Women in Partition: A Feminist Reading
Chapter - 5

WOMEN IN PARTITION: A FEMINIST READING

Beautiful neighbour!
With a pair of bullocks in front of your cart
You are driving away and away,
Leaving behind
On the body of our common motherland,
Two deep scars of the heavy wheels.

You are driving away and away
With your families,
And your bag and baggage,
Because our common motherland
Has been dissected.

‘One’, they say, ‘is Pakistan’,
‘The other’, they tell us, ‘is Hindustan.’

(Pritam 32-39)

The predominant narratives of Partition suggest the bitter, unforgettable memory of the Partition violence. The closure of human trauma is inherent in the narratives of Women, historical texts and popular, violent belongings shattering the existences of the human agency involved in the crisis of the Partition of India. Partition narratives detail the consequences of violent effects and counter-responses providing a legitimate critique of the Communal equation in South Asia. Narrative interpretations reveal regarding the victimization processes of the female
agency, organization of the gendered tropes in understanding the relevance of the Partition era on the gendered subjects contesting the nationalities in conflict. Women narratives provide a careful dissection of the gendered roles or the identities in crisis, due to the reshuffled national identities and forced ideologies of the Hindus and the Muslims affecting multiple national identities in the process.

Thus, Communal conflict assumes importance as it negates the contradictory religious forces contesting for a legitimate nationalism within a unified national category. Feminine and the Masculine tropes engage the crisis of Partition, as it remains inevitable on both the sides affecting the case of Women, predominantly; forcing them to acknowledge the male imposed political and historical necessity. It shows patterning of the vital female questions, which remained out of Politics with the increasing developments of Partition but were the worst to face the difficulty of male-brought-choices, affecting Women, their status ruptured through the ceaseless interplay of Politics and Culture of the Partition of India. Narratology offers a peep into the symbolic experiences of the female characters, struggling and resisting Women marginalization to the core. Indian culture and the detailing of the pattern of the female subjective agency remained more or less out of the dominant power-structure of the political résistance against the colonizers.

Colonial discourses provide evidences of the very early form of reducing the identities of the colonized though the construction of the feminized or the
effeminate character obviously, the colonial superimposition (Sinha 18). The
degraded condition of Indian women was taken as an indicator of India’s inferior
status in the hierarchy of civilizations (Bandyopadhyay 381). The status of women
transformed the major focus of the reforming agenda of the modernizing Indian
intellectuals of the nineteenth century. In their acknowledgement to the alarming
critique of the West, they anticipated a golden past, where women were treated
with ‘dignity’ and ‘honour’; they prompted reforms of those customs, which they
considered to be distortions or aberrations. Thus, female infanticide was banned,
sati system was abolished and widow re-marriage was legalized. In all such cases
reforms were legitimated by referring to the shastras (rituals and practices) and no
women was ever involved in the Reform movements. It would be too early to
suggest that these male dominated reformers lacked affinity for their Womenfolk.
In spite of that, they treated them as subjects of their restorative projects and could
not predict them to their conscious equals, damming organization for their own
liberalization. Women’s condition remained restorative in pre-colonial India.

Indeed, women’s position in ancient India was never static or uniform: in
the words of Romila Thapar, it varied widely from “a position of considerable
authority and freedom to one of equally considerable subservience” (Thapar 7).
Women’s plight began gradually worsening, decisively, with the development of
peasant societies and the growth of states. In Hindu society, the central organizing
principle of Caste hierarchy came to be more integrally connected to the ideology
of Patriarchy; both *Sudras* and Women were debarred from the access to legacies of Vedic ritual rites. Women remained more confined to their household, whereas their public space became the sphere of activities only for men. Women’s issue also became a part of the discourses of national progress and modernity, a movement for female education started as a part of the colonized males’ search for a new identity in the indigenous woman. Subjective agency for the spread of Education lay with three groups of people, as Geraldine Forbes has classified them: “the British rulers, Indian male reformers and educated Indian women” (Forbes 60). Similar steps were carried in Calcutta by men like Radhakanta Deb and the School Book Society and later by Keshub Chandra Sen and the Brahma Samaj; in Western India by Mahadev Govind Ranade and Prarthana Samaj, in North India by Swami Dayanand and his Arya Samaj, and in Madras by Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society.

As far as Indian educated women were concerned, we may mention the endeavours of Pandita Ramabai in Western India, sister Subbalaksmi in Madras and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain among the Muslim women in Bengal. As for as the education of Muslim women in other parts of the country, certain families like the Bilgramis in Hyderabad, the Tyabjis in Bombay and the Mians in Lahore, or few organizations like *Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam*, the *Anjuman-i-Islam* or the Nizam’s government in Hyderabad took considerable roles. Colonial government from the administration of Lord Dalhousie (1848-56) took particular
interest in the female education. J.E. Drinkwater Bethune, the law member in the governor general's council opened in 1849 that, eventually became the most well-known girls' school in Calcutta. Between 1849 and 1882, when the Hunter Commission was appointed, female education in India had progressed very little, as 98 per cent of women in the school attendants, remained uneducated. Hence, the commission recommended liberal grant-in-aid and special scholarships for Women's education. During the next two decades, significant improvements were seen in women's enrolment in both universities and secondary schools, although compared to the total female population of the country the figures remained insignificant (Forbes 44-45).

Nationalist imaging of their country as “motherland” initiated when in 1875 the famous Bengali savant Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote the song “Bande Mataram” (Hail Mother). The concept of mother, which was later, incorporated and contextualized in his novel Anandamath (1882). In this novel, he depicted three images of mother-goddess: ‘mother as she was’, ‘mother as she is’ and ‘mother as she will be’. During the Swadeshi movement, the Bengali extremist leader Aurobindo Ghosh discovered the potential of the imagery that could infuse patriotism and national awakening. Moreover, from now on almost every nationalist leader, from Bipin Chandra Pal to Jawaharlal Nehru used this metaphor of ‘motherhood’ to signify the country and the nation. Early Indian nationalists gave prime importance to mother-goddess, the traditional image of a nurturing,
affectionate and were the concept of Shakti or primal power that was epitomized in Hindu cosmology as Goddesses Durga, Kali, Chamundi etc., who extinguished the devils to shield the innocent.

Jasodhara Bagehi has argued that this ideology of motherhood by “creating a myth about her strength and power”, took away from women their “real power”, confined them exclusively to their reproductive role, and thus, deprived them of access to education and occupation, or in other words, to all possible avenues to their real empowerment (Bagachi 65-71). Women turned into spies to circulate messages from one place to the other to protect bad happenings by the British. In Bengal, the most powerful imagery, that was used to mobilize women’s support this time was Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity who had allegedly left her abode because of Partition, and who had to be brought back, protected and looked after (Engels 28-29).

There were some remarkable exceptions, like Sarala Debi Chaudhurani, who got involved in a committed cultural movement for the Bengali youth or a few women who participated in the revolutionary movement. However, in the latter case, their involvement was mostly of a supportive or indirect nature, which included giving shelter to renegade revolutionaries or acting as couriers of messages and weapons (B. Ray 184-89). This nature of participation, thus, did not abruptly break the accepted norms of feminine behaviour or signify their empowerment. Gandhiji’s emergence in the Indian national movement made great
difference to women’s involvement in the Nationalist movement. Gandhi conceptualizing the ideal Indian womanhood shifted the focus from motherhood to sisterhood, by negating the explicit transformation of Women’s sexuality. Gandhi’s strong opinion about women stood couched in a language full of religious metaphors that did not undermine the traditional and social behaviour about women.

