Chapter-3

Violence and Trauma of Partition in *The Ice-Candy Man*
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*Ice-Candy Man*

“We were ruined in the name of freedom and so were you

We were looted unawares for we were asleep and so were you

The red eyes reveal that we have wept and so have you.”

— Ustad Damman

The 1947- partition of the Indian subcontinent, primarily meaning the political separation of its Hindu and Muslim population into distinctive independent countries is undoubtedly the most important factor in determining the destiny of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. This side-effect of the freedom from British Empire is the single event, not only in the history of India, but even in the world history, that has been documented as one of the most quickest, the most traumatic, even the most lethal and the greatest forced migration which the entire humanity has ever witnessed.

“Boundaries, refugees, displaced, homeless victims, riots, rapes, abductions, loots, the mad dance of violence, communal disharmony, trainloads of dead bodies, bloodshed, massacre, genocide, property loss, refugee camps, nearly a million deaths and the Partition…”¹ : this is how Kashish Badar’s article “Theme of Partition in Indian Literature” opens encompassing all the tragic aspects of the Partition of 1947 of India.

In fact, the Partition of the Indian subcontinent is much more than a historical fact. This messiest national divorce created two new independent nations
dividing the subcontinent along sectarian lines. The northern, predominantly Muslim sections of India became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on August 14, 1947 and the very following day the southern and majority Hindu section became the Republic of India. This cataclysmic, life-changing event brought along itself great misery and pain. Though its significance lies in the emergence of the sovereignties of India and Pakistan, one cannot deny the fact that the borders between the two was drawn with the blood of nearly half million people of the subcontinent who were slain in communal riots. Not only a country was divided; even the heart and very soul of its people got alienated. The magnitude, monstrosity and horrific emotional duress of this tragedy shocked the human psyche in such an unprecedented manner that even after 70 years it loiters as an agonizing unforgettable tale of parting and is likely to continue for an unimaginable period of time. It was so terribly barbaric that “The cultivated genocide and organized violence experienced by the Jews in the West during the Holocaust cannot compare with the kind of spontaneous violence experienced during Partition violence.”

No doubt that the attainment of independence of India after the slavery of nearly two centuries of British rule was a great achievement for its people. But this freedom from British Empire brought in its wake the Hindu-Muslim holocaust, which marred the mirth and joy of this much awaited and sought after achievement by tearing apart the country on the very eve of independence. E.H. Carr has remarked aptly, “Suffering is indigenous in history. Every great period has its casualties as well as its victories.”
This vivisection of the sub-continent displaced, within a few months, nearly 12.5 million people from their ancestral homes forcing them to flee across newly delineated frontiers depending upon their religion and faith. “The transfer of population surrounding the Partition of India on August 14-15, 1947 created at least ten million refugees, and resulted in at least one million deaths. This is perhaps as much as we can quantify the tragedy. The bounds of the property loss, even if they were known, could not encompass the devastation. The number of persons beaten, maimed, tortured, raped, abducted, exposed to disease and exhaustion, and otherwise physically brutalized remains measureless. The emotional pain of severance from home, family and friendship is by its nature immeasurable.”

The ambit, magnitude and the wide-ranging impact of the world’s largest mass exodus was so enormous that almost the entire population of the subcontinent ranging from the little baby in mother’s womb to an old man leading towards grave suffered physically, mentally and emotionally. All human values were debased and trampled leaving no difference between human beings and animals. The inhuman and barbaric treatment with women and girl children, wide-spread instances of slaughter and violence, communal tension, mutual distrust proved to be a trauma from which the subcontinent has never fully recovered. Though the records vary about the data of loss of life and property, but roughly, this one of the bloodiest and most gruesome carnages in the history of India resulted in the displacement of millions of people, abduction, rape and mutilation of over a hundred thousand women, arsoning of tens of thousands of houses, shops and other establishments. Urvashi Butalia gives following statistical account in her *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*: 
“Estimated of the dead vary from 200,000 (the contemporary British figure) to two million (a later Indian estimate) but that somewhere around a million people died is now widely accepted. As always there was widespread sexual savagery: about 75,000 women are thought to have been abducted and raped by men of religion different from their own (and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion) Thousands of families were divided, homes were destroyed, crops left to rot, villages abandoned.”

In history books these astounding facts are generally overshadowed by the roles played by the renowned leaders in fighting for the freedom and new identity of the nation. We find nationalist historiography celebrating the moment of independence whereas the sacrifice of people during and due to the violence of the Partition is given little room. To quote G.D. Khosla:

“History has not known a fratricidal war of such dimensions in which human hatred and bestial passions were degraded to the levels witnessed during this dark epoch when religious frenzy, taking the shape of a hideous monster, stalked through cities, towns and countryside, taking a toll of a half million innocent lives.”

Even today the shadow of this horrendous tragedy continues in the diverse forms of terrorism, communal violence and even open hostility between the two countries. The abruptness, horror, brutality of the Partition resulting in the enormous loss of human lives and property deeply disturbed the psyche of the subcontinent and its social fabric as well. Anupama D. Deshraj expresses the far reaching effect of violence and trauma associated with the Partition in these moving words:
“From the killings, rapes, kidnappings, looting and banditry, the South-Asian populace continues to suffer from psychological wounds etched by Partition. Arguably before the Indian-Partition, the twentieth century had not experienced such a massive and excruciating migration of people.”

The Partition is not just a political event in the history of the country. The resulting trauma, sometimes overshadowing the joys of Independence, has fired the imagination of the Post Colonial creative artists of South Asia who through various forms of art have given expression to the horrendous effects of the Partition. Painters have painted down on canvas, dramatic artists have acted out and writers and poets have penned it on papers. In literature the theme has been so frequently and intensely dealt with that it can even be categorized as a different genre, namely Partition literature. Literature, having a wider scope and perspective than the conventional history, records not only the historical facts and political events of the time but also provides a detailed account of emotional and psychological turbulence faced by the people affected by the Partition. Preferring scholarly literature on the Partition over the history books which mainly focus only on the political processes that led to the vivisection of India Mushirul Hasan says:

“The history books do not record the pain, trauma and sufferings of those who had to part from their kin, friends and neighbours, their deepening nostalgia for places they had lived in for generations, the anger of devotees removed from their place of worship, and the harrowing experiences of the countless people who boarded train thinking they would be transported to the realization of their dreams, but of whom not a man, woman or child survived the journey.”
Similarly Francisco revealing the wider scope of Partition literature that deals also with the psychological and emotional effects on people than conventional history analyses: “Only the literature truly evokes the suffering of the innocent, whose pain is universal and ultimately a vehicle of more honest reconciliation than political discourse. The literary work on the Partition affirms that the subject of the Partition was first the human being…”

A number of partition novels have captured this unforgettable and undesirable moment dealing with various themes ranging from displacement, uprootedness, bloodshed, communal riots, search for identity, alienation, sad plight of women, and nostalgic lament for a lost age of communal harmony, for the mass scale destruction. As Rituparna Roy says that the Partition “has served and continues to serve as compelling literary theme that has engendered a substantial body of fiction on the subcontinent fiction that is startling in terms of its diversity of focus, style and treatment.”

A great number of works from regional literature produced in languages like Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali and Urdu have depicted the various aspects of Independence and the partition powerfully. In Hindi, Bhishm Sahni (Tamas), Ramanand Sagar (Aur Insaan Mar Gaya), Rahi Masoom Raza (Adha Gaon); in Punjabi Surinder Singh Narula (Dil Dariya); in Gujarati Chunila Vardhman Shah (Kantak Chhaya Panth), Kamla Ben Patel (Mool Sota Ukhadela); in Bengali Manoj Basu (Se ek Dushswapna Chhilo), Tarashankar Bandhopadhyaya (Uttarayan), Mahasweta devi (Mukti); in Urdu Saadat Hasan Manto (Thanda Gosht, Khol Do, Toba Tek Singh), Ismat Chugtai (short stories), Intizar Hussain (Hindustan Se
Aakhri Khat, Basti), Quarratulain Haider (Aag Ka Duriya) are some of the most intense and thought-provoking works dealing with various themes related to Partition. Different Indian languages thus considerably contributed to the partition Literature.

