



Beyond the Colonial Veil: Unveiling the Socio-Psychological Impact of Postcolonialism on Youth and Children in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

Dr. Rafiq Nawab¹, Dr. Riaz Hussain² & Gul Aizaz³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan,

Email: rafiqnawab@awkum.edu.pk

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Islamia College Peshawar, Pakistan

³Lecturer, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: January 20, 2025
Revised: March 06, 2025
Accepted: March 10, 2025
Available Online: March 13, 2025

Keywords:

Postcolonial, displacement, identity crises, resistance, socio-psychological, youth and children

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Rafiq Nawab

Email:

rafiqnawab@awkum.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This paper employs a postcolonial lens to explore the social and psychological impact of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, on youth and children's characters as reflected in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel Cracking India. Historical and cultural differences, issues of place and displacement, and the myths of identity and authenticity are common features of postcolonial literature in English. Equally, this paper analyzes the postcolonial elements such as identity crises, displacement, othering, cultural and religious differences, and resistance; and its socio-psychological impact on young characters. During the partition, due to abrupt changes in religious and national identities, families were lacerated apart, small children were left orphaned and youth suffered the traumas of torture and bloodshed. The Partition holocaust wrought havoc on all sections of society, and communalism led people to go berserk. This paper focuses on the transformed social and psychological state of young characters. Through a close reading of the text, the socio-psychological impact of postcolonialism on youth and children's characters is contextually analyzed. For the conceptual framework, the research examines the social and psychological dimensions of postcolonial literary theory in light of the concepts of Homi. K. Bhabha, and other eminent theorists. In the field of social psychology, the study utilizes Erik Erikson's concepts and the parameters developed by Robert T. Carter concerning PTSIM. This paper's specific focus on the representation of the socio-psychological impact of postcolonialism on young characters and their consequent resistance and reactions will add more to the dynamics of postcolonial literature.



Introduction

This paper explores postcolonial perspectives on partition and its social and psychological impact on youth and children's characters as reflected in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India*. The end of colonization and partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan on the basis of religious and cultural differences was followed by communal violence, large-scale human displacement, identity crisis, physical, social and psychological suffering. Partition, according to Homi. K. Bhabha, "gives us a useful sense of the circulation and proliferation of racial and cultural otherness" (97). Makarand Paranjape states, "unlike the tussle between the different caste groups, the religious conflict in India led to the two-nation theory and, eventually, to the cataclysmic event of the partition" (258). David Gilmartin delineating the role of religion, the colonial process and the causes of partition, writes: "Influenced by postcolonial scholarship [. . .] causes of a partition based specifically on religion have nevertheless been lightly glossed, and usually assumed to [. . .] a narrative of religious boundaries hardened by colonial processes of boundary-making and divide-and-rule" (31). Writers and researchers deeply sensitized to the role of colonizer and the constructed character of post-partition religious communities, as well as the ensuing violence and suffering, penned partition literature. Referring to such literature, Ashcroft *et al* assert that "historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English" (9). Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin observe that after decolonization, "the story of 1947, while being one of the attainments of independence, is also a gendered narrative of displacement and dispossession, of large-scale and widespread communal violence, and of the realignment of family, community and national identities as people were forced to accommodate the dramatically altered reality that now prevailed" (2). In the decolonized subcontinent, according to Haimanti Roy, the "[d]efining categories of identity such as evacuees, refugees, displaced persons, aliens, and infiltrators was a major element of the process of establishing post-Partition national orders and turning colonial subjects into national citizens" (5).

Aim and Significance

Equally, this paper explores the postcolonial elements such as identity crises, displacement, dispossession, othering, cultural and religious differences, and resistance; and its socio-psychological impact on young characters in *Cracking India*. According to Hans Bertens, "[p]ostcolonial theory, in particular, sees such displacements, and the ambivalences and hybrid cultural forms to which they lead, as vantage points that allow us to expose the internal doubts and the instances of resistance" (160). Moreover, "[w]ork on the impact of partition—a moment exemplary in twentieth-century history of the violent consequences of new, modern 'borders and boundaries'—has thus made partition into a critical subject for the development of larger postcolonial theory" (Gilmartin 27).