Sita, Damayanti, Savithri and Draupadi were his role models for Indian women. The age-old traditional codes got reconstituted and loaded with new meanings. These women represented themselves as no slaves of their husbands, but extremely virtuous, and capable of making greatest sacrifices for the welfare of their family, society and the state. Sita, the sacred wife of Rama symbolically represented as Indians and the British could conveniently be equated with the demon King Ravana. However, while addressing Muslim women, Gandhi would meticulously avoid the most allegorical references to Ramayana and would simply ask them to make sacrifice for their country and for the sake of a unified Islam.

Gandhi accepted what he called the “natural division of labour” between the sexes and believed that women had a duty to look after the hearth and home. Nevertheless, from within their ordained spheres, they could serve the nation by spinning, by picketing at foreign cloth and liquor shops and by shaming men into action (Kishwar 1691-1702). For him, men and women were equal, but had different roles to play and in this, as Sujata Patel has strongly argued, Gandhi
remained within the Indian middle-class tradition of conceptualizing Womanhood. He accepted women’s biological weakness, but turned that weakness into power by glorifying their strength of the soul. He did not seek to invert the doctrine of two “separate spheres” of private and public space, but redefined political participation by creating space for politics in home. In other words, what Gandhi did was “an extraction and reformation of received social ideas in moral terms”. (Thorner and Krishnaraj 288-321).

In December 1921, Basanti Devi, the wife of the Bengal Congress leader C.R. Das, his sister Urmila Devi and niece Suniti Devi, astounded the nation by participating in the open demonstration on the streets of Calcutta and by inviting legal arrest. Gandhian appeal was now seemingly reaching down also to the marginalized women like the prostitutes and devdasis (temple women), for example although Gandhi himself was not too keen to involve them (Thorner and Krishnaraj 312). Gandhi did not want to include women in his original core group of volunteers on the Dandi March. The Muslim women also participated in the Khilafat Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921.

The Muslim women were struggling to break their traditional practices of the rigorous purdah, but its total abolition was out of question, because for Muslims, it was a symbol of their cultural distinctiveness. On the other side, if a small group of women really crossed the socially constituted boundary of feminine modesty by involving in violent insurgent action, they were heavily expurgated by
a condemning society. Such "strong traditional moorings", argues Tanika Sarkar, elucidates why this politicization was possible and why it failed to promote to any significant extent social emancipation of women in India (91-101). The Congress leaders were not interested in women’s issues, except for allowing some symbolic presence, never included women in any decision making process. A disappointed and frustrated Sarala Debi Chaudhurani therefore had to lament that Congress wanted them to be “law-breakers only and not law-makers” (Forbes 143).

Sarala Devi Chaudhurani’s Bharat Stree Mahamandal held its first meeting in Allahabad in 1910, opened branches all over India to promote Women’s education. In Bengal during the 1920s, as Barbara Southard has indicated, the Bangiya Nari Samaj started campaigning for women’s voting rights, the Bengal women’s Education League demanded compulsory elementary and secondary education for women and the All-Bengal Women’s Union campaigned for legislation against illicit trafficking of women. However, the Partition rose in 1935 on the issue of reservation of women’s seats on a Communal basis. Some of the Muslim leaders of the All India Women’s Conference, like Begam Shah Nawaz recollects in her autobiography, refused to “accept joint electorates when their men were not prepared to do so” (A.A. Ali 131).

Thus, broader political arrangements or adjustments or man’s politics, influenced women’s movements as well. The Muslim League also sought to universalize its Politics and in 1938 started a women’s sub-committee to involve
Muslim women. As the Pakistan movement gathered momentum, more and more of them were absorbed into it as election candidates, as voters and as active demonstrators in street politics, particularly in Punjab and the NWFP. But it signified nevertheless, an acceptance of public role for women in Muslim society. During the pre-Partition of India, women struggled a lot to resist British Raj.

In fact, women did not share a good fate; their physical weakness was one of the major causes for their exploitation by men. Before independence, she (women) was exploited by the British and by their own men and after independence and Partition, women remained the primary targeted victims. Hindus and the Muslims had taken greater advantages of these weaker sections. During the time of partition, men from both the religious communities participated in killings, rape, abductions, murdering and plundering the innocent women and ultimately both the nations celebrated independence on women’s deathbed.

Innocent women stood bewildered by the hard and serious reality of Partition. Their parents astoundingly witnessed the helpless faces of their daughters, sisters and wives. Most of the women they did not understand: what is Partition? Why it happened? Why were their parents dragging them into such a situation? They only understand British Raj, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Jinnah, Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs. Women of both communities reconciled that they were partitioned and they had to live separately and depart as separate independent nations. Aftermath Partition, the countless sufferings of refugees who
lost all properties and cursed their fate, old aged men and women were forced to accept the decision of Partition, taken by the political leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League. The female refugees took shelter in their relative houses, some relatives were allowed—but some shut their doors ruthlessly, in fact, hundreds and thousands of female refugees reluctantly wished to stay in the refugee camps.

It was inevitable, there was no way, they had to stay and search for their existence. Approximately 500,000 to one million people were believed to have died; hundreds of thousands of children lost and abandoned; between 75,000 to 100,000 women raped and abducted. There is no reliable record/documents of the number of families separated; the fields neither of crops were left to rot, their homes destroyed, nor of the perilous journeys people made as they fled to their new homelands by train, cart, lorry and on foot. This long and painful transition was accompanied and often prompted, by slaughter and violence, as people who still then had lived, despite their differences (or perhaps because of their differences) in some kind of social contract, suddenly began to see each other as enemies (Kaul 208).

Refugees did not take care of themselves at any hardships and difficulties, they wanted to search and settle in their permanent existence. Their existing places no matter how far, better and permanent, they didn’t know, but for the future hope they came with buffaloes, bullocks, camels, horses, sheep, goats, they heaped with bundles of old cloths etc. on their journeys, they faced unpredictable pain and
sufferings, unaccountable predicaments, miseries like exhaustion, starvation, cholera etc. They wore filthy dhotis, sarees, baggy trousers and frayed sandals. The family members carefully shielded their old aged parents, most of the elderly women clung to their sons, pregnant women to their husbands. Men carried invalid wives and mothers on their shoulders, women their infants. They had to endure their burden not for a mile or two but for a hundred, two hundred miles, for days on end with nothing to nourish their strength but a few chapattis and a little bit of water.

Violence experienced by women, as women, results when women from one community were sexually assaulted by the men of the other, in an overt assertion, of their identity and simultaneous humiliation of the other by “dishounouring” their women. In this respect, the rape and molestation of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim women before and after Partition, probably followed the familiar pattern of sexual violence, and of attack, retaliation and reprisal. What may be remarkable is the exultation that accompanied it. Stories of women being stripped “of their cloths just as bananas are peeled. The skulls of the young ones were broken like almonds. The old were thrown into the fire like dry wood: the middle aged were made to smoulder like cowdung cakes. But even so, in the deep caves of that dark night, the light emitted by some jugnus, fireflies persisted” (Hasan, India 146-47) and being made to dance, thus, in gurudwaras; of being raped in the presence of their menfolk, recur both in written accounts and interviews. The civil surgeon of
Sheikhupura for example, testified to the Fact Finding Team mentioned earlier, on the violence in Guru Nanakpura on August 26, 1947 and said that, “Women and young girls in all forms of nakedness” were brought to his hospital; “even the ladies of the most respectable families had the misfortune of having undergone this most terrible experience. The wife of an advocate had practically nothing on when she came to the hospital” (Khosla 133).

The medical doctor at the refugee camp in Jhang testified as follows: “Apart from the injured from Jhang-Maghina town (following the violence of August 26, 1947) over 500 seriously wounded persons were brought to the refugee camp from adjoining villages. One of the cases that I treated was of a woman from village Chund Bharwana who was the wife of a railway porter. One of her hands was chopped off above her waist and then she was thrown into the fire, as a result of which her lower portion got burnt. But she escaped from there and was then thrown into well with her two daughters and one son. She was taken out of the well later on and brought to the refugee camp” (Khosla 181).