In English language also, we have superb examples of writers who have expressed the trauma of Partition with great intensity and concern. Some of them are Khushwant Singh, Chaman Lal Nahal, Manohar Malgaonkar, B.Rajan, Salman Rushdie, Raj Gill, Attia Hussain, Mehar Nigar Masroor, Nanak Singh, Kartar Singh Duggal, Amrita Pritam, Gurucharan Das and Yashpal. Moved by the horrendous consequences of the Partition these writers wrote powerfully and sensitively on the unprecedented destruction and violence, the predicament of the refugees, the breakdown of human values, strain of despair and disillusionment that this event brought in its wake.

Khushwant Singh’s paramount novel Train to Pakistan (1956) owns an iconic status as the first Partition novel which shows the naked power of violence erupted during the turbulent days of partition. The sleepy little village Mano Majra, situated on the frontier of India and Pakistan awakens to unprecedented horrors of the partition. Trapped by a mad communal agitation, the village gets distorted and suffers enormous destruction and melancholy. With a scathing irony, Singh exposes the brutality, savagery and sinister impact of the horrifying tragedy of the Partition. In delineating the scenes of the corpses-loaded train, the dreadful sight of the Sutlej swollen with corpses, the burial and cremation of the dead bodies, the emergence of a sudden belief in ‘tit for tat’ theory, the ghostly horror of bloodshed, destruction

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and trauma on both the sides of the border, tragic fate of Sundari, Hukum Chand’s ironical thinking on ‘tryst with destiny’ and several other such incidents, Khushwant Singh has successfully presented the stark reality of an unpleasant phase of our national history. At the same time his faith in humanistic ideals of love, affection, loyalty, courage and endurance are also revealed in his portrayal of characters like Jugga. Vasant Shahane observes:

“Train to Pakistan, therefore, is no mere realistic tract nor is it a bare record of actual events. On the contrary it is a recreation of the real and it reaffirms the novelist’s faith in man and renews artistically his avowed allegiance to humanistic idea.”

Attiah Hosain’s novel Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961) is an impartial study of the social structure dislocated by the 1947-Partition and presents for the first time the Muslim point of view of the event. The novel deals with the psychology of a joyous and peaceful Muslim home ‘Ashiana’ which gets ruined by the ironic reward of the Indian Freedom Movement. The narrator-heroine Laila reveals the trauma of partition through her insights and memories of her disintegrating Taluqdar family. According to Sarla Parlkar:

“…one cannot neatly compartmentalize the personal history of Laila from the social or national history—in fact what makes Sunlight on a Broken Column a three dimensional novel is the manner in which the personal, the social and the national issues keep interacting and reflecting on one another.”

Hosain shows how the introduction of religion in politics poisoned the minds of millions of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. She maintains a commendable
impartiality and regrets with a sense of sorrow and guilt that the impulse for the partition was initiated by the Muslims. She criticizes Muslim leaders for inciting frenzy, hatred and violence and for running away to the other side of the border for their own safety leaving behind their followers to the mercy of enraged Hindus. She offers a genuine version of the Partition in that she graphically depicts the events of abduction, rape, murder, mutilation, arson, train-tragedies and heart-rending conditions of children whose mother were raped and fathers killed, and at the same time admires good humanitarian works carried out in India and Pakistan by both Hindus and Muslims. The novel makes a strong appeal to shun all the feelings of hatred, violence and retaliation and to embrace the ideals of love, tolerance, co-existence and non-violence.

Manohar Malgonkar, another prominent Indo-English novelist, also takes up the theme of Partition in his politico-historical novel *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964). Written in a straightforward yet appealing manner and set during the period just prior to the partition and the onset of independence, the novel creates a vivid picture of anarchy, treachery, mayhem, slaughter, abduction and emotional separation. Indira Bhatt, in her article “Manohar Malgonkar as a Political Novelist”, writes:

“The novel is, in fact, a testament of ‘The tangle of feelings and relationship’ against the background of the freedom movement and partition holocaust.”

Malgonkar in his novel examines different dimensions of the freedom movement through the characters of Debi, an ardent and committed revolutionary terrorist, Gian, a professed follower of Gandhi and Shafi who turns anti-Hindu from an ardent believer in communal solidarity. The novelist presents both the violent and
non-violent means adopted by the nationalists. As the novel moves ahead, we realize how the growing communalism made religious identity overpower one’s personal beliefs, emotions and sense of right and wrong. The novel covers a wide range of events including Quit India Movement, World War II, Cellular Jail and tortures inside, British Indian prisoners of War, Japanese invasion of Rangoon and Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Indian National Army, Debauchery of the Indian Royalty, Bombay Explosion, Partition and finally the Indian Independence. Malgonkar attempts to maintain the fundamental Indian value of ‘non-violence’ as the final solution to the problem of hatred and communal frenzy.

Chaman Lal Nahal’s Azadi (1975), a Sahitya Academy Award winning novel is a significant contribution to the genre of Partition literature. It presents a very convincing and graphic picture of the unnatural dismemberment and tremendous human suffering experienced by the people of north-western part of India around 1947. The chief concerns of Nahal in the novel as Ramamurthy observes:

“…are not only the socio-economic and humanistic implications of the tragic exodus of suffering millions from the lands of their birth but also the deep psychic disturbances and emotional transformation brought about by that traumatic experience in the inner lives of individual men and women.”

The three parts of the novel— The Lull, the Storm, and the Aftermath—correspondingly represent the silent atmosphere before the announcement of the partition, the obnoxious and monstrous holocaust caused by the partition and the pitiable conditions of the uprooted refugees after the partition. The novel shows how Hindus and Muslims resort to violence in the name of religion and how communal
frenzy upsets the balance of human relationship. Chaman Lal Nahal voices the injured human psyche through his protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram and shows a ray of hope and regeneration towards the end. Asha Kaushik observes:

“…although beginning on a note of ambivalence and uncertainty of national integrity in the face of religious fanaticism, moral degradation and political fragmentation, *Azadi* closes with the affirmation that a nation … outlives even annihilating tragedies.”\(^{15}\)

All the novels discussed above and many others belonging to the genre of partition novel realistically and effectively depict the heart-rending saga of partition. The present chapter studies Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) which also takes up as its theme the cruelest and the harshest reality that our country has ever faced and which resulted in monstrous holocaust. Partition with all its implications finds explicit expression in *Ice-Candy-Man*, though the theme of partition is common in most of Sidhwa’s novels. This novel differs from the novels discussed earlier in the sense that it is “the only novel written by a Parsi on the theme of partition”\(^{16}\)

In its American edition the novel is called *Cracking India*. It was first published as *Ice-Candy Man* in London in 1988 and was republished in America as *Cracking India* in 1991 due to an apprehension that the Americans might misinterpret and confuse the term ‘ice-candy’ with drugs.

The novel was filmed as *1947- Earth* (1999). It was directed by Deepa Mehta. The casting of the film includes Shabana Azmi, Amir Khan, Nandita Das and Rahul Khanna.
Ice-Candy-Man is Sidhwa’s most acclaimed novel and has become a classic partition story as a book and on the screen. Sidhwa, in the novel dramatically recreates Lahore during the tumultuous period of partition. An 8-years old Parsi polio-stricken girl Lenny is the narrator in the novel. The story is told from her point of view. The novel has an autobiographical element in that Sidhwa herself is a Parsi, suffers from polio, lived in Lahore and was nine years old when the partition took place. Sidhwa’s childhood memories are recreated into the novel. The story reflects Sidhwa’s “dual perspective, which is based on both the Pakistani and the Parsi point of view. She speaks both for the Pakistanis and marginalized Parsi community.”

In an interview with Ruth Gutman, she herself says:

“The struggle was between the Hindus and the Muslims, and as a Parsi, I felt I could give a dispassionate account of this huge, momentous struggle (...) as a Parsee I can see things objectively.”

