the story is extra good, and the tentative toes
polite.” (19) In all cases, the emphasis in Lenny’s description of these encounters is
on the unequal but not unmanageable relations of power between Ayah and the men
of her social circle.

While Ayah is adorned as a symbol of India by conservative-nationalists,
the imaginary remains at the local level. She is able to hold the group of her
admirers together and diffuses conflict among them despite the intensification of
racist and patriarchal discourse at the time of partition. It is interesting to notice that
when the men in Ayah’s social circle engage in divisive metaphorical attacks
against the Hindu and Muslim communities alternately, Ayah cleverly redirects the
conversation by changing the topic of the discussion to the character of the British
Viceroyal and his wife. Lenny notes that Ayah is: “like Mother, is an oil pourer.”
(91) Ayah though appears as a symbol of India and a target for patriarchal struggles
for power, slowly the image falls and narrows down as Pakistan eventually prevails. It signifies the escalation of violence against women in the border of the country.

The violence against women in the novel is exemplified by Ayah’s fate. Ayah begins to venture beyond the closed sheltered world that Lenny introduces, early in the narration:

I gain Ayah’s goodwill and complicity by accommodating her need to meet friends and relatives. She takes me to fairs, cheap restaurants and slaughter-houses. I cover up for her and maintain a canny silence about her doings. I learn of human needs, frailties, cruelties and joys. I also learn from her the tyranny magnets exercise over metals.” (20)

The intensification of women’s self-discipline according to community and national patriarchal codes is illustrated in Sidhwa’s novel. Lenny observes how Ayah’s relations with the men in her social circle become restricted by a rigid definition of her racial, gender and sexual identity. Lenny gets the first clue of this, when Ice-candy-man provides Lenny and Ayah with a shabby of the latest “news of the world.” After he reports how Chandra Bose has stated that: “If we want India back we must take pride in our customs, our clothes our languages...And not go mouthing the got-pit sot-pit of the English! (28)” Lenny narrates how,

Finally, narrowing his focus to our immediate surroundings, he says to Ayah, ‘Shanta bibi, you’re Punjabi aren’t you?’ ‘For the
most part,’ Ayah agrees warily. ‘Then why don’t you wear Punjabi
clothes? I’ve never seen you in shalwar-kamize.’ (29)

Ayah’s response that ayahs who wear saris earn more money than those who
wear Punjabi clothes discloses that she is not unaware of the regional politics that
prevail in her contemporary surroundings. She prevents Ice-candy-man’s endeavor
to register her identity narrowly as ‘Punjabi’ by responding to his question about
her ‘identity’ with dismissive assent: “For the most part” In this brief scene, Sidhwa
weaves together the micro and macro-political discursive to disclose how women of
partition days “are being redefined as semiotic objects on which the actions of the
state are to be inscribed.” (Veena Das 70)

Another key element in the novel, ICM is considering religion as
supplement to the patriarchal power relations in Lahore. It also simultaneously
enforces and elaborates definitions of national identities as it is related to the
victimization of women and their living practices. Later, as the traditional
nationalist political narrator, Lenny becomes aware of religious differences “for the
first time” people suddenly shrink. They are now Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian:

Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah— she is also a token.
A Hindu. Carried away by renewed devotional fervor she expends a
small fortune in joss-sticks, lowefrs and sweets on the gods and
goddesses in the temples. Imam Din and Yousaf, turning into religious
zealots, warn Mother they will take Friday afternoons off for the Jumha
prayers. . . Crammed into a narrow religious slot they too are
diminished, as are Jinnah and Iqbal, Ice-candy-man and Masseur. (93)
Thus Lenny’s description of the changes in behavior of Ayah’s and her followers’ emphasizes the narrowing of the community identity that moderates the vitality and the complexity of social relations in the community. Ayah and the others are marginalized, elevated to a privileged position within the shifting relations of power pervading the country.