Larger numbers of women were forced to death to avoid sexual violence against them, to preserve chastity and protect the individuals' family and community “honour”. The means used to accomplish this end varied; when women themselves took their lives, they would either jump into the nearest well or set themselves ablaze, solely or in groups that could be made up either of all the women in the family: the younger women; or women and children.
A school teacher of government high school, Sheikhupura, who was in one of the three camps attacked on August 26, 1947, recounted the following: “During the attack, my wife and daughter got separated. My wife took shelter in one house and my daughter in another. My daughter tried to put an end to her life by persuading a lawyer’s son to strangle her. Three attempts were made, but my daughter survived though she remained unconscious for some time. There were one or two girls in this house also, and they prepared a pyre with some quilts and chairpayees” (Khosla 130).

Menon and Bhasin writes “Similar accounts abound but it is not our purpose here to repeat the litany of horror; it is been amply documented and can be easily located. Nevertheless, as we read and heard these reports, and as today we read and hear about similar violence in Meerut, Surat, Bhagalpur, Ahmedabad. We begin to discern some specific features of “communal” crimes against women: their brutality, their suffering of extreme sexual violence and their collective nature. The range of sexual violation explicit in the above accounts-stripping; parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia with triumphal slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the womb; raping of course; killing fetuses—is shocking not only for its savagery, but for what it tells us about women as objects in male constructs of their own honour. Women’s sexuality symbolized the opposing “Manhood”, its desecrations is a matter of such shame and dishonour that it has to be avenged. Yet, with the cruel logic of all such violence, it is women who ultimately are most violently dealt with as a consequence” (Menon and Bhasin 42-43).
Each one of the violent acts mentioned above has specific symbolic meaning and physical consequences, and all of them treat women's bodies as the territory to be conquered, claimed or marked by the assailant. Some acts are simultaneous or continuous (they may begin with stripping or/and culminate in raping, branding or tattooing); they may take place in public or market places, temples or gurudwaras, the latter two signifying the simultaneous violation of women and sacred space—or privately, but with families as witnesses. Tattooing and branding the body with "Pakistan, Zindabad!" or "Hindustan, Zindabad!" not only disfigure the women for entire life; they never allow her (or her family or her community) the possibility of forgetting her humiliation (Menon and Bhasin 43).

Marking of the breasts and genitalia with symbols like the crescent moon or trident makes permanent the religio-sexual appropriation of the women for masculine demands, and symbolically extends this violation to future generations who are turned metaphysically stigmatized. Amputating her breasts at once desexualizes women and negates her as wife and mother; no longer a nurturer (if she survives, that is) she remains a permanently inauspicious figure, almost as undesirable as a barren woman. Sudhir Kakar, in his exploitation of how communities fantasize violence, indicates that sexual mutilation figures prominently: the castration of males and the amputation of breasts "incorporate the (more or less conscious) wish to wipe the enemy off the face of the earth" by eliminating the means of preproduction and nurturing (Menon and Bhasin 43-44).
Chaman Nahal meticulously described the naked procession of women in his novel *Azadi*, where he defines the grotesque parading of the female bodies; displaying communal grudge, the violent display of bodies dissipated and disfigured. Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* describes the process of the ‘nakedness engulfing or erasing the identities, disfiguring them to a sole status of being just a community of afflicted with replaced religious identities contesting and contradicting their original identity. The bleeding bruises on their arms, especially with women felt more alienated in the event of Partition. These examples illustrate systematic manhandling and the violent ill-treatment of the female bodies conquered and spoilt in the name of religious antagonism and communal frenzy. Nahal narrates the female helplessness at Narowal; the Dera Baba Nanak border with India, only eight miles from Narowal. The Muslim abductors abducted the Hindu and Sikh women. The same midnight processions happened in East Punjab, in fact, Muslim women suffered to a greater extent. Nahal and his family were also victims of Partition, so that he portrayed his own experience in his novel (Nahal 296-297).

Personalized details and Partition political realities remained more conventional and more predictable, segregating and separating the conventional forms of the non-conventional, dividing the realities of women and men in the traditional public and the private sphere. The Partition realities also restored the climax of the Partition trauma. Recovery and Rehabilitation by agencies of India
and Pakistan is a clear indicator of the methods employed by these new states to restore those benign structures of patriarchal authority that had crumbled under the onslaughts of collective-male violence.

Difficult choices were forced upon women who were pregnant or had children with their abductors or companions in order to restore them to their families, and to acceptable social purity. They were led to abortions or to giving-up their children, either to the men who had fathered them or to orphanages. Most often, those women who kept their children did not return to their families and lived in ashram-style institutions as wards of the state. Recovered women and girls were thrown-out of the Hindu-traditional families. They were ill-treated by all people; their parents did not allow them to rejoin their families. They were frustrated and psychologically depressed; it was inevitable to make the choices of suicide, to lead independent life or inevitably, to become prostitutes. In the early 1948, Nehru appealed to the public and declared: “I am told that there is unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept those girls and women back in their homes. This is a most objectionable and wrong attitude to take and any social custom that supports this attitude must be condemned. These girls and women require our tender and loving care and their relatives should be proud to take them back and give them every help” (Khosla 75).

Abducted Muslim women were easily accepted back into their families; in Pakistan, the All Pakistan Women’s Association and other organizations, worked
hard for arranging marriages for many women who were recovered or returned. Orthodox Hindus, strictly banished re-marriage for widows and they kept them away from their place. Before and after Partition the women of the Hindu or the Sikh community committed suicide, jumped into a well or killed by their parents. The Partition memory of rape and sexual violence reminds of the eternal saga of community cleavages that remained unhealed with normal circumstances. The cultural difference of acceptance on the part of the Pakistani women and reluctance on the part of Hindu women shows the cultural differences of both the religious communities struggling to overtake the other with the event like the Partition of India.

Sudesh Vaid and Urvashi Butalia interviewed to Amrik Singh of Doberan village, Punjab, who had narrated his heart rendering story with them. “At first in the Gurudwara they were (Muslims) throwing stones. Our people understood that nothing could be done unless there was help from outside. And there was no sign of such help… So they thought, what about the young girls, the women? What can we do about them? The girls said, ‘They’ll take us away, they’ll treat us badly, they’ll do all kinds of things, they’ll make us change our religion. Why don’t you finish us off with your own hands?’ So there were about 70-80 girls whom their brothers, their husbands, their fathers killed. They just lay down on the ground… and they killed, them, they slit their throats…” (Hasan, India 127). The umpteen numbers of such stories narrated and circulated by many sensitive writers on the
subject of Partition are large in number. Massive scale of women’s recovery, and rehabilitation done by government and many social service organizations mostly go ignored in dealing with the effects of the Partition and counter-offensive to it.

The Indian government sought the help of several social service organizations like the Kasturba National Memorial Trust, the All India Save the Children Committee, the Trust for Sindhi Women and Children, the Jainendra Gurukul, Arya Pradeshi Pratinidhi Sabha, Nari Seva Sangh and Akhil Bharat Nari Shiksha Parishad among others (Menon and Bhasin 150). These organizations strived hard to give definite shape to destitute women’s life. In the aftermath of Partition, the governments of India and Pakistan swamped with complains by relatives of missing women seeking to recover them, either through government, military or voluntary effort.