Methodology

Through a close reading of the text, in this paper, contexts and receptions, and the socio-psychological impact of new identities in the post-colonial India on youth and children characters are analyzed. The selected text correlates to Edward Said's notion "that every literary text is in some way burdened with its occasion, with the plain empirical realities from which it emerged" (35). In addition, this paper takes guidelines on social psychology from the book *Identity: Youth and Crisis* by Erik Erikson, wherein he presents that "the whole interplay between the psychological and the social, the developmental and the historical, for which identity formation is of prototypical significance, could be conceptualized only as a kind of *psychosocial relativity*" (23).

Hence, the idea of identity, the development and resolution of identity crises; issues of otherness and resistance; and the impact and change in the socio-psychological realities of young characters are examined and supported with arguments, through carefully sifted textual evidences. Furthermore, this research paper looks for guidelines provided by the Post Traumatic Stress Injury Model (PTSIM); a hypothetical psychological theory developed by Robert. T. Carter first in 2001 and then further improved in 2007, which focuses on racial conflicts, discrimination, traumatic stress, the subsequent reactions, and sufferings. Carter is of the view that “one’s racial identity is experienced in relation to his or her gender, ethnicity, social status, religion, age, and other factors” (18), and “racism has been found in research to be a form of stress and, as such, has affected the mental and physical health of its targets” (25). Keeping in view the aforesaid theoretical perspectives the young character’s identity crises, and mental traumas as depicted in *Cracking India*, are analyzed as follows.

Analysis

Cracking India reflects the violent torture, killings, bloodshed, abduction, and rapes, associated with the partition and decolonization of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. After two hundred years of colonial rule, the Indian subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan. M. Natarajan and G. Muniyaraj note:

In 1947, freedom came to the Indian subcontinent but in a fractured form. India was divided into two countries India and Pakistan, and the border between the two was drawn with blood as nearly half million people were slain in communal clashes. Twelve million people fled their homes and over a hundred thousand women were abducted, raped and mutilated. (4)

Furthermore, Makenna Mall describes the rise of communalism, violence, and religious antagonism and the after-effects of colonization: “The colonial history of religious antagonisms, gendering of the nation, and elitist political aspirations served to fuel the concomitant violence and implementation of communalism that occurred during the partition” (2). In addition, about the abysmal disaster and brutality of partition and the rise of communal riots, Pin-chia Feng quoting, Urvashi Butalia, notes, “roughly ten to twelve million people are said to have moved, within the space of a few months, between the new, truncated India and the newly-created Pakistan. Between 500,000 to one million people are believed to have died, hundreds of thousands of children lost and abandoned, between 75,000 to 100,000 women raped and abducted” (229).

Henceforth, as an unforgettable historical event, the partition has been a major theme in Indian and Pakistani postcolonial literature. Arabati Pradeep Kumar remarks: “Partition has been the theme for many of the Pakistani and Indian authors. It is an unforgettable event. Families were lacerated apart and small kids were left orphaned. The Partition holocaust wrought havoc on all sections of society, and communalism made people go berserk” (139). Pradipta Shyam Chowdhury writing about the approach of Indo-Pak authors from across the border, notes: “Partition fictions, written both from the Indian and Pakistani perspectives are imaginary constructs based on the real historical facts. Though they are mediated by their respective national and political ideologies, there is sometimes a sort of holistic approach towards combining the national and personal versions” (4).

Thus, partition and its agonies have remained the central theme in South Asian Literature as Showkat Ahmad points out: “Many attempts have been taken in this direction by writers to highlight the agony, cruelty and genocide. The partition experience crept into prose, poetry, drama, novels and short stories” (136). Similarly, Bapsi Sidhwa in *Cracking India* gives literary accounts

of the traumatic happenings of partition and the aftermath, wherein, she records that “[i]t is sudden. One day everybody is themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols” (93). Amartya Sen identifies the same and argues: “A great many persons’ identities as Indians, as subcontinentals, as Asians, or as members of the human race, seemed to give way—quite suddenly—to sectarian identification with Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh communities” (28). Kandhare Ram Shamrao notes, “Bapsi Sidhwa depicts how the violence of partition has cut the roots of people of different communities, irrespective of ideology, friendship and rational ideas. [. . .] It was the most shocking and traumatic experience of division of hearts and communities” (125). In this connection, Erik Erikson theorizes that for the biological, social, or psychological study of communities,