The relationships between the intense patriarchal nationalist discourses and the pressures on women’s subjectiveness is reflected in the gendered sectarian violence at the time of partition. As tensions within Ayah’s group of followers intensify, they engage in arguments about the future of each community in the future Pakistan. In their arguments, images of contrast are linked with the identity of the minority community on each side of the border. In one such discussion, the local “restaurant-owning wrestler” proclaims: “Once the line of division is drawn in the Punjab, all Muslims to the east will have their balls cut off!” Ice-candy-man becomes angry at this statement and shouts at him “Oye! You gone crazy? You son-of-an owl!” (130) The subjugation of the other community is repeatedly associated in the conversations of these people. For instance, when the first reports of the riots begin to trickle in, Ice-candy-man reports that there are no young women among the dead, Only two gunny-bags full of women’s breasts. The fact that women are singled out as special targets for torture and abduction is not limited to Ayah alone. When Ice-candy-man takes Ayah and Lenny up to the roof to witness the burning of Lahore, Lenny observes how Ayah begins to withdraw from the group in a pessimistic attitude: “Ayah moves away, her feet suddenly heavy and dragging, and sits on the roof slumped against the wall. She buries her face in her
As the violence against women increases, Ayah begins to lose her ability to negotiate her desire in an enduring fashion.

An added element of danger occurs because of the presence of the men, most notably Sharbat Khan, the Masseur and Ice-candy-man. While Ayah has many admirers, these three men are the most strongly attracted to her. Sharbat Khan is the knife sharpener, practitioner of an occupation that suits his character perfectly. He is a flashy and proud, but nice, young man. Ayah is first attracted to him but Ayah’s education in the ways of the world is furthered by her interaction with the Masseur who replaces Sharbat Khan in Ayah’s affections after he leaves for his mountainous homeland. Ayah’s emotions, awakened by her association with Sharbat Khan, blossoms into full-fledged love with the Masseur. But right from the beginning there is some tension between Ayah and Ice-candy man. His methods of seduction are always cunning and harsh. Unlike with Sharbat Khan and the Masseur, Ayah never expresses any sense of happiness about her relationship, or the lack of it with Ice-candy-man, at any point. As her acquaintance with Ice-candy-man progresses, the shades of religious differences and violence increase in the novel.

Ayah moves further and further into a world unregulated by the rules that she is familiarized because of the intensification of violence in the city. Lenny accompanies her into the city, where she sits along with Ayah, and a few of the men, and watches the burning of Lahore. Masseur objects Ayah and the child when they witness the terrible scene of the violence. He tells Ice-candy-man “‘You shouldn’t have brought them here, yaar ... They shouldn’t see such things . . . Besides, it’s dangerous.’” (135) To which Ice-candy man responds in his usual way:
“‘We are with her. She’s safe . . . I only wanted her to see the fires.’” (136) His words are very suggestive. They indicate not only the future spoiling of Ayah’s body but also the fires burning inside him against Hindus and Sikhs.

Lenny replays the violence that she has witnessed when she tears apart a beautiful doll by the legs, and it is no coincidence that the doll is “large, life-like doll with a China face and blinking blue eyes and coarse black curls. It has a sturdy, well-stuffed cloth body and a substantial feel.” (138) This description suggests the treatment inflicted to Ayah’s body after her abduction. It is also indicative of the fact that it is Lenny, Ayah’s most beloved, who hands over her in childish ignorance, thus aiding in the tearing of the doll. The violence has clearly impacted all their lives.

Lenny’s and Ayah’s worlds are soon wrought with turbulence. The Eden is no longer what it had been. All the Hindus convert to Islam or Christianity in order to escape religious persecution in Pakistan. The ranks of Ayah’s admirers are also split, and they no longer come and visit her in groups. The loss of mutual trust is tangible. Masseur and Ayah plan to marry but he is killed in the riots. It is significant that there is no sign of Ice-candy-man, although he usually haunts Ayah, especially if she is in the company of Masseur. Prior to Masseur’s death, Ice-candy-man had boasted about his involvement in the insulting and later, the killing of the Hindus. It is clear that somehow he is related with Masseur’s death, as Ayah’s and Masseur’s intentions to marry are no secret. He comes back again to take away Ayah out of her hiding place. When Ice-candy-man along with rioters come looking for Ayah, Lenny directs him to the roof. It is because of her innocence and belief
that the Ice-candy-man will not do any harm to Ayah. As Nilufer E. Bharucha clarifies, this is a “betrayal, the result of centuries of patriarchal conditioning, a misplaced faith in the integrity of men and a searing lack of confidence in and hatred for the female self.” (181) After knowing the hiding place of Ayah through Lenny, Ice-candy-man along with the rioters, take away Ayah from Lenny’s house by force:

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. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dean child’s screamless mouth…The men drag her in grotesque strides to the cart and their harsh hands, supporting her with careless intimacy, lift her into it. Four men stand pressed against her, propping her body upright, their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces. (183)

Lenny may not be as guilty as the men who come to take Ayah away, but Sidhwa cannot help but note that the little Parsee girl could have helped Ayah, if only she has got faith in her mother and her household and not in the Ice-candy-man. Ayah is carried off by the Ice-candy-man, an admirer whom she has thought of as a friend. Lenny remains sad and dejected after Ayah’s abduction. 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 prickling toothbrush until it is sore and bleeding. (184)

This shows Lenny’s sincere anguish for Ayah. Lenny’s love and affection towards Ayah also come into the light.

Ayah finds herself in the red light district, “dancing and performing” for the household cook as well as other former friends and acquaintances. According to Ananya Jahanara Kabir, the association of the female body and the sexual violation is as follows:

As in other moments of collective violence, it was the systematic rape of women that trauma and body obviously linked. Women were raped and mutilated during the mayhem of the partition because their female bodies provided a space over which the competitive games of men were played out. (179)

One day Lenny’s cousin comes with the news that he has seen Ayah in a taxi dressed like a film actress. After a few days, Lenny too sees Ayah, in a taxi that rushes past them. Significantly her physical appearance is altered. Ayah’s passing by in a taxi is an analysis of the fleeting way in which she is to touch their lives henceforth. It is also a signifier of her position as a dancing girl being transitory. She is struck down by two men, all means of escape blocked off.

Although Lenny knows the ways in which her mother resists patriarchal domination, in extending help to the fallen women, she is still drawn more to her
beloved Godmother. The older woman who can freely speak her mind, and who is a spinster, is more close to Lenny’s temperament and is better suited to openly tackle with Ayah’s abductors. Once Godmother hears that Ayah is not safe back home, but still in Hira Mandi, she has an interaction with the Ice-candy-man at her place. Allowing Lenny to be present at the exchange, she forcibly shows the young girl how a woman with power can stand up for other women. Ice-candy-man proclaims that he and Ayah are now married, and that he has treated her well but Godmother refuses to consider his explanation. She asks the Ice-candy-man that what he has done to her all the three months of Ayah’s abduction to protect her ‘honour’ for which he has no answer. Godmother confronts Ice-candy-man:

‘Why don’t you speak? Can’t you bring yourself to say that you played the drums when she danced? Counted money while drunks, pedlars, sahibs, and cut-throats used her like a sewer?’ Godmother’s face is slippery with sweat. Her thighs beneath me are trembling. I have a potent sense of her presence now. And when I inhale I can smell the formidable power of her attack. “Did you marry her, then, when you realized that Lenny’s mother had arranged to have her sent to Amritsar?” Ice-candy-man, his muddied hair falling forward from his bowed head, remains still. ‘Why don’t you speak?’ A little while back you couldn’t stop talking!’(250)

Not satisfied with the answer given by the Ice-candy-man, Lenny and Godmother decide to visit Ayah in Hiramandi.
Lenny accompanies Godmother to Ayah’s house that has the appearance of a market. The description fits obviously into the historic and traditional mold of the space of the dancing girls that reside in India. Lenny describes the place as having the “appearance of a bazaar with rows of shops at the ground level and living quarters with frail arched windows and decaying wooden balconies teetering above.” (258) This bazaar is a place where one can buy anything, including other human beings, all for the price of money. The balconies, that are barely holding together, are the space where the women display their physical attractions. There are also small flower stalls that sell flowers that the men who visit these houses, wear when they visit the dancing girls. It is to be noted that Ice-candy-man himself wears flowers on his hands when he goes to visit Godmother in her house, Lenny sees “The ancient roughly carved doors are shut for the most part. And the few that are open reveal steep flights of narrow steps or twilit interiors.” (258) Everything is mysterious, and the only sense that Lenny gets is that there is something abnormal about the place.

