

Remembering Partition: Unraveling the Complexities of Collective Memory and National Memory in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*

**Dr Prakash Balikai
Mohammad Asif**

Partition of Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan, has been a significant event which changed the course of history in twentieth century. The recent scholarship in history, literature and cultural studies has focused on the artistic and testimonial evidence of the lasting suffering partition has engendered in both material terms (murder, rape, dispossession, and displacement) and psychic terms (trauma, nostalgia and the formation or suppression of collective memory). The paper directs its attention to the intricate complexities surrounding the remembrance of the partition of India in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*. It delves into the memories recounted by various characters who represent diverse religious, ethnic, and social groups affected by the partition. Additionally, the study explores the tensions, conflicts, and divergences that emerge between individual recollections and the prevailing national narrative. Given the crucial role of memory in identity construction, it becomes evident that the characters are entangled in conflicts arising from both collective and national memories. Consequently, the central focus of this paper centres on the conflict between collective and national memories. Furthermore, the research examines the plight of women who become victims not only of the memories perpetuated by the dominant nationalist narrative but also of localized collective memory.

Keywords: partition, national memory, collective memory, identity, complexities.

Introduction

Partition, in terms of Ayesha Jalal, an acclaimed Pakistani Historian describes as “the central historical event in the twentieth century South Asia”. She writes partition as “a defining moment that is neither beginning nor end. Partition continues to influence how the people and states of postcolonial South Asia envisage thus past, present and future” (Dalrymple, 2015). Sidhwa’s fictions recreate the historic incident of partition with great passion. Her fictions, particularly *Ice-Candy Man*, present the tumultuous history of partition. They include individual experiences, domestic issues and historical events through her perspective.

The psychological ramifications of partition, echoing on both cultural and personal dimensions have found their intricate resonance at the juncture where the individual intersects with the collective cultural sphere. Within this analytical framework, the partition emerges as a poignant example of cultural trauma, a term meticulously delineated by Ron Eyerman, whose research predominantly orbits African-American identity. “He bifurcates trauma into two distinct levels: the psychological experience of emotional anguish and physical trauma, and collective phenomenon of cultural trauma, characterized by a rupture in identity and meaning. This rupture, constituting a rupture in the social fabric, particularly affects groups bound by a shared cohesion” (Eyerman, 2001., p. 2). As a cultural entity, “trauma’s ramifications paradoxically encompass both the erosion of the tissues of a community, and the reshaping of collective identity and memory” (Eyerman, 2001., p. 1). Evidently, the partition of India hysteric these criteria; it inflicted an acute fracture in the social structure which had woven regional communities and group together and necessitating innovative frameworks for self-concept within the broader social context. The paper encapsulates an inquiry into how different groups memorialized and internalized partition’s memories. “It endeavours to uncover how these memories underwent integration into the cognitive scaffolding of groups identities – whether delineated by religious

orientations(Hindu, Muslim, Sikh), ethnic orientations(Punjabi, Bengali, Muhajir, Kashmir), national affiliations(Indian, Pakistan) or even gender-based distinction(male, female).” (Kabir, 2005, p. 03)

Ice-Candy Man depicts the evil done in the name of religion which is mainly encouraged by politicians in which commonplace people become the victims of the riots that happened after partition. The novel focuses on the vulnerability of human understanding and the life caused in the aftermath of the partition which has divided friends, people and neighbours. It presents different communities which were affected by partition namely the Muslim, the Hindu the Parsi and the Christian. Sidhwa has excellently fused both the historical events and memories of the communities to build a narrative representation on stories of partition, which recollects the horrors of partition. Sidhwa in her novel *The Pakistani Bride* remarks,

The earth is not easy to carve up, India required a deft and sensitive surgeon, but the British, steeped in domestic pre-occupation, hastily and carelessly butchered it. They were not deliberately mischievous-only cruelly negligent! A million Indians died. The earth sealed its clumsy new boundaries in blood as town by town, farm by farm, the border was defined. Trains carrying refugees sped through the darkness of night- Hindus going one way and Muslims the other. They left at odd hours to try to dodge mobs bent on their destruction. Yet trains were ambushed and looted and their fleeing occupants slaughtered. (*The Pakistani Bride* , 1983, pp. 14-15)