The novel is a story of communal solidarity and of communal frenzy; a story of individuals and their inseparable communal identities; a story of vivisection of a nation and of emerging nations; a story of characters from all communities and of an individual. There are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis, and thus multiple perspectives of partition emerge as viewed and experienced by all the affected communities.

The story of Ice-Candy-Man is set in Lahore before, during and after partition. The novel can roughly be studied into three parts. In the first part, Lahore which is now in Pakistan and close to the border between Pakistan and India is shown as populated by the people of different religions— Hindu, Muslim, Sikh,
Christian and Parsis—all peacefully co-existing as friends and neighbours. The middle part deals with the tension that sweeps all over India and the horrible tumult and eruption of violence when partition actually takes place. Last few chapters depict the monstrous aftereffects of partition and the change in the lives of all the characters in the novel affected by it.

Through Lenny, the daughter of a well-to-do jobholder, and the narrator-chronicler of the story, Sidhwa stresses the vulnerability of human mind and understanding caused by the excruciating pain of partition which inexorably and relentlessly divided friends, families, lovers and neighbours and destroyed their centuries-old amity, unity and solidarity. The device of child-narrator helps Sidhwa to deal with the horrifying historical moment of partition with “…more of compassion and agony than of anger as the novelist seems to accept the inevitability of the event that changed the history and geography of the subcontinent forever.”

Lenny is a precocious and observant narrator, though many times her understanding of things is limited by her young age. Her narration starts in her fifth year and ends after her eighth birthday. In the course of her narration she presents the panoramic views of existing social milieu. The opening paragraph of the novel tells that her parents are quite well-off. She has a brother, Adi, one year and a month younger than her. They live in a big house on Warris road, an affluent corner of Lahore with a large staff of servants which includes Imam Din, Yousaf, Hari and Moti. As Lenny’s right leg is afflicted with polio, her world is compressed and her movement is limited. She likes her deformed leg because it is for the same reason she is pampered by everyone and everywhere. A beautiful, eighteen years old Ayah
Shanta, the maid, looks after her and takes her out in the pram to her grandmother and electric aunt’s house on the opposite sides of Jail road to the Queen’s Park, the zoo and other places from time to time. Most of the narrative is focused upon what happens to Lenny’s beloved Ayah before, during and after partition.

Ayah’s stunning looks, natural beauty and sensuality draw covetous glances from men of every class, religion and background. Beggars, holy men, hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes pushing Lenny’s pram. She is surrounded by a group of friends and admirers of varying occupations and religions. The group consists of the slender Sikh zoo attendant Sher Singh, the Fallettis Hotel cook, the Government House gardener, the Masseur, the Ice-candy-man, the restaurant wrestler, the knife-sharpener Sharbat Khan, the butcher Ramazana, Imam Din and a Chinaman. They are people of different occupations and different faiths— Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Pathan— yet they all live together in great communal harmony and peace. This motley collection of her admirers is symbolic of diversity of all India in miniature and their peaceful co-existence in their competition for Ayah’s affection is suggestive of communal harmony in Lahore. Of all her admirers, masseur and Ice-candy-man are her most favourite. Lenny takes advantage of their flirting with Ayah and asks Ice-candy-man to give her popsicles free and Masseur to massage her legs.

The Ice-candy-man, the title character, is a Muslim-Urdu raconteur and a Muslim street vendor. Initially the most aggressive of Ayah’s suitors, he is central to most of the events and plays different roles in the course of the novel. “Lenny observes the transition of the Ice-candy-man through the roles of ice cream vendor,
bird seller, cosmic connector to Allah via telephone, and a pimp. This last role shows the devious methods which some, particularly politicians, will sink to in order to survive.” 20 His transformations represent sub-continent’s own several transformations.

Through Lenny’s nightmares, Sidhwa prepares the reader for the serious events that may come across in the novel. Lenny becomes symbolic of the sufferings and helplessness of millions of innocent people when she recalls her first nightmare that connects her to the pain of others. The nightmare is about a German soldier coming to take her away on his motorcycle. Her another portentous nightmare is that “men in uniforms quietly slice off a child’s arm here, a leg there.” 21 She dreams of herself being dismembered. Disappointed and frustrated she exclaims: “I feel no pain. Only an abysmal sense of loss— and a chilling horror that no one is concerned by what is happening.” (ICM 22) Here Lenny’s body epitomizes the body of the tortured country. In yet another nightmare Lenny sees the hungry zoo lion breaking loose and “cutting across Lawrence Road to Birdwood Road, prowls from the rear of the house to the bedroom door, and in one bare-fanged leap crashes through to sink his fangs into my stomach. My stomach sinks all the way to the bottom of hell.” (ICM 24)

Lenny’s nightmare about her dismemberment foreshadows the imminent vivisection of India. The extreme disappointment and frightening horror that she feels is symbolic of impending bloodshed of Partition. The act of dismembering her body symbolizes the division of the country and the men who perform the act ‘quietly’ are symbolic of all those who were involved in the decision of partition
without caring for the pain of innocent people who were to cope with the division of the country. And everybody’s being unconcerned about her dismemberment, symbolizes the general lack of sensitivity towards the cruelty and brutality of violence caused by the Partition. The hungry lion portends the blood-thirsty people of different communities treating one another with murderous cruelty at the time of unfortunate vivisection of India. Through the device of Lenny’s nightmares, Sidhwa sets the stage for the shocking, sensational and horrifying details of blood-shed, violence and massacre. Violence is also indicated when the Ice-candy-man reads the news in *Urdu Digest* that the Germans “have developed a deadly weapon called the V-bomb that will turn the British into powdered ash.” (ICM 28)

In chapter 7 of the novel, villages are initially shown to be unaffected by communal disparities. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims are living together amicably since ages. Pir Pindo is one such village, forty miles from Lahore, where Sikhs and Muslims live with solidarity. Lenny, in her visit there with Imam Din, finds that people of Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities ‘are bound by strong ties’ (ICM 56). They are, however, aware of deteriorating communal situations in the cities. They initially consider the Partition plan as a great conspiracy to divide their centuries old fraternity and communal harmony. The Muslims of Pir Pindo and the Sikhs from the neighbouring village Dera Tek Singh sit together to share their concern over outbreak of hostilities in other parts of India and nonchalant attitude of the Raj towards incidents of violence. The mullah says:

“…Hindus are being murdered in Bengal… Muslims, in Bihar. It’s strange …the English *Sarkar* can’t seem to do anything about it.” (ICM 55) And the village
Chaudhry emphasizes, “I don’t think it is because they can’t… I think it is because the Sarkar doesn’t want to!” (ICM 55)

The age-old fraternity and unity among Hindus-Sikhs-Muslims is still intact in the village. Imam Din is assured by the villagers that communal frenzy will not infect the villages. The Sikh granthi says, “If needs be, we’ll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!” and the Chaudhry reciprocates that “every man in this village will guard his Sikh brothers with no regard for his own life!” (ICM 56-57)

As Lenny sits with Ayah and her admirers in the Queen’s garden, she becomes aware of the current political situation and the tension borne out of communal violence elsewhere in the country. At home also she overhears her parents’ and their friends’ discussions of the major political players like Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah, Lord Wavell, Lord Mountbatten, Congress, Muslim League, the Akalis and issues like Swaraj, the demand of Pakistan etc. In a dinner party with Mr. Singh, Mr. Rogers, the inspector General of police and their families, Lenny’s father cracks a joke about a British soldier. Mr. Singh enjoys the joke with blowing a whistle. Lenny’s father further remarks: “…there was no syphilis in India until the British came.” (ICM 61) All this is suggestive of the growing marginality and diminishing hold of Britain and the Raj in India. The conversation takes a political turn. Mr. Singh becomes sarcastic and asks Mr. Rogers to quit India to which he replies that rivers of blood will start flowing and “If we quit India today, old chap, you’ll bloody fall at each other’s throats!” (ICM 62) Sidhwa here implies that some Muslim leaders of Muslim League and Congress were interested in formation of a separate country and for this they were ready even for violence and bloodshed.
The heated arguments take an ugly turn. Mr. Singh accuses the Britishers of “divide-and-rule monkey trick” and says that the moment India gets Home Rule i.e. Swaraj, people of India will settle their disputes and differences. Here Sidhwa seems to convey that the “divide-and-rule” policy was the British modus operandi for consolidating power in India and thereby making one religious community fight against the other. S.A.I. Tirmizi in his Introduction to *The Paradoxes of Partition, 1937-47* mentions it and summarizes the reasons that made Hindu and Muslim drift away from each other. Three main factors that accelerated the process of division, as observed by him, were:

“Firstly, different reactions of the Hindu and Muslim elites to the new situations arising from the challenges of the Western civilization, secondly, the British policy of divide and rule and thirdly, new competitive forces generated by the introduction of representational politics.”