Recognizing the enormity of the problem, the two governments entered into an Inter-Dominion Agreement in November 1947 to recover as many women as speedily as possible, from each country and restore them their families. This agreement was followed by the passing of ordinances in both countries to cover the years up to December 1949, and in December of that year, the Indian Parliament legislated an act to facilitate the Recovery operation in India. In that stagnant condition, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhiji, Patel etc., tried to solve the problems of recovery and rehabilitation of women but it was some extent solved because of social and religious problem many Hindu women did not approve to
rejoin their families. Mridula Sarabhai began discussing this problem with Raja Ghazanfar Alikhan, who was then Pakistan's Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation. As a result, a meeting was arranged in Lahore on 6th December 1947 between senior officials of both governments, as well as the Social workers.

At this meeting, an agreement was signed by both the countries for the recovery of abducted women and children. On the December 1947, Mahatma Gandhi referred to this meeting in his speech. His words are quoted from Manuben Gandhi's Delhi Dairy as: "... Raja Ghazanfar Alikhan and others were present at this meeting. Rameshwari Nehru and Mridulaben informed me that a resolution was passed that the primary task was to recover these women. It has also been decided that some women would accompany the police and army personnel and go to Pakistan as well as East Punjab, and help recover these women from wherever they are almost imprisoned... Moreover, there are rumors to the effect that these abducted women do not wish to return to their own families. They have embraced Islam and married Muslims. However, I am not convinced by these stories. Such conversion to a different religion must not be regarded as genuine and such marriages cannot be regarded as legal. These women have been treated as prostitutes... At the moment, all that is needed to be done is to see to it that those women who have been forcibly abducted and kept like prisoners, should be rescued and restored to their own families... The governments of both countries should take up this work. Do not conclude that I am accusing either of these two
governments as having carried out these abductions. The Muslims in Pakistan, the Hindus and Sikhs in India are responsible for this, and it is these very persons who should bring these women back. And their own families should be large-hearted enough to accept them back. These women were not responsible for what happened. In their state of helplessness, they were abducted by evil men...” (Patel xvii-xviii).

The brutal consequences as Krirpal Singh writes: “At places the police officers, who were appointed to protect the women themselves committed the worst crime. Two Assistant Sub Inspectors of Police went to recover a non-Muslim woman from a village in West Punjab and the unfortunate woman was raped and ravished by those very police officers during the nights on the way. In the meeting of the officers, Inspector of Police at Kamoke District Gujranwala had collected all the non-Muslim girls at the time of the Kamoke Train Attack and distributed them to his accompaniments” (Partition 6-7). Nehru said: “There is one point, however, to which I should like to draw your attention, and this is the question of rescuing women who have been abducted or forcibly converted. You will realize that nothing adds to popular passions more than stories of abduction of more than stories of abduction of women, and so long as these ... women are not rescued, trouble will simmer and might blaze out” (Menon and Bhasin 68).

Communal tension and the ensuing violence escalated at such a rapid pace, however, especially after March 1947, that on September 3rd, 1947 leaders and
representatives of the governments of India and Pakistan met and resolved that steps be taken to recover and restore abducted persons. Thus, on November 17, 1947, the All India Congress Committee passed a resolution that announced: “During these disorders, large numbers of women have been abducted on either side and there have been forcible conversions on a large scale. No civilized people can recognize such conversions and there is nothing more heinous than the abduction of women. Every effort must be made to restore women to their original homes with the co-operation of the governments concerned” (Menon and Bhasin 69). On December 6, 1947, the Inter-Dominion Conference was held at Lahore where the two countries agreed upon steps to be taken for the implementation of recovery and restoration, with the appointment of Mridula Sarabhai as Chief All India Organizer. The Recovery operation itself was in the charge of the Women’s Section, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, with Rameswari Nehru as Honorary Advisor. Primary responsibility for recovery was with the local police, assisted by a staff of one additional inspector-general, two deputy-superintendents of police, 15 inspectors, 10 sub-inspectors and 6 assistant sub-inspectors. Between December 1947 and July 1948, the number of women recovered in both countries was 9,362 in India and 5,510 in Pakistan (Rai 113).

Recoveries dropped rather drastically after this date, one reason put forward being the withdrawal of the Military Evacuation Organization from both territories and it was felt that a more binding arrangement was necessary for
satisfactory progress. Accordingly, an agreement was reached between India and Pakistan on November 11, 1948 that set out the terms for recovery in each dimension. Ordinances were issued in both countries, in January 1949 for India, and May 1949 for Pakistan; in the case of India, it was to remain in force till January 1950, in Pakistan, till it was cancelled. Partition scholars like Ashis Nandy, Veena Das, Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin, Kamala Patel, Gyanendra Pandey, Mushirul Hasan and many others narrate the bizarre sexual violence suffered by women. They deal with the cultural loss, their bodies mutilated and disfigured, their breasts and genitalia tattooed and brandished with triumphal slogans, their wombs knifed open, fetuses killed, rampant raping along with all the savagery using the woman’s body as an easy object to dishonor the other community. Literary memory becomes almost a mandatory source for the subtle revelations of some deeply ingrained attitudes operating behind so much of the action during the days of Partition. There is, indeed, sexual politics operating subtly, behind the absence of emphasis on the narration of pornography of male violence on women. High-brow politics did record in history, debates about the inevitability of Partition but what was suppressed was the great human tragedy of the times. The magnitude of this human aspect of the tragedy of Partition cannot be merely presumed to statistics of how many rapes or refugees occured. Forms of Patriarchy themselves, women often consented. Their elimination donated their martyrdom and their murders completely acquired social sanction, since the act of killing had after all the noble purpose of safeguarding the honour and self-respect.
However, there were women who restricted the imposition of such a death and confronted the possibilities of rape and the stigma of sexual impropriety. Women, who had lost their husbands and families had to, by force acquire economic stability for survival. For this, they could not remain confined to the traditional norms of behaviour prescribed for widows. The rehabilitation of widows meant suspension of various social constraints on them. The fetters imposed on widows by patriarchy had to loosen to re-assimilate them in the society. A special section within the government was set-up to help their rehabilitation and referred to as unattached women rather than widows. Supported by such an official gesture, these victims of the national disaster mustered extraordinary courage and enterprise to renegotiate their mode of existence in the post-Partition scenario. Jalal argues that women were "the main victims" of the Partition violence (Jalal, Nation 190), a view well supported also by the accounts provided in Urvashi Butalia's work. Moreover, the women were often twice and thrice victimized; first, by their abduction; second, by their 'recovery' after Partition against their will in many cases; third, by the rejection and loss of their children born after their abduction but before their recovery by their original families (Major 57-72).

The significance of the narratives of thousands of brutalized women cannot be undermined. What cannot be shared through reports, documents, diaries and memoirs can only be narrativized. The absences, silences and different kinds of
psychological deaths of women find essential voice in these narratives. Memory recreates the inherent fears of the mind, and victimhood becomes the soul of the nation.

Everyone (Partition victims) becomes a victim of the victim. The nation is the victim of the imperial policy of divide and quit. The minority becomes the victim of the nation. Individual refugees seeking shelter in the other half of the portioned land becomes the victims of the alien state, which they had considered their own, and which they now discover to be their unwilling host for the state, too, claims to be the victim of political conspiracies.

The feminist consciousness targets the narrative strategies taken to examine the role and reshuffling of sexual identities coupled with politics, culture and society at large. Literary texts examined the scope and elasticity of the novel elaborating Textual positioning, interpreting the reality of Partition tracing the counterclaims of the characters that the novelist is speaking and addressing for understanding the phenomenon of Partition. Bapsi Sidhwa is a popular novelist of great talents; she was born in Karachi and brought up in Lahore. She has remained a prominent and an active socialist for representing the Pakistani side to the Asian Women’s Congress held in 1975. She has other novels of unique importance to her credit like; The Crow Eaters, The Pakistani Bride and The American Brat. She prefers her time with teaching and active involvement with the United States and teaching at Pakistan. The title is more fascinating and interesting for the
publishing hype that feared the readers of American kind could easily be mistaken for a different meaning that the term leads to when pushed to the ordinary meanings. The title *Cracking India* was revised to *Ice-Candy-Man*. The novel *Ice-Candy-Man* refers to the Muslim street vendor attracted by the feminine charm of the magnetic Ayah, who appears in the fiction as a central character conjoining two females and feminine voices with Ayah and Lenny turning to suggest the meanings of the Partition scenario to a greater extent. Sidhwa is looking at her central mouth-piece, Lenny, who is able to witness the scenario of Partition by making her subtle inferences recover the loss of feminine consciousness in the Partition fiction.