The above extract describes a clear picture of pain and suffering that people of India had undergone during partition. In her work *Women at the Borders*, Andrew Whitehead offers a sobering assessment of the partition aftermath, estimating the toll of lives lost due to the riots, massacres, and the arduous migration process to be between 200,000 and a potentially higher 600,000 casualties (Whitehead, 1999). This fracturing event not only negligently divided the land but also left an indelible mark on the social fabric of India, a theme eloquently encapsulated in the following passage:

Within the ornate halls of the Falettis Hotel, presiding as British arbiters beneath the shadow of Queen Victoria’s cultivated image,

the Radcliffe Commission doles out Indian cities as though shuffling a deck of cards. Lahore falls into Pakistan's embrace, while Amritsar aligns with India's destiny. In similar vein, Sialkot becomes part of Pakistan, and Pathankot becomes inextricably tied to India. (The Pakistani Bride , 1983, p. 140)

Echoes of this heart-wrenching division resound in *Ice-Candy Man's* sombre narration to Ayah, recounting a tragic incident: "From Gurdaspur arrives a train, yet its passengers arrive no more, victims of an unrelenting wave of brutality... Amidst the fallen, the absence of young women is conspicuous—only a pair of gunny sacks filled with the dismembered remains of women's breasts bear witness to the horror" (*Ice-Candy Man.*, 1998., p. 149). These accounts bear witness to the inhumanity and violent disturbance that characterized intercommunal strife, leading to the brutal loss of lives. The profound repercussions of such a period are powerfully encapsulated by Krishna Sobti's reflection that "partition, while difficult to erase from memory, remains dangerous to revisit" (Whitehead, 1999).

Lenny's Narration: A Cultural Memory Site of Partition.

Memories are crystallised and transmitted from one generation to the next. They are symbolic. They refer to the experience shared by different communities that may not have participated in them. According to Nora, Memory sites (*lieux de memoire*) are created by a play of memory and history. He argues that,

If we accept the most fundamental purpose of the *lieux de memoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialise the immaterial –just as if gold were the only memory of money – all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is clear that *lieux de memoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, on endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications. (Nora, 1989, p. 19)

Through the above excerpt it is very clear that, how Lenny becomes a memory site, through which Sidhwa is describing the memories associated with partition. The psychological impact of the

partition is effectively elucidated and conveyed through the lens of Lenny, a child, who happens to belong to a marginalized minority. The profound sense of remembrance is poignantly encapsulated when Lenny, accompanied by her brother Adi, wanders through the garden and observes, “Adi and I traverse from one group to another, peering into countenances beneath the white skull-caps and above ascetic beards. A disconcerting unease envelops me. Much like Hamida, I am an outsider. The familiarity we seek is conspicuously absent” (Ice-Candy Man., p. 237). The turmoil caused by the partition is laid bare as Lenny drifts aimlessly through Queen’s Garden, fruitlessly seeking out faces and acquaintances she recognizes. Even within the child, a feeling of insecurity pervades.

In her Ayah’s reassuring presence, Lenny clings to her hands, imploring her not to wed Masseur, a Muslim who holds a place among Ayah’s numerous admirers. The Masseur pledges matrimony and protection to Ayah during the tumultuous partition era. Upon overhearing this proposal, Lenny fervently beseeches Ayah to forgo marriage, recognizing that it could culminate in separation. Subsequently, when Ayah is abducted, it is Lenny who argues for her pursuit. In these instances, Lenny’s responses acutely portray the sense of dislocation instigated by the partition’s disruptive force.

As Lenny and her younger sibling, Adi, bear witness, a disquieting tableau unfolds: “the silhouette of the time-honoured fortified city illuminated by flames, its residents ensnared in a gruesome ballet of violence” (Ice-Candy Man., p. 134). The unrelenting conflagration exhibits impartiality, reducing domiciles and businesses belonging to Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in Shalmi to nothing but ashes. Overall, the quote encapsulates the tragedy of communal violence, portraying its impact on a diverse population and the shared vulnerability of humanity in the face of such destructive forces. The expanse of Shalmi, spanning a rough four square miles, becomes a canvas of detonations and radiant bursts. (Ice-Candy Man., p. 137) Amid this fiery maelstrom, fire knows no allegiance. The resounding cries of “Pakistan Murdabad! Death to Pakistan! Sat Sri Akaal; Bolay so nihaal!” reverberate through the Sikh crowds gathered at Queen’s Garden, juxtaposed with fervent shouts of “Allah-o-Akbar! Yaaa Ali! And Pakistan Zindabad!” echoing

from the plundering Muslim mobs. These rallying calls, imprinted in Lenny's memory as indelibly as the resounding roars of the zoo's lions, lay bare the corrosive aftermath of communal frenzy.