Sidhwa is eager to criticise Congress and rebut Indian views of Mohammad Ali Jinnah by portraying him as more rational and responsible than has been portrayed in Indian account of partition. Inspector General Mr. Rogers says:

“…don’t you know the Congress won’t agree on a single issue with the Muslim League? The Cabinet Mission proposed a Federation of the Hindu and Muslim majority provinces. Jinnah accepted it; Gandhi and Nehru didn’t.” (ICM 62)

Gandhi and Nehru are criticized severely as they:

“…even rejected Lord Wavell’s suggestion for an Interim Government with a majority Congress representation! They’re like the three bloody monkeys! They refuse to hear, or see that Jinnah has the backing of seventy million Indian Muslims!
Those arrogant Hindus have blown the last chance for an undivided India… Gandhi and Nehru are forcing the League to push for Pakistan!” (ICM 62-63)

The mention of historical figures and historical events of the time, to some of which Sidhwa herself was a witness as a child in Lahore, points to her attempt to remain true to the history of the sub-continent. She chooses age and sex of her narrator of the novel very cautiously. Lenny, as a Parsi little girl looks at events and characters of different communities through the prism of her own Parsi sensitivity. As Ralph Crane puts it:

“It may be that the atrocities of 1947 are best seen through the innocent naïve eyes of a child, who has no Hindu, Muslim or Sikh axe to grind … Lenny is free both from the prejudices of religion and from the prejudices against women and the constraints she will be subject to as she grows elder.”

The peaceful life in Lahore gradually begins to change. The communal harmony is disrupted when ‘bad times’ come. The news of partition plan sets the atmosphere of cities and towns charged with political talks and tensions. The Pathan Sharbat Khan, who is friendly with Ayah, tells her:

“These are bad times—Allah knows what’s in store. There is a big trouble in Calcutta and Delhi: Hindu Muslim trouble. The Congresswallahs are after Jinnah’s blood…” (ICM 75)

To Ayah’s casual reaction that Jinnah, Nehru and Patel ‘are not fighting our fight’, Sharbat Khan becomes thoughtful and says, “…but they are stirring up trouble for us all.” (ICM 76) Here Sidhwa seeks to make a strong and daring political statement about the nature of politics. In their greed for power, the political
players do not hesitate to the least to put their people in great discomfort and trouble. This is a harsh reality that one cannot but accept it.

Queen’s Park, earlier symbolic of a place of communal harmony where Lenny, Ayah and her motley group of admirers with different religions sit together on grass, becomes a place of religious differences. With the rising political and communal tensions and violence, this group of friends starts falling more and more apart. Their friendly discussions turn into heated arguments and take a communal hue. The Government House gardener breaks the news of Lord Wavell’s sacking at the instance of Gandhi, Nehru and Patel. Masseur, who is a Muslim flares up and calls them ‘The Bastards’ who have sent “for a new Lat Sahib who will favour the Hindus!” (ICM 90) For Ice-candy-man it is not unexpected. He makes sarcastic remarks to the gardener “…aren’t you Hindus are expert at…Twisting tails behind the scene…and getting someone else to slaughter your goats?” (ICM 91) The butcher snorts suddenly and joins with contempt, “That non-violent violence-monger—your precious Gandhijee—first declares the Sikhs fanatics! Now suddenly he says: “Oh dear, the poor Sikhs cannot live with the Muslims if there is a Pakistan!” What does he think we are—some kind of beast? Aren’t they living with us now?” (ICM 91)

The Government House Gardener, a Hindu, calls it ‘the English’s mischief’. “They are past masters at intrigue. It suits them to have us all fight.” (ICM 92) But the furious butcher blames Hindu politicians who “connived with the Angrez to ignore the Muslim League and support a party that didn’t win a single seat in the Punjab …They manipulate one or two Muslims against the interests of the larger
community. And now they have manipulated Master Tara Singh and his bleating herd of Sikhs!” (ICM 92)

In fact while distilling the love-hate relationship of the Hindus and Muslims through Lenny’s point of view and consciousness, Bapsi Sidhwa seeks to present a Pakistani version of Partition. She presents Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Master Tara Singh as architects of Partition along with the Britishers. In an alternate view of reality, she attributes the country’s division to British policy of divide and rule, Gandhi’s associating politics with religion and Nehru’s Prime-ministerial intentions and thereby makes her Pakistani identity clear. As a critic would have it:

“. . . Ice-Candy-Man presents a Pakistani version of Partition. Sidhwa’s Parsi faith keeps her out of the religious imbroglio of Partition but as regards nationality, she is definitely a Pakistani and it biases her in favour of Pakistan.”24

Naturally enough, the literary history of Pakistan, the country born of India by means of partition in 1947, is “as much a part of Pakistani history as it is a part of Indian history”25 providing a Pakistani version of partition.

The impassioned discussion about Hindu-Muslim in the Queen’s Park is pacified by Ayah with a warning that she will stop joining them in the park if such discussions continue. Ice-candy-man believes “Such talk helps clear the air” (ICM 92), though he assures Ayah that they will not bring up such a talk again.

The air, however, instead of getting clear, heats up violently by the flames of communal passion leaping up in the skies of Lahore. Everywhere there is much disturbing talk that “India is going to be broken.” (ICM 92) Lenny naively expresses
her dreadful worry “what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother’s then?” (ICM 92) Such an apprehension is suggestive of the broken nations, broken homes, broken relationships, broken hopes and broken trust of innocent people at the frontiers.

Different opinions about Hindu-Muslim and political players like Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Iqbal, Tara Singh, Mountbatten that Lenny is exposed to, make her aware of religious differences around her. The realization of social and religious divide between communities comes instinctively to Lenny:

“It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves— and next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer my all-encompassing Ayah – she is also a token. A Hindu.” (ICM 93)

With the Partition coming closer, Lenny notices a change in the behavior and attitude of people around her. Ayah starts visiting temples, Imam Din and Yousaf start attending Jumha prayers, the Sharmas and the Daulatrams start ostentatiously displaying their caste-marks. Such an arousal of caste, community and religion consciousness widens the social rift which is evident in the discriminating treatment in that “Hari and Moti-the-sweeper and his wife Muchho, and their untouchable daughter Papoo, become ever more untouchable as they are entrenched deeper in their low Hindu caste.” (ICM 93) The practice of superstitions and untouchability are the harsh realities that are pointed out here while dealing with the greater harsh reality of communal and religious discordance taking place.