The beauty of the novel shows the feminine side altered with greater issues of nationality, religious extremism, communal divide and hopelessness of female struggle in a male-dominated political revival of Partition. The precocious narrative told from the female narrator, polio-stricken does hardly realize the tumultuous lifestyle of the people around her devastated and contaminated by the forceful event of the Partition of India. The ‘cracks’ are the loopholes in people, torn aside by conflicting identities, religious mores and dampening moral values. Lenny connects the human side to the universal ideological underpinnings of the events, consequently, rendering the drama of Partition into reality. Moreover, the historical fusion of the actual incident and the fictional renderings are carefully balanced to narrate the complexity of Partition from a child’s point-of-view making her to witness the ‘cracks’ unhealing, the crude remnants of existence.
Female gaze is elementary in understanding this particular fiction, as it tries to provide a glimpse of varied problematic faced by feminine subjectivities. Engaging the reality of Partition, restoring the counterclaims of the religious antagonism that prevailed before the Partition; it was as if Partition revisited like the ‘ghosts’ that existed inside every communal subjects irrespective of religions in making the unfortunate event of Partition in actual reality.

Lenny’s understanding of the situation easily slips out of the context providing depth and destruction of Lenny’s worldly inferences about people, religious sides and sexualities. The novel explores the poisonous influx of the communal hatred; reminiscent of the disability, obstructing Lenny’s pace of freedom, choice and societal understanding. She is able to see and identify the ruination of the political aspect on the startlingly ‘feminine’ but gracious Ayah (A Maid-servant) disrupted and cracked under the plethora of communal realities entering though the waves of Indian Partition, with a relative focus on the feminine identities, unable to recover form the traumatic events that carried stronger waves of Indian Partition. ‘Neutrality’ is not enough in the event of Indian Partition; the Parsi community that Lenny belongs realizes later that neutrality does not matter with the magnitude of Partition affecting the communal relations and communitarian links with both the Hindus and Muslims.

Interesting is the dragging on of the Parsi community into the problems of Partition. Menon and Bhasin identify the desperate lack as the missing context or the foremost weakness with existing histories on the Partition of India. The
paucity of the social histories appears blended with the political significance of the
even of Partition (Menon and Bhasin 6-7). Narratives of the novel render the
subject of the Indian Partition, indicating the feminine consciousness.
Contemporary historiographical and literary investigation problematizes the notion
of “objective” histories, “fictional” representation accepted to be fulfilling a
specific role in the larger question of what history is and can be. Thus, the often-
stilted invocation of an official history to serve the needs of the state may be
challenged by various kinds of literary productions, including autobiographies,
ficto-biographies, or oral histories.

Sidhwa’s novel fits within this kind of writing—they are semi-fictional,
semi-biographical. Indeed, Sidhwa articulates her ambition at writing Ice-Candy-
Man as it restores the complexity of the event of Partition from a third-perspective
i.e., the Parsi view that shows that Partition of India which affected almost all the
communities, not necessarily the Hindu and Muslim questions. “There are certain
images from my past which have always haunted me...Although I was very young
then, I saw killings, fires, dead bodies. These are images which have stayed with
me...This hostility needs to be dealt with” (202). The next line of argument
stresses on the factor of the minorities on both the sides of the subcontinent-the
minority complex that carried “the fear of being deprived, surpassed, losing out,
threatened, dominated, suppressed, beaten down, exterminated and of losing one's
identity and even life” (Dhavan and Kapadia 177).
Sidhwa’s narrative strategy of constructing the episodes of the Partition indicates the extremely talented instigators, specialized in turning a minority’s grievances—real and imaginary into a monolithic, effective strategy for Communalism. The novelist tells that narrow political gains reworked within the seriously transplanted lives of the common people suffering the anguish of the Partition. The novel connects the Parsees of Lahore, a community caught up in the rumble of Partition; surcharged by the atmosphere, where the passions of human beings were bound up with the hard questions of reason and choice for their survival. Parsees knew that they, owing to the vulnerability and the lack of numerical strength, could not afford fighting a pitched battle against any section of society. “Nor could they cherish any fond hope of siding towards any party because there was the possibility of "not one but two-or even three-new nations!" (Piciucco, Vol. 1, 214). Col. Bharucha warned Parsees that they should be very cautious lest they might find themselves championing the wrong side. “If we’re stuck with the Hindus, they’ll swipe our business from under our noses...If we’re stuck with the Muslims they’ll convert us by the sword! And God can help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs!” (Ice 37). Sidhwa also reminds that, “The Parsees of Lahore were not 'stupid enough to court trouble' by backing up any community because they have something against everybody. Parsees were not likely to take an active part in Politics because they dreaded that by 'jumping into the middle' they would be 'mangled into chutney'. Parsees knew that 'it was not easy to be accepted into a country unless some ingenious norms for living with other communities
were clarifiedly suitable. Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land” (39). The Parsees followed that they were granted a home in India because Parsees neither proselytized nor entered into the realm of politics.

The success of Parsees lies in the fact that by evolving certain workable norms and practical political strategies to live amiably with the majority, they tided over the problem of being driven out of Pakistan. It was they who did not bog down in minority complex, and, therefore, they came out of identity politics. They remained intact and prospered even under ‘Muslim Moguls’ simply because they continued to conduct their ‘lives quietly’ (Ice 130). As ‘a smart and civilized people’ they wanted ‘to sweeten the lives’ of others. They did never engage themselves in proselytization; nor did they present ‘threat to anybody’. It was resolved to a man that Parsees should be neutral in the tug-of-war among the three major communities, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. The neutral attitude of the narrator character, Lenny understood its roots in the racial psychology of the Parsees. Even the Parsees’ children, Lenny and Adi, taking the cue from their elders, shouted themselves hoarse crying, ‘Jai Hind! Jai Hind!’ Or ‘Pakistan Zindabad!’ depending on the whim or the allegiance of the principal crier. Parsees lived in harmony with the Muslims, the other minorities, Hindus and Sikhs, got uprooted from their homes and hearths and were subjected to atrocities unimaginable.

The Sikhs of Lahore, on the contrary, failed to derive peaceful terms with the Muslims. They kept on perpetuating old animosities with their policy of their
religious intolerance. Their verbal skirmishes with the Muslims reveal the fact that Sikhs' anger was aided by the complex fear of losing their religious identities. They dreaded that their community was confronting the danger of being wiped-off, erased and on the brink of total extinction. This feeling of insecurity did not make them sagacious and sane like Parsees but further aggravated the complex. Singh and Sher Singh peeved at the Muslims; at the slightest provocation and their arguments envenomed with spite, which did not behave them well. Likewise, in the novel, 'The Sikh Soldier-Saint', Master Tara Singh was very vitriolic in his attack against the Muslims in Lahore. “We will see how the Muslim swine get Pakistan! We will fight to the last man! We will show them who will leave Lahore!” (Ice 133-134).