The inescapable contagion of hatred infiltrates even the most intimate bonds. The *Ice-Candy Man*, the ardent lover of the Ayah, gazes upon the fire consuming Shalmi and Mozang chowk, his visage distorted in an unsettling frenzy, an expression Lenny fervently hopes to never witness again. The transformation of a once cheerful soul, who once revelled and entertained as a court jester in the park, into a malevolent entity under the grip of communal fervour is vividly disclosed through Lenny's horror at the sadistic expression etched onto his features. This visceral depiction stands as a stark symbol, a perpetual reminder of the era's unforgiving brutality. Sidhwa's skilful treatment of partition theme is cleverly accomplished through subtle insinuations, evocative imagery, and understated gestures. This narrative approach resonates throughout the vivid portrayal of the horrors of loss, bloodshed, and estrangement, all without yielding to verbosity, sensationalism and sentimentality. The nuanced depiction of partition's traumatic realities intensifies the event's poignancy and cruelty, while simultaneously sidestepping the pitfalls of pedantry or pretension.

Sidhwa precisely employs allegory as a vehicle for conveying the agonising trauma of partition. The voice of the child narrator, Lenny, is not immune to the harsh violence engulfing Lahore: "The entire world seems to be ablaze. The scorching air against my skin feels as though it could ignite my very flesh and clothes. Panic takes hold, prompting unrestrained screams and uncontrollable sobs" (*Ice-Candy Man.*, p. 137). The scenes of rampant chaos, unrelenting fires, and perhaps most piercingly, the malicious animosity emanating from individuals who once shared harmonious bonds and, just month's prior, dismissed violence as unlikely, leave an indelible scar on Lenny's consciousness. It is an evocative reminder of how violence breeds further violence, entrapping even the innocent. Her turmoil finds its expression in her collection of dolls. With a near-frenzied intensity, she takes decisive action: "I single out a corpulent, bloated celluloid doll. Inverting it, I wrench its limbs apart. The once elastic connections now yield easily. As I release one leg, it recoils, attaching itself to the

fragile torso” (Ice-Candy Man., p. 138). Lenny’s overwhelming impulse is a reflection of her own vulnerability to the primal forces of violence, a microcosm of the societal turmoil of partition. With perceptive insight, Sidhwa reveals through allegory the fragility of the human psyche and its susceptibility to the consuming chaos of communal violence. Lenny’s overwhelming guilt, her tears after her own act of senseless violence against the doll, becomes a clarion call from the author—a stark reminder that without critical introspection and a concerted effort to reshape the collective mind-set, the legacy of brutality and insensitivity will persist as an enduring legacy of communal strife.

Division of Social Fabric and Rupture of Identities

Within the context of the Holi festival, where vibrant colours once adorned friends, the sombre image is now painted with the blood. Sidhwa precisely emphasises the human loss and migration by the Partition:

Contrarily, it is a torrent of Muslim refugees that floods Lahore—sweeping relentlessly across the Punjab’s western Lahore. In a mere three months, a staggering seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs are displaced, marking the most formidable and lamentable episode of population displacement in recorded history (Ice-Candy Man., p. 159)

These stark facts unveil the chilling horrors of this unparalleled communal division. Sidhwa’s narrative effectively reveals the inexorable trajectory of the partition, a force that relentlessly marches forth, rendering even the rational and amicable powerless and impotent. A stark illustration of this helplessness is presented through Jagjeet Singh and his surreptitious group of Sikhs, who, under the cover of night, visit the Muslim village Pir Pindo to alert them about an impending Akali onslaught. Yet, at the crack of dawn, Pir Pindo falls prey to a deluge of Sikh attackers, resulting in the tragic demise of men, women, and children. Likewise, Sikh families within Lahore are targeted. Mr Singh and his wife, neighbours of the Sethis, hastily depart with their two children and a limited selection of belongings, leaving Lenny’s parents to safeguard their remaining possessions. The attendant of