The house where Ice-candy-man and Ayah live is itself old, having a weathered door with deep grooves, clearly ancient and enclosing many secrets. Lenny finally meets her precious Ayah. When she hears that Ayah, whose actual name is Shanta, has been renamed Mumtaz in her re-embodiment as dancing girl and wife, Lenny in her childhood ignorance thinks that it is “fitting that a courtier’s wife be named after a Mogul Queen.” (260) Lenny soon dreams of rare flashes of Ayah moving around in the Recovered Women’s Camp on Warris Road and that she has once again, returned to the spaces of safety.
As a wife to Ice-candy-man she comes into the hold of patriarchal domestic sphere of Pakistan even while her religious identity connects her with the patriarchal society in India. On one hand, though Ayah’s gendered religious identity disqualifies her for citizenship in the Muslim centric nation of Pakistan, her marriage to Ice-candy-man places her in a relationship in the domestic sphere recognized by the state. On the other hand, her ‘abduction’ stands as a shame for Hinduism’s patriarchal society of India. It is counter to the prohibition against inter-marriage in both the communities.

Lenny realises that Ice-candy-man has betrayed Ayah’s dignity and personal safety in order to satisfy his desire to dominate her sexually signals the end of the narrative. Initially, Lenny is impressed by the romantic presentation of Ice-candy-man’s identity. Upon his arrival she states: “Behold! The bridegroom comes. Lean, lank and loping, in flowering white muslin, raising dust in his sandled feet, the poet approacheth.” (244) While previous events in the novel suggest Lenny that this new person is just one more strategic embodiment that Ice-candy-man adopts to suit his purposes. It is clear that Lenny takes the transformation of Ice-candy-man into a poet as she comments: “Astonishingly, we are not amazed at the surge of words pouring from him: so well do they suit the postic mold of his metamorphosed poetic character.” (245) Ice-candy-man’s identity for another in Lenny’s perspective of the situation is:

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 and then come
so close that I can see every pore and muddy crease in his skin
magnified in dazzling luminosity. (251)

Although Sidhwa represents this moment of substitution as a conversion
experience, a clarifying moment, after which Lenny:

“sees differently. There is all the difference between subjective
perceptual clarity and transparent vision; one does not necessarily
follow from the other even if the subjective state is metaphorically
presented as a visual experience.”

Indeed, Lenny’s experience is represented as distorting her vision making
“any claim to experience’s unmediated transparency impossible.” (Scott 794)
Lenny’s representation of this experience highlights the new understanding of
reality that brings her new consciousness.

Lenny realizes the reality. She no longer takes vision as evidence to identify
people. She comes to see the world with “perpetual clarity.”

The innocence that my parents’ vigilance, the servant’s care and
Godmother's love sheltered in me, that neither Cousin’s carnal
cravings, nor the stories of the violence of the mobs, could quite
destroy, was laid to waste that evening by the emotional storm that
raged around me. The confrontation between Ice-candy-man and
Godmother opened my eyes to the wisdom of righteous
indignation over compassion. The demands of gratification -and
the unscrupulous nature of desire. To the pitiless face of love.

(252)

Godmother’s confrontation with Ice-candy-man reveals to Lenny the time of colours of him being a Muslim working class man who claims to worship Ayah but subordinates her to his desires. Godmother visit to Hiramandi, motivates the government machinery. And one day a police party comes to Hiramandi and takes away Ayah from Ice-candy-man. She is put at the recovered women’s camp on Warris Road which is well guarded. Ice-candy-man, now a changed man visits the camp to see his beloved but is beaten up badly by the Sikh sentry. Dejected, he wanders placing flowers for Ayah over the wall of the camp every morning and sings for her: “Ice-candy-man’s voice rises in sweet and clear song to shower Ayah with poems.” (277) This continues for many days. One day he learns that Ayah is shifted to Amritsar to her family there. Ice-candy-man follows her across the Wagah border into India to pursue his love and the novel ends on this tragic note. Lenny gives a sympathetic view of Ice-candy-man at his departure:

Jinnah cap in hand, Ice-candy-man stands before us. His ravaged face, caked with mud, has turned into a tragedian's mask. Repentance, grief and shock are compressed into the molds of his features...And his inflamed eyes are raw with despair. (252)

