

Sethe is ostracized from her "black family" because of the murder of her own child. In the eyes of the society this is an unpardonable offence. The female community especially, rejects Sethe in her motherhood the moment she takes the handsaw into her hands (Payant 1993: 200). Women who perform the role of mothers within the community, consider the act of killing one's child an inevitable exclusion from *the mothers'* rubric. Yet, in *Becoming and Bonding*, Katherine B. Payant accounts for Morrison's assertive point of view regarding "the dark side of the community." In her opinion "the community members refuse to recognize their complicity in the death of the baby." Payant assumes that the same pride that allowed Sethe commit the crime was a reason for the community's passive conduct and prevented them from warning Sethe of the slavers' approaching.

In order to construct and reconstruct identity and selfhood, the revision of one's actions have to work both ways. Such decision allows Sethe to preserve her community, and conversely, gives a second chance to the community to protect its member by "performing" its empowering force once more. Performance as 'restored behavior' or 'twice-behaved behavior'... requires repetition, but repetition with a difference" (qtd. In Kella 2000: 148). Although "repetition" indicates a monotonous movement, the stressed "with a difference" marks a new era for the community as a whole. Due to its revision of the once assigned communal role, the recognition of its uniqueness and, therefore, revival of the collective identity is at hand.

Interestingly, "being a mother" that unites women to act, is the very aspect that allows them to reject Sethe in the first place. In their mentality, Sethe's infanticide is an action against the law of nature. Killing her own child ostracizes her not only from the black community, but most of all, from the range of mothers. This way Morrison challenges the traditional definition of motherhood. All the more understandable seems Sethe's refusal to be defined as "a breeder." This fact condemned her in the eyes of the female part of the community. Unable to put aside their pride, they refrain from warning Sethe of the masters' approach. At the same time, they withhold the communal embrace, which marks a turning point for both, Sethe and the community. Consequently, Sethe's revision of her actions is not sufficient to heal the past. To gain the feeling of wholeness there is a need for compassion on the part of the society. Yet, it is not until the community re-examines its actions, that recognition of collective identity is feasible.

Therefore, one can arrive at the conclusion that social as well as individual well being and healing is deeply rooted in the female community. Through *re-memory* women can finally come to understand "the historical circumstances that have limited their own potential" as mothers, which is exemplified by Sethe's eerie choice to kill her child. "This here Sethe talked about safety with a handsaw... more important

than what Sethe had done was what she claimed" (*Beloved* 1997: 164). Despite the community's instability, that was hopefully temporal, women found in their uniting a succour to keep the community together as one whole. Through *restored* behavior the possibility to re-gain an empowered identity appears achievable. This must be substantially observed that not until Sethe is freed *by* and *into* the community of women, can she finally claim liberation to herself. Sethe's rebirth into the communal bounds is accepted thanks to the community's regeneration. Through *re-building* a union with Sethe's family, the black community affirms its true function. Therefore, apart from Sethe's *individual* recognition and self-assertion as a free person, her emancipation should also be termed as a cornerstone in the process of the affirmation of *collective* identity.

Indeed, *Beloved* is an exquisite example of the journey to self-reliance on a *societal* as well as *individual* plain. Here, the black society is given a chance to play a significant role in formulating individual identity of the main female protagonists, Sethe and Denver. In fact, reciprocity does exist in the process of self-assessment and affirmation of one's identity. Therefore, much as the society identity depends on the individual, the self-valuation of an individual owes predominantly to the community's agency. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of self-definition is it on social plain or personal level should be defined as a quest for *subjectivity*. It is a rejection of being *the defined*, and a claim to be given the right *to define*. Such metamorphosis forms a significant aspect for the growth of the future African-American posterity. Thus, the role of an individual, as well as collective struggle for self-affirmation contributes greatly to historical legacy. What constitutes the very foundation of an African-American heritage is the historical burden of slavery and the struggle of black people to gain self-esteem.

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Theme of Pseudo-Neutrality in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*

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Abstract

The theme of Partition in Modern Indian English novels has been in limelight since its inception. Some of the famous Modern Indian English writers have presented the theme of Partition with the minutest detail in their novels. Amrita Pritam, Attia Hosain, Manohar Malgaonkar, Amitav Ghosh, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal and Bapsi Sidhwa are some of the prominent writers. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* presents the story of Independence leading to partition with a feminist point of view. It also propagates the message of undying love for the humanity. It decries the cult of violence in any form and on any pretext. It holds in rejection the oft proclaimed policy of neutrality and non-alignment. To Bapsi Sidhwa the said policy represents a pseudo- concept. In fact man is a victim of different passions. So most of his actions are the outcome of his different passions. Only a man who has succeeded in curbing his passions to the point of extinction can talk of neutrality in his life which this paper mainly deals with.