the zoo, Sher Singh, flees the city due to escalating insecurity after his brother-in-law's demise. Simultaneously, the tightly-knit community of King Edward's Medical College is disrupted. Prakash and his family embark on a migration to Delhi, while Rahool Singh and his sisters are escorted within a convoy route to Amritsar. The very fabric of Lenny's home undergoes transformation: the gardener Hari's religious identity is altered through circumcision, transforming him into Himat Ali, and Moti becomes David Masih—a testament to the politics of compromise and survival. The haunting discovery of Ayah's lover, the Masseur, dead and mutilated within a gunny sack, stands as a symbol of brutal fate. The money lender Kirpa Ram flees, abandoning both wealth and prosperity. Even families of modest means, such as the Shankers, hastily flee. The Partition is depicted in a sequence of vivid images and events, each encapsulating profound human loss and torment. The unsettling rupture of established lives is strikingly illuminated through Lenny's realization of Lahore's shifting demographics: "Lahore is suddenly stripped of yet another venerable dimension: Brahmins adorned with caste-marks—and Hindus donning traditional dhotis and bodhis—are absent. Instead, hordes of Muslim refugees loom" (Ice-Candy Man., p. 175). Lahore's cosmopolitan tapestry unravels, bereft even of Sikh presence. The child-narrator perceives the profound chasm and anguish borne from the colossal exchange of populations. These instances describe how the partition stark brutality left an indelible mark on both the geographical and human landscapes.

The Queen's Park in Lahore, a hallowed space where companions and associates had engaged in interminable discourse regarding the implausibility of violence and the notion of abandoning their homeland, metamorphoses into an ironic image. While their elders—figures like the Masseur, Butcher, Ice-Candy-Man, Sher Singh, and Ayah—partake in discussions about national politics, the discerning child-narrator detects a subtle transformation in the days preceding partition: "I struggle to articulate it, yet an imperceptible shift has indeed occurred within the precincts of Queen's Garden." (Ice-Candy Man., p. 97) A shift away from shared companionship becomes conspicuous, as individuals deliberately congregate along communal and religious lines, embracing their respective identities. The Brahmin community

establishes its exclusive enclave, juxtaposed with a distinct grouping comprising Muslim women adorned in burkhas along with their children. Lenny astutely notes the poignant reality that even children, typically devoid of such divisions, are now refraining from intermingling during playtime. An endeavour to engage with Sikh children is impeded by the intervention of the Masseur, and subsequent interactions with Sikh women reveal the pervasive nature of segregation. Lenny's acknowledgement of her Parsi affiliation provokes astonishment, a revelation that unintentionally unveils the deep-seated gap between communities. In this moment, Lenny acutely comprehends the division that has insidiously crept between once-unified groups. Articulating her epiphany, she reflects, "That's when the epiphany strikes me. The Sikhs, with their boisterous young boys sporting topknots, are chiefly congregating amongst themselves" (Ice-Candy Man., p. 96). This microcosmic portrayal at Queen's Garden offers a poignant mirror to the broader reality prevailing in Lahore and across Indian cities—a consolidation of sentiments that breed communal divisions.

Within the existing atmosphere of escalating communalism, rationality capitulates to the prevailing insanity. Ordinary individuals lose their capacity for reasoned judgment, with Ice-Candy-Man's emotional turmoil serving as a stark illustration: "I will confront you directly—I confess to relinquishing my sanity when my mind turns to those mutilated bodies aboard the Gurdaspur-bound train... That fateful night, I descended into madness, and I flung grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs whom I had known my entire life! I harboured an abhorrence for their very essence" (Ice-Candy Man., p. 156). Sidhwa's narrative describes about the harsh course of communal vehemence, illuminating how narrowness, once harmless, can multiply into indifference, and ultimately evolve into disdain—a potent breeding ground for prejudice and the eruption of communal violence. Against the backdrop of a society steeped in intolerance, the gradual erosion of sanity among regular individuals stands as a stark testament to the unsettling power of communal frenzy.

The Role of Rumours in Inflicting Violence

The turbulent feelings of communal vehemence exhibit a profound transformative impact on individuals, stimulating emotions of suspicion, doubt, and vulnerability to rumour. Even the youngest, like Lenny, Adi, and their cousin, find themselves entwined in a web of curiosity and skepticism, keenly attuned to even the most minor deviations from the norm. This is perceptibly evident in Mrs. Sethi and Aunt Minnie's expeditions across Lahore in their automobile, deliberately excluding the children from their journeys. Bereft of the customary extended drives, Lenny and her cousin become captivated by the secret undertakings of their mothers. Adding to this enigma, Ayah contributes an air of intrigue by disclosing that the car's trunk harbours an assemblage of petrol cans. The narrative dexterously illustrates how an atmosphere fraught with tension and volatility inevitably stimulates suspicion and scepticism.