Godmother’s disregard for the binaries that pit ‘respectable’ and ‘polluted’ women against each other within patriarchal social norms allows for the unfolding of a complex selection of discourses that inform Ayah’s new identity as an ‘abducted woman,’ ‘wife,’ ‘subaltern’ and ‘Hindu’ in postcolonial Pakistan.
Godmother first encourages Ayah to accept her fate as a wife of Ice-candy-man. “‘You must make the best of things’”, she tells, suspecting that Ayah’s family may not take her back. Godmother initially attempts to encourage Ayah to stay with Ice-candy-man “‘What’s happened has happened’”, (261) but on Ayah’s continuous urging, she agrees to investigate the possibility of arranging her travel to her family who are in Amritsar. The novel provides strong-willed representation of Ayah’s decision to leave Lahore for her family’s home in India. Through her strong decision it is understood that she is thoroughly traumatized, shamed and betrayed by the men she has previously considered as her close associates. Lenny wonders as her eyes meet Ayah’s:

Where have the radiance and animation gone? Can the soul be extracted from its living body? Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever: wide-opened with what they’ve seen and felt: wider even than the frightening saucers and dinner plates that describe the watchful orbs of the three dogs who guard the wicked Tinder Box witches’ treasures in underground chambers. Colder than the ice that lurks behind the hazel in Ice-candy-man’s beguiling eyes.

(260)

Ayah undergoes a change in understanding rather than a discovery of truth to the new conditions that prevail in the post colonial Pakistan. Her new ‘watchful’ stance is a combination of detachment and suspicion produced by the experiences she has had in Pakistan and those she is going to face in India with the stamp of an abducted woman. She resolves to leave at the first opportunity, so cannot be
interpreted as an escape from these pressures since her behaviour is more guarded than ever. Betrayed by the community and the nation, Ayah is determined to reject the community that has made her a victim of their patriarchal struggles but still braces herself for the new humiliations she will endure in her homeland.

After partition, Ayah is more constrained and eventually her body becomes a prey for the power struggles between warring communities. As Veena Das argues about the treatment of women in relation to the Recovery Operation: “the woman’s body became a sign through which men communicated with each other.” (56) Though partition leaves the nation and community broken, it is clear that Lenny has cracked the patriarchal-nationalist code that reasserts itself in the aftermath.

Lenny’s ability to put things in perspective does not mean that she creates a sort of inferiority about herself where she only focuses on her own position. She recognises how she has been granted certain rights and privileges, but she refuses to get this protection on the cost of others pain. Early in the narrative, she says that she has a recurrent nightmare “that connects her to the pain of others.” (21) Images of frightening soldiers and dismembered children alert her to the fact that there are problems going on which no one seems to bother or wants to change. Though Lenny is a middle class Parsee girl, but her concerns are not strictly class based. She seeks to see fallen women of all classes and castes “recovered.” She wants to make sure that people like Ranna are not brutally killed for the sake of politicians they have never met. In addition to this she wants to draw attention to the ways in which social norms allow for the exploitation of untouchable women, even though those women, like the unmanageable Papoo, can clearly show active resistance.
Papoo is Mucchoo’s daughter. Mucchoo has an obvious hatred of her daughter that finds expression in undiluted physical brutality. The child is often beaten up senseless, with little provocation. It is true that female children are considered useless in poor Indian families. So, the depth of the violence that Papoo faces seems unavoidable. Papoo’s fate is only a small incident in the larger theme of the ill-treatment that all the prominent women in the novel experience at some point of time.

In Lenny’s world, women obviously have different positions and different abilities, but these differences do not separate them. Their interconnected nature demonstrates precisely the need of working together. Shahnaz J. Rouse notes:

a history of nationalism in peripheral states in general indicates that it was always predicated on the prior subordination of women to a larger cause, rendering the question of women’s rights secondary. In Pakistan, this scenario is repeated but with an even more troublesome twist: women’s subordinate status is relegated to divine sanction by virtue of fundamentalist religious ideology. Thus, the women’s movement must not only broaden its base in class terms but also deny primacy to any form of nationalism since all versions—religious, ethnic, class—rest on privileging one oppression over others. In order to succeed, women must insist on the interrelatedness of different forms of oppression. The semantic recognition of exploitation as distinct from oppression cannot be
used as justification for privileging struggles against the former system over the latter. (30-31)

Inherent within this call for diversity is a distinctive advantage of a feminist agenda. It is women who must work together in order to rectify wrongs, because they are the ones victimized by various forms of nationalism and by religious fundamentalism. Sidhwa’s novel campaigns that women, as a collective unit, find ways to work productively together in order to counteract the ideologies that have restricted and continue to restrict them.