Bapsi Sidhwa designs a pattern of communal amity among the three communities. Underlying the basic unity among the various religions of India is the Hindu Ayah and her multi-religious throng of admirers. Hindu, Muslim, Parsi characters in the novel try to impress her. They are Masseur, Yousaf, Ice-Candy Man, Sher Singh, Moti, Hari and others. As the action of the novel moves forward, the novelist reveals the composite culture of rural areas, by showing that Muslims’ “relationships with the Hindus are bound by strong ties” (Ice 56). They were dependent on each other for their existence. Sharbat Khan rightly anticipated when he said to Ayah thoughtfully: “...they are stirring up trouble for us all” (Ice 76). The novelist narrates the hollowness of the notion of two-nation theory. The division of Punjab, like the division of Bengal, was spurious because Punjabis
were 'bound by strong ties' and were dependent on one another. On seeing them the Brahmin's face expressed the whole gamut of negative feelings, "terror, passion and pain expected of a violated virgin" (Ice 116), because they could not bear the presence of an outcast, an untouchable excrescence. "Ayah was no longer only an 'all-encompassing'; as she had been but became 'a token', a Hindu" (Ice 93). "One day everybody is themselves-and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols" (Ice 93).

Sidhwa depicts Ayah who was very frugal started expecting a small fortune in joss sticks, flowers and sweets on the gods and goddesses of the temples. Imam Din and Yousaf, too, turned into extreme 'religious zealots'. Religious appeal and religious symbols were used to garner support, to arouse religious hysteria and to whip-up mass frenzy and ultimately all this resulted in disastrous consequences. The tragedies continue to be faced and systematically repressed for the feminine voice in the novel as the violence perturbs the city and catches on the lives of private women. The novelist objectively depicts the cataclysmic events. Ayah was abducted, raped and made a dancer in the Hira Mandi, the red light area of Lahore. It was a very traumatic experience for her because all this happened, but with the active complicity of Ice-Candy Man, one of her close admirers.

Though he married her later, she was 'emptied of life and despairing'. When she was sent away to India on her own accord, *Ice-Candy Man*, now 'a truly harmless fellow' and a man of refined maturity, disappeared across the Wagah
border into India leaving the land he cherished for the sake of his Hindu beloved. Lenny’s pain, however, is suggestive of her community's indifference on account of its aloofness, from the religio-political convulsion. The other nightmares foreshadowed consequences of the impending Partition and dehumanized people turning on each other in a sort of the bewildering frenzy. *Ice-Candy-Man* narrates strong women characters who want to forge their independent identity. In a patriarchal set-up, which is essentially discriminatory against women emphasizes on conditioning them for a life-long and willing subjugation to men. The women of *Ice-Candy-Man* are not only conscious of their desires, but also eagerly assertive about their independent handling of situations. Male characters, despite the fact that they initiate almost all events of the novel, remain peripheral and apathetic, lacking the will to change and transcend their circumstances.

Women characters, “subtly but effectively subvert the ingrained elements of patriarchy, privileging female will, — choice, strength along with the feminine qualities of compassion and motherhood” (Dhavan and Kapadia 177). *Ice-Candy-Man* is a feminist novel—the traditional novel eulogizes the heroic qualities of men, while in feminist narratives, women acquire such attributes by their active involvement in control of situational contexts. Lenny, the narrator in *Ice-Candy-Man* is also the centre of the novel, retaining her independent identity in diverse situations. The feminine consciousness addresses the torn-off identities and subjugated selves of the female characters in the novel; making the Partition
theme self-evidently reflective of the feminine consciousness challenging the
traditional mores of male-centric decisive decisions. Lenny’s attitude towards her
nameless cousin, significantly, portrays the feminist need for desiring enough as­
sertive equality. At this point, it shall be interesting to note that all women’s
writing may not be necessarily feminist. Feminist consciousness strives to look at
the traumatic conditions of women, facing deadly marginalization, reshuffling
their identities in the wake of the violent challenges. Truly, men compelled women
to suffer for their decisions of Partition.

A piece of writing which justifies, propagates or perpetuates discrimination
against women cannot be grouped as feminist. Only that artistic work which
sensitizes its readers to the practices of subjugation and opposes them can be
treated as being feminist in nature. Feminine consciousness probes on the levels of
the dehumanization process at work, caused though the significant change in the
view of Partition. *Ice-Candy Man* probes patriarchal norms engendering a
discriminatory social climate, but also portrays the struggles against them, as well
as the desire to manifest an assertive self-will on the part of its women characters.
Lenny, the key witnesses of the novel registers the barbaric cruelties of the
Partition days, including the inhuman commodification of women. Yet, what
clearly emerges as the dominant note/thematic motif in the novel is not the
victimization of women, but their will and sustained effort to fight against it and
overcome it.
Most of the other Partition novels in English, as well as in other languages, have concentrated largely on the helplessness of women pitched against the oppressive male forces. There are many popular genres to suggest the popularity of the Partition category in literature and visual culture. The familiar names are Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* in English, Jyotir-nioye Devi's *Epar Ganga*, *Opar Ganga* in Bangla, Yashpal's *Jhootha Sach* in Hindi, and the short stories of Saadat Hasan Manto and Kishan Chander in Urdu.

These works highlight the trauma that women had to undergo during the tumultuous times of Partition. It is a commonly held belief that the narrative design by the contemporary writers on the Partition of India has invited response from the neutral third-person perspective. Innovative designs like linear-time sequencing for relating the depth of the Partition event show the incidents related to it at the most microscopic levels.

Shauna Singh Baldwin in *What the Body Remembers* talks about the mutilation of woman's body and its impact on the collective gender memory. It is another attempt at the process of dehumanization at work on the onslaught of the human memory and the characters facing their disturbed lives remembering the Partition. Sidhwa's clever juxtaposition of images and an underlying ironical humor without compromising with the innate independence of women is almost clear in her fiction.
Lenny is a handicapped girl representing a miniscule minority. She is also free from the effect of social conditioning most of the Indian girls have to undergo. She is a young, curious and vivacious child, eager to know what is happening around her and participating in it vigorously. For Lenny socio-religious divide creates in her an awareness of her own identity, but even prior to that she had become conscious of the creation of the gender, the socially accepted role of women and girls, and also of her burgeoning sexuality. Lenny is aware that her “world is compressed” (Ice 1). This awareness is greatly intensified when Col. Bharucha prophesies her future, “She’ll marry, have children-lead a carefree, happy life. No need to strain her with studies and exams” (Ice 15).

Lenny observes the gender-based relationship in the society and accepts it as a peripheral part of her experiences, without allowing it to colour her own individuality. Lenny at the tender age is able to realize the gender-ordeal. She observes how in Col. Bharucha’s clinic a woman has to discuss her child’s health through her husband (Ice 12). During her visit to Pir Pindo she notices how Khatija and Parveen, the adolescent sisters of Ranna, like the other girls in the village, already wear the responsible expressions of much older women “affecting the mannerisms of their mothers and aunts” (Ice 54). Lenny’s disciplined attire, her cropped hair along with short dresses perplex other gendered females inside the family circle. These early impressions of Lenny, presented with multiple strains of irony, humour and wit exhibit her awareness of gender stereotypes. She
is able to prospect and internalize the gender traits that also give her the chance to explore feminine consciousness and sexual difference. She perceives many differences in the personality traits and interests of men and women.

However, Lenny is neither influenced nor conditioned by her perception of gender-based social stereotypes—that she assertively retains her interests is evident in her attitude towards her Ayah, Hamida and her cousin. When Godmother prepares a meeting with Ayah, Lenny insists on accompanying her. She feels that Ayah has been wronged and ashamed by her friends and she shares her humiliation. She wants to “comfort and kiss her ugly experiences away”. (Ice 254) the beauty of the female companionship and sharing of the miseries of the other females recovers the Partition tragedy to its inner victuals. She also keeps Hamida's past a secret under the impression that, if she revealed, her mother might sack her. Her sympathy bonds her to all the women characters in the novel.