Ayah herself, imbued with this prevailing atmosphere, becomes apprehensive about the movements of petrol cans orchestrated by two Parsi women. While she refrains from explicitly conjecturing that these cans are being dispensed to fuel the flames of arson, the mere notion of such a possibility underscores the palpable atmosphere of mistrust. The reactions of the three children are emblematic of this prevailing paranoia, with their imagination running rampant. Their collective deduction is unequivocal: "We are privy to the identity of the malefactors. It is our own mothers who are instigating the fire in Lahore! My heart shudders at the impending condemnation that will befall their souls. My knees tremble under the weight of the impending horror of their imminent apprehension" (Ice-Candy Man., p. 173). In this manner, the narrative captures the transformative power of communal hysteria, illustrating how ordinary lives can be distorted and metamorphosed within the crucible of suspicion and mistrust. Through the prism of the children's bewildered perception, the author underscores the pervasive sense of foreboding that permeates a society gripped by the grip of a fervent and volatile communal atmosphere.

Sidhwa satirises to illuminate the children's suspicions and distrust toward their mothers. While Lenny, Adi, and their cousin's

imaginary apprehensions provide a source of humour, they simultaneously serve as a sombre reflection of how baseless rumours can become deeply ingrained within a charged environment. These whimsical conjectures remain confined to the realm of fantasy for the children. However, the author skilfully demonstrates how, in an environment poisoned by communal animosity, such baseless fabrications can prey upon the fevered minds of individuals. The present theme is further underscored by the insidious role rumours play in the narrative.

The radio broadcasts news of turmoil in Gurdaspur, immediately prompting the Ice-Candy Man and his companions to interpret it as “uncontrolled carnage unfolding in Gurdaspur” (Ice-Candy Man., p. 148). Subsequent rumours describe a train laden with lifeless bodies’ route from Gurdaspur to Lahore. The Ice-Candy Man, returning from a breathless bicycle ride, further exacerbates the climate of horror. His account, rife with tales of unspeakable acts perpetrated against women, paints a horrid image where the deceased are exclusively Muslim. As these narratives take hold, the acquaintances of Queen’s Garden internalize these distortions, fostering a desire for retribution against Sikhs. The long-standing friend, Sher Singh, finds himself the unfortunate target of their newfound animosity, forcing him to flee Lahore.

Sidhwa’s narrative showcases how the toxic propagation of rumours, coupled with an atmosphere dominated by communal hatred, can shape perceptions, amplify divisions, and drive individuals to drastic actions. The seamless transition from imaginative apprehensions to communal upheaval serves as a stark reminder of the potent and destructive force that misinformation wields within a troubled societal context.

Parsi Paradox: Exploring Memory and Identity

The partition’s traumatic aftermath posed substantial challenges for the Parsi community, compelling Sidhwa to meticulously portray the intricate process of reevaluation and reestablishment amid the upheaval of religious discord. The era of partition plunged the Parsis into a profound crisis, marked by the culmination of British rule

and the ascendancy of conservative nationalist forces, which dampened their aspirations for recalibration. Eminent scholar Madhu Jain delves into the predicament faced by the Parsis, articulating it as a quandary of allegiance—Whom do they align themselves with? The advent of imminent independence amplifies the Parsi community’s pervasive paranoia, a facet magnified by their status as a marginalized minority. A special congregation of Parsis in Lahore, convened within the precincts of their temple hall on Warris Road, epitomizes their unease. The discourse during the Parsi assembly uniquely mirrors their sense of insecurity, arising not solely from communal discord but, rather, from the apprehension of their stature once British governance dissipates. Within this discourse emerges Dr. Col. Bharucha, a Parsi physician responsible for Lenny’s care. His reproach of a Muslim parent for neglecting his child’s welfare and attributing the prevalence of polio to the British bears testimony to the charged sentiments of the era. The present episode serves to encapsulate the complex sentiments of the time, reflecting a community grappling with the juxtaposition of their loyalty to British rule and an uncertain allegiance to Indian independence. Col. Bharucha, the domineering Pariocotr and the president of the Parsi Anjuman cautioned his community as,

We must tread carefully... We have served English faithfully, and earned their trust... So, we have proposed! But we are the smallest minority in India... Only one hundred and twenty thousand in the whole world. We have to be extra wary, or we’ll be neither here nor there... We must hunt with the hounds and run with the hare! (Ice-Candy Man., p. 16)

The present episode highlights the Parsi community’s robust sense of self-preservation and a heightened awareness of their numerical diminutiveness. Their historical role in the struggle for freedom remains indelible yet is shaded by an unfortunate absence within the official historical discourse, owing to deliberate historical manipulations. It provides profound insights into the conundrums of identity, loyalty, and survival amidst the tumultuous backdrop of partition-era India.