Through the exploration of partition incidents, Bapsi Sidhwa proves that “feminism” and “feminist concerns” are not formulated in Britain and transplanted to India. She shows this as a native agency even in traditional and patriarchal countries like India and Pakistan. Lenny’s narrative not only demonstrates how Indian women and Pakistani women are able to serve “Mother India” themselves. It also presents the modern Pakistani woman who is able to look beyond the compulsive gendered structures and the liberatory ideologies. Sidhwa creates a narrative in which nationalism itself is integrated into a distinctly feminine framework.

Gandhi’s power is revealed when the great leader is introduced as a character in the novel itself. Gandhiji visits Lahore and Lenny is taken to see Gandhi. The little girl eventually comes to feel the power of Gandhi’s attraction: “suddenly his eyes turn to me. My brain, heart and stomach melt. The pure shaft of humor, compassion, tolerance and understanding he directs at me fuses me to
everything that is feminine, funny, gentle and loving. He is a man who loves women.” (87) As Katrak contends:

In his nonviolent philosophy, Gandhi interpreted some personal aspects of tradition—e.g., the Indian woman’s submissiveness, her ability to suffer silently—as embodying the potential for political resistance necessary for a nationalist struggle…the practice of dowry which validates the inferior status of woman-as-property. Such violent configurations were temporarily repressed thanks both to struggle against a foreign enemy and to Gandhi’s charismatic personality…Gandhi’s mass-based movements which effectively obscured the economic bases underlying religious rivalries. (402)

Lenny finds that her home is close to a make-shift women’s shelter. Of course, the innocent Lenny does not initially know that the building is a shelter. The presence of “guards” and the unhappy looks of all the sluggish women within leads her to believe that she is living next to a women’s prison. When Lenny’s mother hires a woman from this shelter to look after Lenny and her brother, Lenny finds out that the building is not a prison. She knows it through Hamida as she tells her, “It isn’t a jail Lenny baby…It’s a camp for fallen women.” (214) The fact that a dismal camp such as this can exist and that women such as Hamida has to accept their plight as normal and natural. The women shelter is the embodiment of the ways in which violence against women has been sanctioned. Though Hamida’s is unjust, she perfectly plays the role of the silent and suffering Indian woman. Lenny
comes to know the pitiable story of Hamida through her Godmother that she has been kidnapped by the Sikhs and her family refused to take her back after the dishonor though there is no fault on her side. She remains as the ultimate victim of partition crisis.

Disappearing during the day and their illegal storing of petrol, Lenny and Cousin come to the unlikely conclusion that their mothers are helping to burn down Lahore but later come to know that the smuggled petrol is used to send the victims back home. Their misunderstanding hides the reality of their mothers’ actions. Lenny blames her mother for withdrawing her efforts on finding Ayah, as she is unaware of the fact that mother and Electric Aunt have already made provisions for Ayah’s recovery. Mother and Electric Aunt have attempted not only to save Ayah, but also they have worked to aid other fallen women. They put all their efforts for the safe transportation of Hindus and Sikhs across the newly defined border. Lenny thinks that mother does not know of Hamida’s past, but her mother has specifically hired Hamida for the purpose of getting her out of the shelter. Earlier Lenny knows her mother as the over-indulgent and smiling wife and also as a distant yet affectionate mother, but later she recognizes that there is much about her mother that she does not and did not know. Rashmi Gaur rightly remarks women’s situation in the novel: “The novel presents women as a twice oppressed category on stage: firstly, as human beings suffocated by violence and secondly, as women burdened by the bond and impositions of a patriarchal society.” (60)

Ayah return to India at the end signals not only the real resolution of Ayah’s journey to Amritsar but also in Lenny’s growing awareness of the social world
about her. Both Lenny’s mother and her Godmother are presented as liberators, free and removed from the grips of patriarchal power. They are able to find ways to aid women in distress. They don’t rely on their husbands or their leaders to make decisions for them, but utilizes their powers and resources.

There are many women whose stories are unsung. Their contribution to history is unrecognized. They have to be acknowledged with great salutation.