Keywords: Partition, communal frenzy, adaptability and equidistance

Among the Post Partition novelists Bapsi Sidhwa occupies a remarkable position. At the time of Partition, she lived in the territory of Lahore (Pakistan). During the Post-Partition era she shifted to the USA where she kept herself busy with vocations like teaching and writing. She has represented Pakistan at the 1975 Asian Women's Congress. Her novels, *The Crow Eaters* (1980), *The Pakistani Bride* (1983) and *Ice Candy Man* (1988), are experimentations with an aim to achieve artistic synthesis.

"Sidhwa's Ice- Candy Man examines the inexorable logic of partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism sparked by hardening communal attitudes" (Kapadia, 75) As a woman novelist she is second to Attia Hosain who is known for her famous novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) on the theme of partition. Attia Hosain an Indian writer was born and educated in Lucknow. Along with her liberal English education, she absorbed the courtly values and traditions of her aristocratic Muslim family, and studied Persian and Arabic as well as her native Urdu. Hosain moved to Britain in 1947 like Bapsi Sidhwa and worked for many years for the BBC. She has held considerable influence on Indo- Anglican fiction, and her work is admired for its lyrical prose and its carefully delineated social, historical and political perspectives. Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* deals with a young woman's personal crisis set against the larger historical background of communal hatred. This novel sharply brings out

the undergoing change, the individual life suffers a change just as the country's political situation changes. It shows that one change goes hand in hand with another. On the other hand, Laila the narrator- heroine, revolts against the traditional values of her family and continues to grow and change. Similarly, the country also revolts against its rulers and undergoes a drastic change.

“Both narrator – heroines, Lenny in *Ice Candy Man* and Laila in *Sun Light on a Broken Column*, react against communal responses to the horror of violence. The mature Laila rationalizes against communal tension whereas the young Lenny instinctively reacts against the horror of Communal violence”. (Kapadia,41)

This novel for the first time, introduces a feminine and Muslim perspective into the Indian English partition narratives. It is, however, one of the few novels, “where the partition of India is presented as the enormous event it was, and the narrator being a Muslim, the issues of loyalty, idealism and expediency are brought out with a special significance”. (Mukherjee, 53) The story of the three generations provides the author with a big enough canvas to build up the various shades of the socio-political reality. The novel is thus a good attempt showing the better fruits of the great freedom movement. Both of the women novelists have dealt with the theme of partition in almost similar perspective. Their novels record in a lively manner the vulnerability of human understanding and life. It seems, the tragedy of the partition caused due to the absence of proper understanding of right religious spirit among the people of the United India. The Partition of the country on religious grounds drew a dividing line between friends, families, lovers and neighbours.

Ice- Candy Man is known for its broad fictional canvass. Its characters are taken from different communities in Lahore. There are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsees, so a multiple perspective of the partition emerges as viewed by all the affected communities. Bapsi Sidhwa uses a narrator to tell the tale. An eight year old Parsee girl with a handicapped foot narrates the story of her changing world with sophistication and wonder in the novel. Lenny represents the persona that Chaucer adopts in his prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, rendering credibility by being almost a part of the reader's consciousness. With the wonder of a child she observes social change and human behaviour, notices interesting sidelights, seeks and listens to opinions and occasionally makes judgements. Her childish innocence is like the seeming naïve display of Chaucer's persona, a source of sharp irony . The device of the child narrator enables Bapsi Sidhwa to treat a historical moment as horrifying as the partition without morbidity, pendentism or censure. The highlight of the novel is that the author throughout maintains a masterful balance between laughter and despair.

Sidhwa uses Col. Bharucha to reveal the theme of her novel. While attending on a Muslim child he asks certain thing about it. But the Muslim

man is not able to give the intended reply. Her wife replaces him and answers Col. Bharucha's query. This annoys him. He roars at the Muslim man and doubts his competence to run his house. Sarcastically he asks how he would govern the country when he was not able to take care of his house properly: Are you a father or a barber? And you all want Pakistan! How will you govern a country when you don't know what goes on in your house?" (12) . After examining Lenny, Col. Bharucha accuses the British of carrying polio in India. In a harsh tone he yells out: " If anyone is to blame, blame the British! There was no polio in India till they brought it here!"(16) . Being the president of two hundred Parsees of Lahore he suggests how his community should behave in a critical situation like impending partition. He tells that the members of his community are very small i.e. one hundred and twenty thousand, in all. In view of this they can't afford to expose themselves to any risk or danger. On the contrary, they should be tactful and practical in their approach. They should be loyal and faithful to whoever becomes victorious.