Even in Queen’s Garden, Lenny subconsciously notices the ‘Sikh women’, ‘a Muslim Family with burka-veiled women’, ‘smooth-skinned Brahmins’ which
indicates a subtle and sudden change in the garden in the wake of partition plan on
the basis of religion. “Only the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindu,
Muslim, Sikh, Parsee are, as always, unified around her.” (ICM 97) But in general
the atmosphere in the city is one of fear, suspicion and distrust. Lenny “noticed a lot
of hushed talk” and “men huddle round bicycles or squat against walls in whispering
groups.” (ICM 101) And soon there is the news of Gandhijee off his feed because
“There is a slaughter of Muslims in Bihar—he does not want it to spread to Bengal.”
(ICM 103)

Amidst the gossips and rumours Imam Din apprehensive of Pir Pindo getting
infected by the political, social and communal tension, pays a second visit to his kin
in the village. The festival of Baisakhi is in full swing with people singing, dancing,
riding merry-go-rounds and enjoying varieties of mouth-watering dishes. However
the merriment, gaiety and distractions, the festival is marked by a peculiar
estrangement. Ranna, Imam Din’s cousin Dost Mohammad’s son “senses the chill
spread by the presence of strangers: their unexpected faces harsh and cold. A Sikh
youth whom Ranna has met a few times, and who has always been kind, pretends
not to notice Ranna. Other men, who would normally smile at Ranna, slide their
eyes past. Little by little without his being aware of it, his smile becomes strained
and his laughter strident.” (ICM 106)

Dost Mohammad also notices the presence of strangers in persons also, the
“stalwarts in blue turbans with staves and long kirpans.” (ICM 107) They are Akalis.
The granthi Jagjeet Singh reveals in a subdued voice their sinister designs of
breaking the Punjab:
“They talk of a plan to drive the Muslims out of East Punjab… To divide the Punjab. They say they won’t live with the Mussulmans if there is to be a Pakistan. Owlish talk like that! You know, city talk. It’s madness…” (ICM 107).

Jagjeet Singh alerts Dost Mohammad “to look out till this evil blows out.” (ICM 107) Sidhwa brings out the feeling of fear, suspicion and distrust that has broken into the psyche of the villagers:

“There’s no telling who’s about these days . . . and not all of them are your friends.” (ICM 108)

Before long, in Lahore the news of attacks on Muslim villages near Amritsar and Jullunder creates panic and the details of the attacks are “so brutal that they cannot be true.” (ICM 109) Imam Din believes it to be Akali propaganda to scare the Muslim peasants. The villagers in Pir Pindo dread the probability of being forced to leave their ancestral village. But when the Gurkha soldiers arrive to evacuate them, they remain adamant and refuse to leave. Sidhwa expresses the emotional and psychological anxiety that the villagers experience at the feeling of uprootedness:

“Do you expect us to leave everything we’ve valued and loved since childhood? The seasons, the angle and colour of the sun rising and setting over our fields . . . the shape of our rooms and barns is familiar and dear. You can’t expect us to leave just like that!” (ICM 111)

Like most other partition novels, *Ice-Candy-Man* is also replete with horrifying details of brutality, dislocation, human loss and violence. Lenny is shocked by the news that the Inspector General of Police Mr. Rogers is murdered. His mutilated body was discovered in a gutter. She remains obsessed with the news
for long: “. . . I cannot eat. Mr. Rogers’s English toes and kidneys float before my disembodied eyeballs. . .” (ICM 116) Her childish innocence becomes quizzical:

“And the vision of a torn Punjab. Will the earth bleed? And what about the sundered rivers? Won’t their water drain into the jagged cracks? Not satisfied by breaking India, they now want to tear Punjab.” (ICM 116)

Communal tension is escalating day by day. The talk of partition becomes the talk of the town. Ayah’s admirers start to get together more at wrestler’s restaurant and less in Queen’s Garden as the British prepare to leave India for good. This shift in the place of meeting from Queen’s Garden to wrestler’s restaurant is symbolic of shift in atmosphere from amity and peace to hostility and conflict. Masseur believes that “If the Punjab is divided, Lahore is bound to go to Pakistan. There is a Muslim majority here . . .” (ICM 128) On the contrary the Government House gardener emphatically claims that “Lahore will stay in India” (ICM 128) because Hindus own most of the property and business in Lahore and have invested too much money there. The Sikh zoo attendant butts in saying, “And what about us? The Sikhs hold more farm land in the Punjab than the Hindus and Muslims put together!” (ICM 129) Masseur advises him “to arrive at a settlement with the Muslim League,” and if they don’t, the Punjab will be divided . . . That will mean trouble for us all.” (ICM 129) The debate turns into heated arguments, allegations and furious when the butcher and Sher Singh exchange angry and foul words. The butcher offensively calls Sikhs ‘bastards’, and tells that “The Angrez call you a ‘bloody nonsense’!” (ICM 129) to be kept clear off as the British have advised Jinnah. Then the wrestler makes a portentous declaration with an impact of an explosion: “Once the line of division is drawn in the Punjab, all Muslims to the east
of it will have their balls cut off!” (ICM 130) Quietly spoken, but carrying the impact of an explosion, these words stun everyone present there. The Masseur in a bid to restore normalcy, says, “The holy Koran lies next to the Granth Sahib in the Golden Temple. The shift Guru Nanak wore carried inscriptions from Koran . . . in fact the Sikh faith came about to create Hindu-Muslim harmony!” By way of neutralizing he further adds, “. . . there are no differences among friends . . . We will stand by each other.” (ICM 130-131)

Here the novelist ironically pleads for the need of communal harmony between Sikhs and Muslims. The fact is that as the time of division draws near, communal rift shakes and breaks the years’ old solidarity of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh. Once the ‘big trouble’ starts Lenny understands that “One man’s religion is another man’s poison.” (ICM 117) As U. Bhaskar Rao writes:

“A new and pernicious doctrine had come to poison men’s minds – that religion divides instead of uniting. And men’s minds were warped; they forgot their humanity and turned upon one another with the ferocity of jungle beasts.”

Communal riots engulf the beautiful Lahore city. There are claims and counter-claims in favour and against the formation of Pakistan raised by both sides. Muslims were demanding vehemently the creation of Pakistan but the Sikhs were opposing it. Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Akali Sikhs, in chapter 12 assures “the peasants — especially the Muslims — to remain where they are. No one will disturb them” (ICM 108) and the same Master Tara Singh in chapter 16 delivers inflammatory speech in the Queen’s Garden. Lenny clearly sees him from the roof of the Falettis Hotel:
“Holding a long sword in each hand, the curved steel reflecting the sun’s glare as he clashes the sword above his head, the Sikh soldier-saint shouts: “We will see how the Muslim swine get Pakistan! We will fight to the last man! We will show them who will leave Lahore! Raj karega Khalsa, aki rahi na koi!” (ICM 133-134)

The thick crowd of his Sikh followers wildly wave and clash their swords, kirpans and hockey-sticks greets his address with shouting of slogans “Pakistan Murdabad! Death to Pakistan! Sat Sri Akaal! Boley se nihaal!” The Muslims in turn shout: “So? We’ll play Holi-with-their-blood! Ho-o-oli with their blo-o-o-d!” (ICM 134)

Lahore, which was a place of fascination for all religions, has now become the place of most horrific violence. Commenting on the situation Jaydipsinh Dodiya says, “Since both the communities have already taken their positions, the festival of Holi becomes a blood-soaked festival. The type of communal harmony that prevailed before the Baisakhi of the year got shattered in the blood bath of Holi festival during the Partition.”

Then there is a towering inferno in the beautiful city of Lahore. They actually make a bonfire by setting ablaze ‘the old walled city’ (ICM 134). Instead of splattering friends with bright coloured water and powder, they splatter each other with blood. Lenny watches Delhi Gate, Lahori Gate, Mochi Darwaza and Gowalmandi in flames. The burning buildings are symbolic of collapsing of all human values. This is the harsh reality that the feeling of love and fraternity with which Muslims and Sikhs used to participate in each other’s social, religious and cultural events before partition has turned into hatred and violence. The festivals are same but the feelings and mode of celebration have changed entirely.
The novelist associates Partition with evil and destruction and gives harrowing pictures of the holocaust in detail. Lenny witnesses English soldiers being chased by a mob of frenzied Sikhs: “…their wild long hair and beards rampant, large fevered eyes glowing in fanatic faces, pours into the narrow lane roaring slogans, holding curved swords, shoving up a manic wave of violence that sets Ayah to trembling as she holds me tight.” (ICM 134)

The heart-rending picture of the barbarous murder of “A naked child, twitching on a spear struck between her shoulders, is waved like a flag: her screamless mouth agape she is staring straight up at me (Lenny)” (ICM 134-135) sends a quiver down the spine. The child is poked by and hung on a spear by the Sikh mob. Extreme madness for their religion resulted in savagery and brutality which further annihilated their body and the Sikh mob has become one creature with “too many stony hearts, too many sightless eyes, deaf ears, mindless brains and tons of entwined entrails. . .” (ICM 135) The body of the helpless innocent child manifests the victory of Sikhs over Muslims.