The freedom movement presented a conundrum akin to T.S. Eliot’s “Prufrockian dilemma” as articulated by Col. Bharucha, who

judiciously discerned the significance of the struggle for independence. The predicament entailed a precarious decision about whom to align with, driven by the realization that their numerical minority might render them overlooked by both Hindus and Muslims, thus potentially resulting in their isolation. While the Parsis had garnered loyalty from the British, it was apparent that the imperial power's dominance might be challenged by the forces of independence. Simultaneously, religious affiliations compounded the predicament, as Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs all fervently asserted their rights, prompting profound contemplation of the very notion of a cohesive nation.

Col. Bharucha's prudential admonition, encapsulated in the vivid metaphor "look before they leap," epitomizes a cautious awareness of the Parsi community's precarious predicament. He offers a counsel, advocating for a judicious navigation of the shifting currents of political allegiance. The discussions within the Parsi enclave mirror these concerns, revealing a palpable anxiety regarding potential subordination to the prevailing religious majorities which is greatly visible in this quote

If we're stuck with the Hindus, they'll swipe out business under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargain: if we stuck with the Muslims they'll convert us by sword! And God help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs! (Ice-Candy Man., p. 37)

As the community contemplates its stance, Col. Bharucha expounds upon the Parsi's historical trajectory, recounting their diasporic separation from Persia and their subsequent assimilation within a diverse cultural tapestry. The historical narrative resonates with the complexities of cultural hybridity as articulated by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. The Parsis, once celebrated for their ability to straddle multiple cultural worlds, now find themselves confronting the potential erosion of these very attributes due to the impending political upheaval.

The discourse within the hallowed precincts of the fire temple on Warris Road serves as an intellectual crucible, wherein Sidhwa skilfully dissects the quintessential consciousness of the Parsi community. The intellectual deliberation presents an insightful portal

into the multifaceted personality traits of the Parsis, revealing them as cultural amalgams that adroitly negotiate linguistic nuances, traditional practices, and political loyalties. The sociological exposition underscores the intricate dynamics of coexistence, where two distinct cultures intermingle yet retain their individual identities. Sidhwa's narrative stands not only as an incisive mirror capturing the multifaceted socio-political rhythms of her own community, but also as a repository of collective memory, echoing the complex tapestry of challenges woven into the fabric of a society tackling with transformative upheaval.

Women as Victims of Memory: Exploring Violence on Bodies

Scholars in the realm of feminist historiography have meticulously documented the disturbing spectrum of sexual atrocities inflicted upon women of Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities during the tumultuous epoch of the partition. The brutality encompassed acts of “stripping; parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia with triumphal slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the wombs; raping, of course; killing fetuses” (Menon, 2013', p. 43). Beyond these horrors, another insidious form of violence, previously obscured but significantly entrenched within the indelible cultural memory of the partition, emerges – the pre-emptive sacrifice of women orchestrated by their families to safeguard familial and communal honour. Menon and Bhasin illuminate the prevailing conviction that safeguarding a woman's honour is indispensable for upholding male and communal honour, spawning an entirely new level of violence. This violence is enacted by men against their own kin, and by women against their own progeny, underscoring the profound sway of this belief (Menon, 2013', p. 44). As attested by survivors, women, and often young children, endured fates of being “poisoned, strangled or burnt to death put to the sword, drowned” (Menon, 2013', p. 45). It is revealed that women frequently inflicted harm upon themselves and their daughters through immolation, shooting, or strangulation. A more harrowing reality unfolds as women resorted to ingesting opium and consuming crushed glass. These are the departed souls with whom the purview of this paper is intimately concerned. An inquiry arises: who amplifies the voices of these silenced victims? How have their tragic demises been imbued with significance

within the narratives of kinship, community, governance, and national identity, and particularly within the domain of feminist discourse?