Very early in the novel, the reader notices Lenny's feminine consciousness of her own burgeoning sexuality. Her inviting background and liberal upbringing make her receptive to her early sexual stirrings. She enjoys the admiring covetous glances Ayah receives from her admirers and displays the traditional feminine smugness and coquetry. She vividly portrays the Ice-Candy-Man's toes, Ayah’s furtive glances towards Sharbat Khan and the Masseur's intimacy with Ayah.

There are many instances to prove Lenny’s internalization of the limits of gender ordeal and sexuality to suggest more generally. Her relationship with her
cousin, allowing clandestine forages into physical intimacies, shows her mental independence. During their walks to the bazaars and gardens, she irreverently points out boys and men to her cousin whom she finds attractive. She sums up her attitude, neatly, when she declares, “Maybe I don't need to attract you. You're already attracted” (Ice 220). Cousin angrily complains to Godmother, “She loves approximately half of Lahore...why can't she love me?” (Ice 232). The pressures of socially constructed gender-roles and expectations, opens the awakening of an individuality which is forcefully present in Lenny, it can be felt ill with other women characters too.

Lenny's mother belongs to the privileged economic strata of the society. She can engage several servants to look after the children and other daily chores. She is kept busy with her social obligations—entertaining guests and partying for usually passing her time. Lenny's physical handicap generates a sense of guilt in her, which often surfaces in her conversations. She says to Col. Bharucha, “It's my fault, I neglected her—left her to the care of Ayah” (Ice 16). Lenny admires her delicate beauty, but resents her “all-encompassing” motherliness. This can be seen as the bond and the feminine relationship closely tying others. Her possessive claims about her mother, learning to cope with it are all indicators of her gender-relations more particularly to her ‘self’. Her mother's voluptuous appeal generates a subtle jealousy too in her psyche: “The motherliness of Mother...How can I describe it? While it is there it is all-encompassing, voluptuous. Hurt, heartache and fear vanish...The world is wonderful, wondrous—and I perfectly fit
in it. But it switches off, this motherliness... Or, Mother's motherliness has a
universal reach. Like her involuntary female magnetism, it cannot be harnessed...
I resent this largess. As father does her unconscious and indiscriminate sex appeal.
It is a prostitution of my concept of childhood rights and parental loyalties. She is
my mother—flesh of my flesh—and Adi's. She must love only us!” (Ice 42).

Lenny is given enough personal space by her mother. Though decisively
controlling and channelizing her children's lives, she allows them to frolic around
and view life from their own standpoints. Lenny is permitted to accompany Imam
Din twice to a village Pir Pindo, her visits to parks and restaurants with Ayah are
also unchecked or uncontrolled that she wants her child to experience. She is also
able to effortlessly control the entourage of servants and run her household
effortlessly. Despite her liberated handling of children and a modern life-style, she
is very much a traditional wife, humoring constantly the wishes of her husband.
She is almost servile in her attitude towards her husband, coquettishly appeasing
him and trying to create an atmosphere of pleasant mirth around him. Lenny
skeptically looks on when her mother chatters in saccharinely sweet tones fill up
the “infernal time of Father's mute meals” (Ice 80). Most of the women writers
have hinted at the presence of an inner hollowness into their lives of women, often
shielded by the deceptively beautiful screen of their social graces and obligations.
For instance, Mrs. Sethi’s social elegance is not simply a pleasure; it is also
bondage, because herein are forced to accept their role as female.
Centrality of the novel's discussion centres on Lenny's Ayah Shanta. She is a Hindu girl of eighteen and everything about her is also eighteen years old. Though she is employed with considerate masters, her condition is that of an unprotected girl whom everybody treats only as a sex object. Looking at Ayah, Lenny also becomes conscious of her sexuality: “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, marked in piety, shove aside their pretences 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” (Ice 3).

If sexuality of Lenny's mother lies hidden below the veneer of sophistication and unfulfilled longings, Ayah's appears more transparent and self-serving. She is fully aware of her sexual charm and uses it without any inhibition to fulfill her desires. She has accumulated a good number of admirers, who regularly assemble in the Victoria Garden—the Ice-Candy-Man, the Masseur, the Government House gardener, the restaurant owner, the zoo-attendant, and a knife-sharpening Pathan are her regular admirers. Lenny also learns to identify "human needs, frailties, cruelties and joys" (20), looking at these people during her outings: “I learn also to detect the subtle exchange of signals and some of the complex rites by which Ayah's admirers co-exist. Dusting the grass from their
clothes they slip away before dark, leaving the one luck, or the lady, favours. ... I escape into daydreams in which my father turns loquacious and my mother playful” (Ice 19). Ayah deploys her charm to obtain easy gains—cheap doilies, cashew nuts, extra-serving of food etc. She successfully uses her charm as a strategy of survival and manipulation until the violence of Partition reshuffles and demolishes her peaceful familiar world. Her portrayal also represents the male-exploitation of the female sexuality legitimizing the female oppression on nationalist concerns. Muccho, the sweepress, and her daughter Papoo are other female characters to name a few.

Muccho takes Papoo as her rival and saddles her with all the household chores, beating and abusing her on the slightest pretexts. Ayah and other servants constantly try to save the young child from this abuse, but often their efforts are fruitless. When, she is admitted to hospital for two weeks as she had concussion resulting of her mother's severe beating. Instead, despite this senseless maltreatment, Papoo cannot be brow-beaten into submission. She is strong and high-spirited, but as Sidhwa suggests very early in the story, "There are subtler ways of breaking people" (Ice 47). The character of Muccho suggests that women themselves are, unconsciously, bound by their cultural conditioning and saddle their daughters, with a repetitive fate, treating marriage as a panacea of all such ills. Muchoo faces the stain of discrimination and religious normalization of the ritual of marriage. The women-characters and victimization of women along with their compulsions to define their lives act according to the pre-fixed gender roles.
They also expose the patriarchal biases present as the archetypal social perceptions. Lenny, the child protagonist, recognizes these social patterns and exhibits the vivacity to transcend them. She also records the multi-faceted trauma women faced during the unsettling and devastating days of Indian Partition. The narration of the story by a girl-child ensures that the surrounding world seen through a feminine eye, refers to the marginalization of the female consciousness through legitimate structures of society culture and religion, even if they denounce the maltreatment of women largely.

Sidhwa’s novel shows 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” (Piciucco, Vol. 1, 201). Sidhwa’s feminine consciousness is an important issue in contemporary thought and has resulted in challenging the patriarchal assumptions associated with women under threat and insecurity. Partition novelists have started using varying proportions of the narrative approaches of what they have experienced; what they have discovered and what they have imagined. Gender has not debarred women from writing about a range of experiences that include the squalid and the terrifying accounts of the historical details of the Partition of India. Sidhwa is meticulous in mentioning the age of her characters. Through Lenny the fictional action of the novel and the seriousness of the narration is complicated. It is through the child's memory that the reader on guard creates a sense of impressions
that the child is capable of reminiscing. The parallel theme in the novel is the slow awakening of the child-heroine to sexuality along with pains and pleasures of the grown-up to the specific historical loss overwhelming her world. There is an element of exaggeration in all instances with regard to characterization and imagination.