This brutality is immediately counter posed by the monstrosity of a slowly advancing mob of Muslim goondas shouting “Allah-o-Akbar! Yaa Ali! And Pakistan Zindabaad!” (ICM 135) They knock down a Hindu Banya and tie his legs to two jeeps pushed back to back. As the jeeps move, his body is ripped asunder. The Hindu Banya being “divided” alive by the Muslims meets a horrible death. He, with his Gandhi cap, is a symbol of several Hindu followers of Gandhi. His vivisection stands for India’s vivisection. The partition of the sub-continent is like an
inhuman act of tearing apart a living human being with extreme brutality and savagery causing inexplicable, extreme pain and anguish.

A child’s watching scenes of violence, brutality and bodily mutilation has its psychological implications. Lenny performs the same action of pulling the legs of her own large life-like doll apart at home with the help of her brother Adi. The act can be understood as a psychological effect of being scared. The tug of war for “partitioning” the doll makes the inner stuff of the doll scatter. That inner stuff can be taken as common social, religious, political fabric of India before partition, which is torn into separated fragments by brutally and inhumanly inflicting “partition” on the doll. Adi calls it Lenny’s “pointless brutality” (ICM 139) which collapses both the children indicating devastation caused by the Partition on both the sides of the border.

Lenny also watches the ‘tamasha’ of setting fire on a Hindu locality Shalmi. The dynamite accumulated to drive Muslims out from Mochi Gate, caused the entire Shalmi flash in explosions. Lenny stares at the spectacle standing mesmerised: “It is like a gigantic fireworks display in which stiff figures looking like spread-eagled stick-dolls leap into the air. Trapped by the spreading flames, the panicked Hindus rush in droves from one end of the street to the other. Some collapse in the street. Charred limbs and burnt logs are falling from the sky.” (ICM 137) For Ice-candy-man this is nothing but a ‘tamasha’. Muslim men and women near Lenny celebrate by laughing, hugging each other and slapping each other’s hands. This is one of the cruelest realities dealt with in the novel that religious madness turns friends into foes, human beings into beasts forgetting the very value of human existence. Novy
Kapadia, while making a comparison between Attia Hasan’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* and Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man*, says,

“Both stress a similar vulnerability of human understanding and life, caused by the throes of Partition which relentlessly divided friends, families, lovers and neighbours.”

The dimension of the tragedy was so gigantic that it makes Lenny feel that “The whole world is burning.” (ICM 137) and she wonders “How long does Lahore burn? Week? Month?” (ICM 139) Lenny and company go to the Daulattrams’s abandoned house to see Mozang Chowk burn. The hellish fires in Lahore have caused large-scale destruction. The narrator pours out the pain of loss like this:

“Despite the residue of passion and regret, and loss of those who have in panic fled – the fire could not have burned for . . . Despite all the ruptured dreams, broken lives, buried gold, bricked-in rupees, secreted jewellery, lingering hopes . . . the fire could not have been burned for months and months . . .” (ICM 139)

Mohammad Ayub Jajja observes that Sidhwa “uses the fire as symbol. Both Hindu and Muslims in equal proportion contribute to the fires of Partition. The fires ignited by the Partition spare nothing, the buildings, the human beings, the history, the heritage, the relationships, the humanity and human values; all are eaten up and consumed by the fires of the Partition.”

Finally, amidst the flames of communal passions, India is divided, vivisected, broken and torn apart. The partition at the hands of the Raj is just like a game of cards played by the British officials during the last phase of their Raj.
“… the Radcliffe Commission deals out Indian cities like pack of cards. Lahore is dealt to Pakistan. Amritsar to India. Sialkot to Pakistan. Pathankot to India.” (ICM 140)

It was a cruel plan of the Britishers to satisfy the demands of both the communities. The decision of division was so quick and unjust that Lenny is confused. “I am a Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that.” (ICM 140) She here becomes the voice of a common man who finds himself baffled at the decision imposed on him by the people who are from a far foreign land. The novel realistically depicts the harsh reality that criminal negligence and lack of seriousness on the part of the Radcliffe Commision and its arbitrary decision of division played havoc in the country. Sylvia Clayton, an eminent literary critic, states:

“The colossal upheaval of partition, when cities were allotted to India or Pakistan like pieces on a chess-board, and their frightened inhabitants were often savagely uprooted, runs like an earth tremor through this thoughtful novel.”

Communal frenzy heats up all the more with vicious news and rumours. The Ice-candy-man comes panting to announce to the group of the Masseur, Hari, Sher Singh, Government House Governor, Ayah and Lenny that “A train from Gurdaspur has just come. Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women’s breasts!” (ICM 149) Communal violence has obviously made his community consciousness more prominent. He casts a hateful glance at his longstanding Sikh friend Sher Singh as if he is the culprit or has some connection with the culprits. This is a bitter reality that
those who were once the closest, were rendered most distant by the partition. It turned out to be a vivisection not only of the sub-continent but of hearts too.

As Lahore is no longer a safe place for Hindus and Sikhs because of communal riots and bloodshed, they begin to migrate to safer places. As the Government House gardener says, “When our friends confess they want to kill us, we have to go . . .” (ICM 157) There are no Brahmans with caste marks or Hindus in dhoties with “bodhis”. Many Hindu families including Lenny’s neighbours, the Daulatrams and the Shankars, have already left Lahore leaving behind their belongings. Many others are planning to leave. Sher Singh leaves after his brothers-in-law are killed. We are informed that the students’ fraternity of King Edward College is also disrupted. The Hindu boy Prakash along with his family migrates to Delhi; the Sikh student Rahul Singh and his sisters are escorted to a convoy to Amritsar. The Governor House Gardener and Falettis Hotel cook also run away to Delhi. Those who remained there resort to the policy of compromising for survival and convert themselves to Muslims or Christians. Hari is circumcised to become Muslim with a new name of Himat Ali. Moti accepts the Christian religion and becomes David Masih. This sort of imposed conversion of religion can undoubtedly be termed as psychological trauma that people had to suffer during the turmoil of partition riots and violence.

The novelist brings out one more harsh reality that the emotionally traumatized victims of communal violence, later on, become the perpetrators of the same. Ice-candy-man himself is an example. He confesses to the Government House Gardener: “I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train from
Gurdaspur … that night I went mad, I tell you! I lobbed grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs I’d known all my life! I hated their guts … I wanted to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women . . .” (ICM 156) The act of violence against Muslim women makes him revengeful and prompts him to inflict violence on Hindu and Sikh women in return.

In Sidhwa’s novel the body becomes the primary object of violence during riots. The scene of murder of naked child and the banya carry extreme horror and pain of violence. One more body that bears the brunt of violence is Masseur’s. Lenny and Himat Ali (Hari) find the mutilated body of Masseur in a gunnysack on the road, Masseur, who was in deep love with Ayah and had assured her safety and security. They look at him as if he is not a person. “He has been reduced to a body. A thing.” (ICM 175) His body becomes the embodiment of violence. The scene has a heart-rending appeal:

“The swollen gunny-sack lies directly in our path. Hari pushes it with his foot. The sack slowly topples over and Masseur spills out— half on the dusty sidewalk, half on the gritty tarmac— dispelling the stiletto reek of violence with the smell of fresh roses…” (ICM 174)

Sidhwa treats the theme of partition from women’s perspective too. Violence is represented in the novel through the sufferings inflicted on female body, the body of a Hindu woman Shanta (Ayah). She becomes the victim of utmost communal violence. This is a harsh reality that every time any war or riot breaks out, irrespective of place, religion or community, it is the women who are targeted victims because their bodies are treated as symbolic battlefields that male offenders
always want to conquer. The same is true of the communal riots that followed the Partition. Women, as Ananya Jahanara Kabir observes, “were raped and mutilated during the mayhem of partition because their female bodies provided a space over which the competitive games of men were played out.”