Elaine Scarry proposes that one way injury's erasure from view occurs is via re-description. She posits, that re-description can be perceived as an intensified form of omission: instead of excluding the fact of bodily harm, the fact itself is included and actively nullified as it intertwines with spoken language or inscribed text (Scarry, 1985, p. 69). Illustrating these theories through her work *Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa portrays the abduction of Ayah by a mob orchestrated by Ice-Candy-Man. In this distressing sequence, Ayah's limbs are stretched taut, her feet dragged, her expression distorted into a silent scream, and her attire torn and strained. The mob's triumphant appearances are etched in stark contrast against the grotesque strides of Ayah's plight. (*Ice-Candy Man.*, pp. 182-83)

The mob led by the Ice-Candy-Man, subjects Ayah to abduction, subsequent forced prostitution, and eventual marriage. She is compelled to convert to Islam and assume the name Mumtaz. What's more, those who once revered and admired her are now the violators of her honour. Reduced to the ignominious station of a prostitute and a captive of the Ice-Candy-Man, Ayah becomes a vessel for the debauchery of inebriated individuals, peddlers, sahibs, and malefactors, with Dilnawaz's complicity. The traumatic episode devastates Shanta's existence, yet her indomitable spirit perseveres. Despite her dire circumstances, she strives to liberate herself from Dilnawaz's clutches. Through multifarious techniques, Sidhwa seeks to convey the individual's profound helplessness in the aftermath of such traumatic circumstances. The partition era witnesses various religious factions resorting to acts of vengeance against one another, manifesting in the violation and abduction of women from opposing communities as a means to settle scores.

Butalia and other scholars in the feminist discourse have meticulously illuminated the underlying reasons why women, akin to the fictional character Ayah, were tragically and recurrently subjected to violence during partition. A myriad of women endured the traumatic suffering of abduction and rape by individuals of different religious

affiliations both before and after the partition. The agonizing phenomenon wasn't solely orchestrated by organized violent groups, but rather ordinary men who had hitherto coexisted peacefully with their Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh neighbours. In an appalling testament to the depths of hostility, women became targets of rape as a means of demeaning and shaming the other. Akin to Elaine Scarry's assertion in *The Body in Pain*, the notion that "what is remembered in the body is well remembered" (Scarry, 1985, p. 109) is evident here, as she endeavours to shed light on the "political identity of the body" (Scarry, 1985, p. 109). The identity, she contends, is imbibed unconsciously and seamlessly, deeply ingrained within the body's very fabric from an early stage. It's not merely externally imposed; it also emanates from within, as the body's rhythms and postures reflect the particular temporal and spatial context it occupies.

Women, as outlined by Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon, assumed symbolic roles of transgressing boundaries, encompassing realms of social, cultural, and political transgressions. Their violation, being synonymous with the defilement of the nation's purity, emerged as a dire threat to the perceived sanctity. Sangeeta Roy delves into the nexus between purity mandates and the nation, highlighting how violence against women served to reinforce this connection. Roy elucidates how the female body becomes a conduit for the sexual economy of desires often denied, accentuating the complex intersections between ethnicity, religion, and gender within the nation's narrative. The distressing inevitability of rape coerces women into the tragic choice of self-destruction, rendering them part of the nation's tale as legitimate yet deceased citizens. Survivors of rape are subjected to exclusion from the sanctum of the new nation's domestic sphere, as their tainted status disrupts the parallel between family purity and national purity, which highlights the narrativity of the nation (Roy, 2000., p. 04).

The scholarship refrains from scrutinizing the reasons behind the gendered communal hostility directed at women's bodies. Instead, it meticulously examines how women's bodies are transformed into favoured sites for the inscription of power dynamics that permeate everyday domestic life. The discourse critiques the undue emphasis

on chastity, synonymous with honour, and the socially proscribed interactions that led to the abandonment of women who were either abducted or violated during the tumultuous communal conflicts (Debali, 2017., p. 32).

The horrendous maltreatment endured by women and children amid the pangs of communal fervour starkly exposes a gender divide that surpasses even the fervour of racial fundamentalism. As encapsulated by Lenny's poignant utterance, "One man's religion is another man's poison" (Ice-Candy Man., p. 117), this turmoil illuminated the stark reality that religious fervour can incite acts of unparalleled brutality. Disturbingly, women often became the tragic casualties, compelled to bear the heavy weight of communal violence's ramifications. Distinctly, their plight encompassed the horrifying spectre of suicide as a response to the profound shame thrust upon them. In other instances, self-inflicted death was viewed as a desperate measure to pre-empt the potential execution by their male kin, who believed that the honour of the family could only be purged through their sacrifice. A stark embodiment of this distressing reality is seen through Ayah's harrowing ordeal: abducted and subjected to brutal gang rape, she resolutely refuses to perceive herself as less pure due to this horrific violation. Upon her liberation from Dilnawaz's clutches, she embarks on a journey to India, fuelled by the conviction that her identity extends beyond the confines of mere symbolism attributed to women's bodies within religious and national contexts.