The ambivalent attitude of the Parsees towards Partition and Independence emerges at the main-hall meeting at the fire temple. Col. Bharucha, the president of the community in Lahore , advocates status quo. He warns fellow Parsees to shun the anti-colonial movement and nationalist agitation spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi. His reasoning is based on expediency. If there is "Home Rule" , political glory, fame and fortune will be acquired by the two major communities-Hindus and Muslims. He considers Home Rule as a power struggle, saying " Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power and if you jokers jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney !"(36). He also advocates caution, because of the Parsee's long standing attitudes of loyalty to the British. This attitude stems from the Zoroastrian religious belief of loyalty to a ruler and a close relationship between state and community. The other cause for loyalty to the British is purely economic. The Parsees primarily trace their secured status as a prosperous minority to the British rule, identity as the "good government" of the African prayer. Loyalty is a self evident precept to the Parsees. The colonel does not want any Parsee of Lahore to offend British sensibilities by espousing nationalist causes. In a tone of admonition he says , "I hope no Lahore Parsee will be stupid enough to court trouble- I strongly advise all of you to stay at home – and out of trouble"(37).

But there are some nationalists Parsees who want to side with the Indian in the Independence struggle. Dr. Mody is one of them. He tells: "Our neighbours will think we are betraying them and siding with the English" (37). The banker, Mr. Toddywala feels that the Indian community was in a dominating position. Keeping in view the interest of the Parsee community, they should support the Indians. He asks the congregation of the Parsees to chalk out their future course of action in the light of the development. Finally they decide to follow the rules of the land and

remain in Lahore only. Some Parsees wish to shift either to London or Bombay where majority of their co-religionists live. They don't like to stay in Lahore after Independence. But their apprehension is put to rest, and with one accord they finally decide to follow the principle of adaptability and compromise, as usual. They find sense in Col. Bharucha's decision to follow the golden mean in the wake of the existing fluid situation in the country. The Colonel says: "No one knows which way the wind will blow ... there may be not one but two- or even three- new nations! and the Parsees might find themselves championing the wrong side if they don't look before they leap!" (37). He is not in favour of any pact with any communities because the Hindus are cunning in business dealings; Muslims are fanatic and atrocious and the Sikhs are rather horrible. On further enquiry Col. Bharucha reminds the members of his community that by pursuing the principle of adaptability and equidistance, their forefathers had been able to achieve something great in India. He further advises that they should choose the path of confrontation against any of the major communities living in India.

But man cannot remain always neutral. Sometime or the other the passions of love and hatred may overcome him, and as a result he may become subjective in his dealings. This becomes obvious when Lenny's mother Mrs. Sethi and some other women of her community start sympathizing with the Sikhs and Hindus in the wake of the partition. They secretly help and arrange safe escape of the Hindus and Sikhs to India. They also play important role in the work of rehabilitation of unfortunate kidnapped women. When Shanta, their Ayah is recovered from the house of the Ice- Candy-man, the godmother extends all sorts of help and cooperation in respect of arranging her safe return to Amritsar. She sends her there under the police escort. Thus. The Parsee community deviates from its avowed goal and ideology by involving itself rather indirectly for the sake of humanity at large. They are seen busy in softening the wounds of the Partition victims.

The pre-independence India was an intermingling of the people of different communities. In fact, intermingling of different races formed the mosaic of the Indian life. After the Partition the colourful harmony of the mosaic suffered a serious setback. This becomes obvious when Lenny visits the Queen's garden after the announcement of Independence:

The garden scene has depressingly altered. Muslim Families who added colour when scattered among Hindus and Sikhs, now monopolise the garden, depriving it of colour. Even the children, covered in brocades and satins, cannot alleviate the austerity of the black burkhas and white chuddars that shroud the women. It is astonishing. The absence of the brown skin that showed through the fine veils of Hindu and Sikh women, and beneath the dhoties and shorts of the men, has changed the complexion of the queenless garden. There are fewer women. More men. (237)