Ayah’s abduction and rape by Muslim mob headed by Ice-candy-man, who claims to love and adore her, is the most loathsome scene in the novel. Lenny’s house is attacked by marauding ruffians to drive the Hindus out. They ask for Hari and Moti but are informed by Imam Din that Hari has been converted into Muslim and is now Himat Ali and Moti, the sweeper, has become a Christian. The crowd however verifies the veracity of Imam Din’s claim by confirming Hari’s circumcision and making him recite Islamic prayer. Then they enquire for Ayah’s whereabouts. Imam Din lies to them that she had left Lahore the previous day. Imam Din, a Muslim, tries to save Hindu people in the house, especially Ayah from the expected savagery at the hands of his own people. He swears and tries hard to convince the furious Muslim crowd that Ayah has left. But frenzied Muslims are not ready to believe his words. At that moment Ice-candy-man comes out of the crowd and mildly asks Lenny about Ayah with a promise that he will protect her. Lenny believing his vision reveals Ayah’s whereabouts. He then betrays his own beloved and gets her forcibly out. Lenny relates the pathetic condition of Ayah thus:

“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 dead child’s mouth. Her violet sari slips off her shoulder, and her breasts strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that the white stitching at the seam shows. A
sleeve tears under her arm. 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.” (ICM 183)

While using ‘women-as-victim’ paradigm, Sidhwa brings home one more harsh reality that during the time of partition crisis women were physically, sexually, economically and spatially exploited and controlled by men who love them and also by those whom they do not even know. As Ambreen Hai notes, “As national boarders are drawn to define postcolonial nationhood, the Hindu Ayah becomes the embodiment of the border that is crossed by men of all sorts, the site of transgression itself.”

The abduction and subsequent forced prostitution and conversion of Ayah speak for the collective tragedy of female victims during partition. She also represents those millions of Hindus and Muslims who were up-rooted, displaced, looted and raped during the most tumultuous political phase in the history of the sub-continent. At a personal level Ayah faces the harsh reality that her tragedy is embarked by her favourite child Lenny’s ‘truth’ and culminated by Ice-candy-man’s ‘love’. This is an irony of fate that she is betrayed by the people who love her most. The worst aspect of her tragedy is that she undergoes kidnapping, rape, conversion, forced marriage, and prostitution at the hands of her own admirers. Her own admirers satisfying their lust on her body comes as a double shock to her. This brings out the fact that sometimes community consciousness terribly gets the upper hand of feeling of love and affection.
The communal frenzy overpowers Ice-candy-man to such a point that it compels him to be so cruel that he lets the mob kidnap and rape his beloved Ayah. One more harsh reality presented in the novel is that when love is controlled by revenge, jealousy, possessiveness and guided by communal passion, it deteriorates and becomes harmful to its very object. This is a cruel, pitiless face of love that adds to Ayah’s sufferings.

Sidhwa associates partition with violence, atrocities, betrayal and brutality. The novel has one after another heart rending representations of violence. Ranna’s story of genocidal massacre in his village Pir Pindo is the most tragic, shocking and horrifying account of genocidal massacre in the novel. When Lenny sees Ranna the third time, she recognizes him with a shock. He is orphaned, “painfully thin…covered with welts as if his body has been chopped up, and then welded” (ICM 194) Lenny notices an “improbable wound on the back of his shaved head. . . a grisly scar like a brutally gouged and premature bald spot.” (ICM 194) One can imagine how and to what extent of the savage brutality the poor child must have been exposed to. His abnormally skinny body and ‘a four-day-old crescent moon’ shaped wound speak up the story of his struggle for survival during the terrible blood-bath in his village. He is the witness of Sikh’s attack on the village. The Sikhs who had once promised that “We’ll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives” (ICM 56) are now “…killing all Muslims. Setting fires, looting, parading Muslim women naked through streets—raping and mutilating them in centre of village and in mosques.” (ICM 197) “Ranna’s Story” gives a graphic depiction of genocidal violence and shows that people blinded by communal frenzy, lost all decency, morality and sense of moral value. There are painful cries of mullah’s daughter: “Do
anything with me, but don’t torment me… For God sake, don’t torture me”; there are scared whimpering of children hidden in a dark room: “I don’t want to die Abba… I don’t want to die” (ICM 200) and there are pitiful requests of fathers: “Kill us… Kill us . . . but please spare the children.” Ranna’s father makes pathetic appeal to marauding Sikhs: “I beg you in the name of all you hold sacred, don’t kill the little ones. . . Make them Sikhs . . . Let them live . . . they are too little. . .” (ICM 201)

Sidhwa describes the horrible bloodbath in Pir Pindo as witnessed by Ranna:

“Dost Mohammad stepped out and walked three paces. There was a sunlit sweep of curled steel, his head was shorn clear off his neck, turning once in the air, eyes wide open, it tumbled in the dust. His hands jerked up slashing the air above and above the bleeding stump of his neck. Ranna saw his uncles beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons, wielding bloodied swords, dragging them out as a sprinkling of Hindus, darting about at the fringes, their faces vaguely familiar, pointed out and identified the Mussulmans by name. He felt a blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood.” (ICM 201)

The mass murder in Pir Pindo narrated in the words of the little boy Ranna is perhaps one of the most heart-rending presentations of obnoxious and atrocious violence captured in the entire partition literature. “Ranna’s Story”, inserted in the middle of the novel, points out one more cruel reality that communal riots and violence during partition of the sub-continent, millions of innocent children like Ranna were left bereaved, lost and traumatized with no one to look after. Ranna’s family, relatives, villagers are forced to suffer untold torture and horrible deaths. The
child Ranna somehow survives and reaches Lenny’s house and narrates his experience of partition to Lenny. His wounded body is symbol of wounded and bruised nation after partition and his ‘improbable’ and ‘crescent-shaped’ scar can be taken as his new identity as a Pakistani.

Hamida, who is Ayah’s replacement in Lenny’s house after Ayah’s abduction, is another traumatized soul and victim of the partition riots. She is recruited from the rehabilitation camp for recovered women adjacent to Lenny’s house. She describes the camp as ‘a camp for fallen women.’ (ICM 214) She was kidnapped and besmirched by the Sikhs and eventually discarded by her family because “… they can’t stand their women being touched by other men.” (ICM 215) Hamida’s honour has been ruined. She represents those “fallen” women who are abducted and raped by Hindu or Sikh mob and then considered impure and rejected by their own family. Yasmin Khan pours out the plight of such “fallen” women thus:

“For women the trauma of rape, molestation and abduction was so grave, and made even worse in many cases because of the cultural taboos surrounding it that it is unclear how recovery was possible at all.”

Both Hamida and Ayah echo the grief of thousands women who underwent the emotional and psychological trauma of being considered defiled and fallen and discarded by their own families and husbands. Rituparna Roy highlights the harsh reality that “(Hamida’s) self-definition as ‘fallen’ is eloquent not only of the way she is perceived by her society in general and the home she has left behind in particular, but also her own construction of herself and the parameters by which she is to reconstitute her life and herself in a new environment.”
Since the time of Ayah’s abduction, Lenny feels guilt-ridden as her “truth-infected” tongue turned out to be curse for her beloved Ayah. Once convinced that Ayah is in Lahore, Lenny becomes eager to meet her. She accompanies her Godmother to meet Hira Mandi, Lahore’s red-light area and is shocked to find that all the radiance and movement of Ayah have gone and she looks as if “soul extracted from its living body.” (ICM 260) She has been stripped off her identity as a woman, and as a Hindu. She loses her honour, her home, her religion, her name. She becomes Mumtaz and is coerced to prostitute her body in Hira Mandi. She is pushed into a life of disgrace and humiliation. What is shocking is the fact that her husband, the Ice-candy-man, himself is instrumental in admitting her into a brothel. Godmother and Lenny realize that she is not happy with her marriage to Ice-candy-man. Her bitter experience of deception by her friend has left her heart-broken. She requests Godmother to send her to her family in India. Her voice is harsh and gruff as if “someone has mutilated her vocal cords.” (ICM 261) Godmother tries to dissuade her from leaving Lahore telling that Ice-candy-man cares for her. Also “…worse things are forgiven. Life goes on and business of living buries the debris of our pasts… Hurt, happiness… all fade impartially…to make the way for fresh joy and new sorrow. That’s the way of life.” But Ayah is so deeply disappointed and disillusioned that she replies, “I am past that… I’m not alive.” (ICM 262)

Godmother tries to divert Ayah’s decision of leaving her husband by reminding her of the possibility that her family may not take her back. But Ayah is adamant. She grasps Godmother’s legs and pleads: “Please—I fall at your feet, Baijee— please get me away from him.” (ICM 263) Whether or not her family accepts her, she is determined to go to her people. Despite physical and emotional
mutilation, Ayah’s decision to probe into future alternatives is an example of resurgence of human spirit.