Ayah's determined spirit and self-awareness underscore her intention to reunite with her family, a prospect she holds optimistically. Yet, heartrendingly, the suffering of women such as Lenny's Ayah Shanta and Hamida echoes with a sombre truth – the grim fact that their reintegration into their families was often denied. Deemed as "fallen women," they were cast aside, bearing the brunt of blame for the heinous crimes committed against them. A conversation between Lenny and her Godmother encapsulates this tragedy, where societal norms dictate that women who have been violated are perceived as tainted, rendering their acceptance back into their families a complex and often unattainable goal (Ice-Candy Man., p. 267).

The tragedy of women during the partition era was compounded by their role as vessels of familial honour. The disturbing reality emerges that many women were coerced into ending their own lives, not by their own volition, but due to emotional manipulation by their families. Thus, within the crucible of partition's disturbing chaos, women's bodies emerged as the embodiment of both oppression and marginalization, victims of the simmering rage and frustration of opposing factions. Sidhwa's narrative deftly navigates this reality, portraying the battleground of religious conflict as inscribed upon women's bodies. This exploitation of women's bodies becomes a pressing national concern, as noted by Menon and Bhasin, who highlight the violation of women's sexuality through abduction, forced conversion, and impermissible cohabitation. The question of how to navigate the troubling landscape of women's sexuality becomes an intricate facet of this larger discourse on communal violence and its harrowing consequences.

Conclusion

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man* serves as a compelling literary canvas that captures the multifaceted dimensions of communal violence and its devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities during the tumultuous era of partition. *Ice-Candy Man* elucidates the stark reminder of the lasting scars left by communal violence and the importance of acknowledging the shared history of pain and suffering. Sidhwa's exploration of memory illustrates how national narratives can suppress individual voices and painful truths, leading to an incomplete understanding of history. The tension between personal memories and the nation's attempts to commemorate its past underscores the complexity of memory's role in shaping identity, both on an individual and collective level. By delving into the intimate lives of characters caught in the maelstrom of partition, the novel transcends its fictional boundaries and offers a poignant commentary on the complex interplay of identity, violence, and memory in shaping the course of history. As we revisit the lessons of the past, Sidhwa's narrative stands as a call to embrace empathy, challenges prevailing narratives, and work towards a more equitable and harmonious future

Works Cited:

- Dalrymple, W. (2015, June 22). Retrieved from The New Yorker: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>
- Debali, M. L. (2017.). *Literature, Gender and the Trauma of Partition: the Paradox of Independence*. . New Delhi. : Routledge. .
- Eyerman, R. (2001.). *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*. Cambridge.: Cambrigde University Press.
- Kabir, A. J. (2005). Gender, Memory and Trauma: Women's Novels on The Partition of India. *Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East.*, 25(01), 177-190.
- Menon, R. B. (2013'). *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*. Cambridge.: Cambridge University of Press.
- Nora, P. (1989). Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire. *Representations.*, 7-24. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2928520>.
- Roy, S. (2000.). *En-Gendering India*. Durham.: Duke University Press.
- Scarry, E. (1985). *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York.: Oxford University of Press.
- Sidhwa, B. (1983). *The Pakistani Bride*. Gurgaon : Penguin Random House .
- Sidhwa, B. (1998.). *Ice-Candy Man*. Gurgao.: Penguin Random House.
- Whitehead, A. (1999). Women at the Borders. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India by Urvashi Butalia: Borders and Boundaries, Women in India's Partition by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin*, 308-312. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4289621>.

Dr. Prakash Balikai

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Central University of Karnataka

Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India

Pin: 585367

Ph: +91 9449327042

Email: prakashbalikai@cuk.ac.in

ORCID: 0009-0004-5708-0774

&

Mohammad Asif

Research Scholar

Department of English

Central University of Karnataka

Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India

Pin: 585367

Ph: +91 6362201868

Email: 20dpeng06@cuk.ac.in

ORCID: 0009-0003-1632-3859