The novel is a statement about a thousand different objects and these elements are held in place by the force of the writer's vision, if the vision falters, the novel collapses. Sidhwa's achievement of the artistic unity realizes that "Artistic creation is a process of synthesis; by effecting harmony in diffused elements, the artist creates a unity in diversity and imparts 'form' to the formless and the deformed" (Sethuraman 271). Her straight narration and her creativity remain more original. Sidhwa's male-characters have distinct personality traits but her women characters are not extravagant—they are ordinary, devoid of feelings, in their limited orbits they are socially active and lead only a superficial existence. Even though they are active, they are flat characters. Sidhwa's novel becomes a significant testament of a gynocentric view of reality in which the feminine psyche and experiences presented with unique freshness aplomb in reality. Sidhwa's characters remain more or less unselfconscious of the biological essentialism of their sex, they cut loose the constraints imposed by the gender which is a social construct and can, therefore be, deconstructed and which has come into existence through centuries of biased, motivated and calculated orchestration of the aggressive Patriarchal postulates.
In a “patriarchal framework, masculinity is associated with superiority whereas 'femininity is linked with inferiority, and while masculinity implies strength, action, self-assertion and domination, femininity implies weakness, passivity, docility, obedience and self-negation” (Kaur 48). Ice-Candy-Man subverts the ingrained elements of patriarchy, privileging female will, choice, strength along with the feminine qualities of compassion and motherhood. A feminist text besides a male discourse acquires specific traits that the latter is invested with the qualities of heroism, sacrifice, justice and action while generally the female protagonist remain the recipients of the male bounty and chivalry, in a feminist text. It is the woman who performs, controls and promotes the action by her active involvement and concern and in the process. Thus, she who acquires the attributes of heroism and glory.

Feminist consciousness in Sidhwa achieves her end in a subtle and complex way. Lenny's mother and Lenny's aunt play the humanitarian and heroic role of fighting for the lives and property of the Hindus. Clearing herself of Lenny's accusation that she has been helping in the communal conflagration, she says: “...We were only smuggling the rationed petrol to help our Hindu and Sikh friends to run away ... And also for the convoys to send kidnapped women, like your ayah, to their families across the border.” (Ice 242) Lenny's Godmother (one of her aunts) with the name Rodabai shines with her razor-sharp wit, her indefatigable stamina, her boundless love for Lenny, and her social commitment.
Her sense of humour, her deer-like agility, in spite of her old-age, and her power to mould, modify and order not only individuals but even the system, when she so desires, earn her respect and admiration of people around her. Besides these qualities, she is endowed with profound understanding of human existence and her wisdom is revealed when she consoles the Ayah, in the aftermath of what has been done to her: “That was fated, daughter. It can’t be undone. But it can be forgiven ... Worse things are forgiven. Life goes on and the business of living buries the debris of our pasts. Hurt, happiness... all fade impartially ... to make way for fresh joy and new sorrow. That is the way of life” (Ice 262). Godmother’s undaunted visit to the disreputable “Hira Mandi” (the area of Kotha) and the rescue of the Ayah, once she is convinced that the Ayah is being kept by force against her will, are commendable indeed.

Godmother strives to probe in her character what the feminists feel is very important for a woman to realize her individuality: the feeling of self-worth. Sidhwa wants to convey an important message, or warning that the exploitation, manipulation or the fatality of suppression of one individual by another is not confined to the male-female relationship. These can exist between female-female backed relationships as well, and become as vicious and debilitating for the victim as when a male dominates and exploits a woman. The feminists, it seems, are exposed to the dangers of replicating the Patriarchal logic and, thus, perpetuating the class of the exploiters and the exploited amongst themselves. This makes
Sidhwa's feminist credo broader, fairer and more responsive to the human condition often tracing the line and a distinct appeal for her characteristic feminine consciousness. Ice-Candy-Man is a feminist text in the true sense of the term that invokes surprise to the centre-stage with all the female protagonists. They, while on the one hand, come alive because of their realistic presentation, on the other; serve as the means of consciousness-raising among the female segment of society. Sidhwa through her extremely absorbing and interesting work seeks to contribute to the process of change that has already started all over the world; involving a reconsideration of Women's rights and the emancipation of the female subject considered to be furthered and ignored as a third-world text.

Development of feminine traits upholding feminine consciousness with female nature and carrying out the responsibilities associated with the domestic affairs are considered as the only aim for women. Patriarchal society stereotypes and ignores women as physically weak to venture into the world outside the four walls of their houses and too deficient to make important decisions. Hence, women are relegated to the domestic sphere, where they have to accept the hegemony of a male counterpart. Since ages, it has been considered that it is a woman's duty to tend house, raise children and give comfort to her family.

Lenny recognizes the biological exploitation of women as she grows. As a child, she cherishes her mother's love and her father's protection but the whole episode of the Ice-Candy-Man and Ayah destroys all her conceptions about human
love. She was shocked to perceive Ice-Candy-Man pushing his wife Ayah into the business of prostitution. Lenny concludes, "The innocence that my parents’ vigilance, the servants’ care and Godmother’s love sheltered in me, that neither Cousin’s carnal cravings, nor the stories of the violence of the riots, could quite destroy, was laid 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. To the demands of gratification and the unscrupulous nature of desire" (252).

The site of Hindu and Muslim women being raped during the riots petrifies Lenny. She watches men turning into beasts leaving no room for moral and human values. Women including Ayah were becoming prey of men. Lenny was shocked to see the human character, built of nobler materials so easily corrupted. Men were declaring superiority over each other by sexually assaulting women. Women had nothing in their favour. Ultimately, they had to bear the anguish and the consequences of the Indian Partition.

Sidhwa projects the aftermath of Partition-invited inhuman and barbaric acts against women after the riots. Her narratives deal with the farcical social behaviour, which victimizes women alone for the bodily violence and leaves them to wail with their bitter experience, which gives them a feeling of pain and sense of great loss. Lenny is shocked to see the changing attitude of men towards one another. Religious enmity easily erases the threads of friendship. She concludes: "And I became aware of religious differences. It is sudden. One day everybody is
themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols” (Ice 93). Sidhwa delivers a feminist quality to Lenny who moves forward in life despite various hindrances and obstacles. As she observes, the lives of various women around her, she understands the limitations associated with women’s lives in Patriarchal society. She is shocked to see men betraying and sexually assaulting women and exploiting them. Sidhwa as a writer encourages women to transgress the line of marginalization. Lenny’s mother is another interesting female character of the novel. As a servile homemaker, she limits her life to the four walls of her home.

Lenny’s mother reticently follows her husband, who is the decision-maker of the family. Lenny’s mother is a representative of those traditional women who as subordinates never express their desire to establish themselves as better human beings. Sidhwa seems to illustrate through Lenny that men have to dilute their ego and women have to eschew the image of the weaker sex or deprived femininity. Mindsets need to be changed in order to establish equality between the sexes. The Patriarchal society should perceive women beyond the roles of daughters, wives and mothers. Traditional male-fantasies have appropriated a particular image of women to locate their interests-submissive, servile, docile and self-abnegating. These fantasies have turned alive, as women have been meticulously trained in the patriarchal/social system to assimilate them. A big transformation is required at the social level, which would acknowledge women as human beings with souls, desires, feelings, ambitions and potentials.
Women should utilize their potentials beyond their domestic life to assert their individuality. *Ice-Candy-Man* interrogates through Lenny’s mother that women should have a specific purpose in life besides ‘domesticity’ that should be developed by them to the best of their abilities. Women need to liberate themselves from the constraints of ‘womanliness’ erasing the existing discrepancies regarding their marginalization. Torn-aside-selves of Partition have narrated the gravity of the unexpected violence shattering their feminine identities but giving an opportunity or a choice to realize the seriousness of the situation of Indian Partition that seems when looked in the present a never-ending phenomenon. Indian nationalism could resist the onslaught on their culture with idealistic pragmatism and lived-realities keeping the subject of women open for deliberation in the wider context of the society aiming for gender parity with the female subject appearing or modifying the imbalances caused due to various gender-related matters. The feminine gaze as revealed in *Ice-Candy-Man* elaborates the centrality of looking at the process of Indian Partition as a divisionary urge based on the revisionist tendency wanting desperately an immediate recovery from the rootedness of Indian Partition, narrating the universal consequences of Partition.