On the other hand, the guilt-ridden Ice-candy-man requests Godmother to persuade Ayah that he loves her deeply and will make her happy. Child Lenny is confused:

“when I think of Ayah I think she must get away from the monster who has killed her spirit and mutilated her ‘angel’s’ voice. And when I look at Ice-candy-man’s naked humility and grief I see him as undeserving of his beloved’s heartless disdain.” (ICM 264-265)

The one-sided love of Ice-candy-man comes to an end when the resourceful Godmother manages to get Ayah liberated from Hira Mandi and rehabilitate in the Recovered Women’s Camp. The apologetic and regretful Ice-candy-man comes to take his beloved back but is severely beaten up by the sturdy Sikh guard. After a few days Ayah is sent to her family in Amritsar. The love-lorn Ice-candy-man turns into a mad fakir “who has renounced the world for his beloved: be it woman or God.” (ICM 276) We are told at the end of the novel: “…and Ice-candy-man, too, disappears across Wagha border in India.” (ICM 277)

The novel thus ends here leaving the reader thinking how religious hatred and violence can play havoc with the life of people. It can, at times, become so powerful that all other emotions and relations like friendship, love, affection, neighbourhood become secondary or even non-existent. The novel is a representation of how people receive religious and communal violence and how violence affects life in general.
Violence in its extreme form i.e. murder and killing is depicted in the case of murder of Masseur, the naked child, the Banya with Gandhi cap and the mass massacre in Pir Pindo. There are other forms of violence which do not kill people, but have traumatic effect on the emotional and psychological aspects of an individual’s personality and cause permanent changes or trauma to the victims. One such example in the novel is circumcision of the body of the Hindu gardener Hari who converts himself to Muslim religion and becomes Himat Ali. When the furious mob comes to Lenny’s house to take revenge on all the Hindu people of the house, Hari is also cross-examined. He is asked to undo his shalwar to show his circumcision and to recite *Kalma* to prove that he has become a ‘proper Muslim’.

(ICM 180) The sweeper Moti also falls a prey to verbal and psychological violence. As he converts to Christianity and becomes David Masih, he is mocked at by the Muslim mob saying, “He’s become a black-faced gent-le-man! Mister sweep-er David Masih! Next he’ll be sailing off to Eng-a-land and marrying a memsahib!”

(ICM 181) And then, there are Hamida and Ayah, the victims of physical, emotional and psychological trauma and violence.

Though Sethi’s (Lenny’s Parsi family) remain physically untouched by the violence throughout the novel yet they suffer from extreme psychological and emotional trauma being live witness of every form of violence. They are witnesses of forced migration, mass destruction, massacre, arson, murders, rapes and mutilation in Lahore. Lenny, a little child also undergoes a traumatic phase because tricked by Ice-candy-man, she unwittingly becomes helpful in Ayah’s abduction and later miseries. This fact scares the child emotionally and keeps her in a constant
feeling of guilt. Ayah’s abduction before her eyes and her being in brothel become conducive to Lenny’s early transition from an innocent childhood to adolescence.

While depicting traumatic effects of partition on individuals as well as society, Sidhwa also points at the hypocrisy of political leaders in the novel. The very title of the novel is suggestive of hypocritical politicians. In an interview about the novel, she says: “Part of my title Ice-Candy-Man did reflect on ice candy men, i.e. manipulative politicians who hold false candies to people.”

Through Ayah’s reply to Sharbat Khan, Sidhwa seems to convey that politicians have their own ulterior motives and they never genuinely fight for common people when she says, “What’s it to us if Jinnah, Nehru and Patel fight? They are not fighting our fight.” (ICM 75) Partition of India was a political decision taken on the basis of religion by political players which ultimately resulted in gruesome and violent hatred between Hindus and Muslims continuing even today. Ayah in the novel is politically the most neutral character, who had an indifferent attitude to the political turmoil in the beginning. But ironically, by the novel ends, it is she, whose life is most violently altered by the partition turmoil. The satire here is very prominent which exposes how innocent people of the sub-continent, for no fault of theirs, suffered the holocaust of partition.

The novel deals with the Parsi dilemma at the time when the country was struggling for freedom. They were not sure whether to support Swaraj or to maintain their allegiance to the British. Later when the sub-continent was gripped with the partition turbulence, and anarchy attached to it, they were constantly obsessed with apprehension and insecurity in regard to their status after the departure of the
British, and in regard to their well-being after the possession of power by Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs. In the novel, Col. Bharucha, the President of the Parsi Anjuman, Lahore warns his fellow Parsis:

“IT is no longer just a struggle for Home Rule. It is a struggle for power. . . If we’re stuck with the Hindus they’ll swipe our business under our noses and sell our grandfathers in bargain: if we’re stuck with the Muslims they’ll convert us by the sword! And God help us if we stuck with the Sikhs!” (ICM 36-37)

Sidhwa here implies that with the passage of time, the struggle for freedom deteriorated in the struggle for possessing the power. Finally the Parsies decide to stay neutral in the tug of war among the three major communities of India. As the things get worse in Lahore, we see a change in the attitude of the Parsies. Inspired by the feeling of humanism, they cease to be passive neutrals and turn into active neutrals. Lenny’s mother and aunts render help in a variety of ways to the riot-victims in Lahore. They furtively smuggle petrol to help people to migrate to safer places; work for rehabilitating ‘fallen’ women; allow their friends and neighbours to store their belongings in their own big house; actively help in Ayah’s rehabilitation and arranging to send her back to her family in Amritsar.

In spite of some historical inaccuracies, and Sidhwa’s seemingly biased approach in favour of Pakistan, the novel Ice-Candy-Man poignantly describes the turbulent times of the division of India and brutal violence and trauma that people were made to suffer. Sidhwa handles the sensitive and delicate theme of partition with a brilliant combination of skill, sympathy, heart-rending realism and a delightful sense of humour. Violence in the form of killing, rape, arson and violence
in its verbal and psychological form presented in the novel convey the horrible trauma of people resulted by the decision of partition. With a rich undercurrent of legend and folklore, the novel brings to life the physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological and real implications of the partition of India. The novel warns us against power monger political players, fanatic lovers and religious extremism. If we do not learn from history, we are condemned to repeat it. The trauma of partition has left behind it an extra-ordinary love-hate relationship, deep sulky resentment and animosity along with a considerable sense of nostalgia that will continue to haunt the people of both sides of the border for ages.

Sidhwa’s novel *Ice-Candy-Man* gives a detailed account of violence, unprecedented both in scale and method, and thus enables the readers to comprehend the extent of horrible impact of the trauma of partition on individual as well collective lives. The novelist’s extraordinary talent of describing traumatic and humorous events alternately; freely mingling historical tragedy with witty comedy; affectionate admiration for Parsi community with a compassion for the dispossessed; resilience of women characters combine to save the novel from being a heart-rending depressive reading. We can conclude with *Economics Times*’ appreciation of the novel and the novelist:

“Sidhwa captures the turmoil of the times, with a brilliant combination of the individual growing-up pains and the collective anguish of a newly independence but divided country. Sidhwa’s work— particularly the dehumanizing effects of communalism she movingly reveals in *Ice-Candy-Man*— is painfully relevant to our present day India.”

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