It must be obvious that the ‘physiology’ of living, i.e., the unbroken interaction of all parts, is governed by a *relativity* which makes each process dependent on the other. This means that any changes observed in one will cause and again be influenced by changes in the others. True, each of these processes has its own warning signals: pain, anxiety, and panic. They warn of the danger of organic dysfunction, of impairment of ego mastery, and of loss of group identity; but each signal announces a threat to all. (73)

So, due to religious differences and changes in identities, the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities living together for centuries, turn from friends to foes and recourse to vicious vengeance against each other. The triggering of communal disrespect according to Bhabha’s postulation, forges “on the borderlines of ethnic deprivation that is, at once, the sign of racialized violence and the symptom of social victimage” (3). Emdad Haque states “that communal antagonisms in the subcontinent were based on religious faith—between the Muslims and the Hindus, as well as between the Muslims and the Sikhs” (189). Prashant Bharadwaj *et al* likewise point out that “the overall impact of partition needs to be interpreted in light of the fact that partition led to increased religious homogenization” (1). Due to the rise of communal violence new religious identities emerge, centuries-old affinities and relationships turn into brutal hostilities, and in a jiffy, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and other communities evolve - and become ‘others’ within themselves. The evolution of new social structures, rise of communalism and emergence of new identities correlate to Erikson’s concept that “many of the mechanisms of adjustment which once made for psychosocial evolution, tribal integration, and national or class coherence are at loose ends in a world of universally expanding identities” (73). Similarly, along with bringing psychosocial evolution and national integration, the partition resulted in multiplying identities.

This study focusing on *Cracking India*’s “central theme [. . .] partition and struggle for existence and identity in different style” (Shamrao 133), navigates how the young characters suffer and their socio-psychological life abruptly becomes chaotic in a short span of time. *Cracking India*, according to Jasbir Jain, “portrays situations in which identity is sought to be defined through the lens of religion” (43-44). Through the eyes of eight-year-old, polio-stricken, young Parsi girl Lenny, “the novel grapples with the issues of identity on both microcosmic and the macrocosmic levels” (Jain 44). Though there are a host of characters in the novel including young and old, the focus of this paper is on Ice-Candy Man, Shanta (Ayah), Lenny, and Ranna. These characters represent various historical segments of society and ideology and speak for millions of young men, women, and children who underwent the traumatic phases of partition and faced indelible socio-psychological traumas due to their new national and religious identities. Henceforward, the socio-psychological impact of partition and consideration of its repercussions in *Cracking India* on the main characters are explored and analyzed in detail.

Ice-Candy-Man

Ice-candy-man, the central character in *Cracking India*, represents the changing phases of religious, cultural, and national identities during the partition. Both as a protagonist and antagonist, Shamrao notes that “[t]he narrative revolves around the character of Ice-candy-man who is a loving person. He is in love with the Ayah of Lenny. [Through his character] Sidhwa shows the changing patterns of communal discard” (132). He is young, cheerful and the source of entertainment and information for the diverse group of Ayah’s admirers. Before partition, Ice-candy-man believes in a joint Indian identity and even goes so far as to claim: “If we want India back we must take pride in our customs, our clothes, our languages ... And not go mouthing the got-pit sot-pit of the English!” (Sidhwa 28-29). Ice-candy-man has no religious grudges against his friends, which is shown when he proclaims, “[s]o what if you’re a Sikh? I’m first a friend to my friends... And an enemy to their enemies... And then a Mussulman! God and the politicians have enough servers. So, I serve my friends” (Sidhwa 122). However, “[o]ne incident transforms the peace-loving Ice-candy-man into a selfish man and a savage” (Shamrao 133). That one incident alters Ice-candy-man when after partition he is waiting for his relatives (sisters) to arrive on a train in Lahore. He gives the news to his friends: “A train from Gurdaspur has just come in,’ he announces, panting. ‘Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women’s breasts!’ [. . .] ‘I was expecting relatives... For three days... For twelve hours each day... I waited for that train!’” (Sidhwa 149). The incident causes a socio-psychological transformation in the Ice-candy-man, making him crude, harsh, and vindictive even towards his Hindu and Sikh friends. He henceforth believes and proclaims that “[t]here’s natural justice for you!” (Sidhwa 156) to molest the enemy’s (Hindu and Sikh) womenfolk, dishonour and kill them all. After partition, in the post-colonial subcontinent, exploitation of women, specifically young girls for their religious and cultural identities, signified that “the concepts of belonging and otherness were of course defined for women by the men of the respective countries. They themselves did not have a choice” (Butalia 45). Similarly, the barbaric scene of the chopped breasts of Muslim women shocks Ice-candy-man and his reaction and resistance turn into fury and vengeance. To avenge the death of Muslims, he loses his sanity and starts killing Sikhs and Hindus and molests their women in the streets of Lahore. During the riots, when the Government House gardener asks him “[w]ere you among the men who exposed themselves?” (Sidhwa 156) to the Hindu womenfolk, Ice-candy-man exclaims:

‘What’s it to you, oye?’ [. . .] ‘If you must know, I was! I’ll tell you to your face—I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train from Gurdaspur... that night I went mad, I tell you! I lobbed grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs I’d known all my life! I hated their guts ... I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women ... The penises!’ (156)

In societal life, with a new religious and national identity, Ice-candy-man becomes a foe to his close friends, which causes a marked psychological transformation in his person. Lenny narrates,

“[t]he longer I observe Ice-candy-man the more I notice the change wrought in him. He seems to have lost his lithe, catlike movements” (Sidhwa 157).

Lenny further delineates the transformed character of Ice-candy-man; he makes fun of the escape of a close Hindu friend, and instead of being upset is exulted, as Lenny quotes him: “The Faletti’s Hotel cook has also run away with his tail between his legs!”; and to Lenny: “he appears bloated with triumph ... and a horrid irrepressible gloating” (Sidhwa 157-58). The sudden change in the behaviour of Ice-candy-man, whose erstwhile friends are now his bitter opponents, shows the socio-psychological impact of partition on his once humane character. Under changed historical

conditions, the psychosocial evolution of Ice-candy-man, his rebellious attitude, deviancy, negation of group identity, and adaptation of the new Muslim identity of post-partition - align with Erikson's concept that "human adaptation has its loyal deviants, its rebels, who refuse to adjust to what so often is called, with an apologetic and fatalistic misuse of a once good phrase, 'the human condition'" (248-49). The worst part of his character surges to the extreme when Ice-candy-man's passionate love for Ayah turns into vengeance, and like a savage, he brings a mob to Lenny's house and abducts her. Ice-candy-man's rage for vengeance swells beyond limits and in a malicious psychological state of mind, he permits his beloved Ayah to "be raped by butchers, drunks, and goondas" (Sidhwa 248). Afterwards, he marries Ayah and forces her to become a dancing prostitute. He "disgraced Ayah! Destroyed her modesty! Lived off her womanhood!" and even to Lenny, once his ardent admirer, he appears "[t]reachorous, dangerous, contemptible. A destructive force that must be annihilated" (Sidhwa 249). This transformation delineates the socio-psychological vicissitudes in the character of Ice-candy-man; since a lover turns into a destroyer and a cherished person becomes despicable for his horrendous acts in the wake of partition and the emergence of new identities. Lenny describes the uncertain state of mind and social condition of Ice-candy-man in the following way:

The longer I look at him the more willing I am to be beguiled by those tearing, forlorn eyes. [. . .] When I think of Ayah I think she must get away from the monster who has killed her spirit and mutilated her 'angel's voice. And when I look at Ice-candy-man's naked humility and grief I see him as undeserving of his beloved's heartless disdain. He is a deflated poet, a collapsed peddler—and while Ayah is haunted by her past, Ice-candy-man is haunted by his future: and his macabre future already appears to be stamped on his face. (264-65)

The transmuted character of Ice-candy-man represents a form of resistance in the wake of emerging religious and national identities. The communities living in co-existence with affection and care for centuries, abruptly become 'others' and therefore have recourse to hatred and retaliation. Gyanendra Pandey, referring to the implications of partition, remarks that "[i]n many parts of the new domains of India and Pakistan, being a Sikh or a Hindu (on the one side) or a Muslim (on the other) had become virtually synonymous with being a refugee and a foreign national. Those who had long adhered somewhat loosely to the label of Muslim, Hindu or Sikh were now categorically named as one or the other" (132). Hence, Sidhwa, as a postcolonial writer, responds to the history and shows that, in a changing world, the character of Ice-candy-man's new religious and national identity represents that of real-life young men who underwent the trauma of partition and resultant socio-psychological vicissitudes.

Ayah (Shanta)

Ayah (named Shanta) is the central female character, nanny of Lenny, who becomes the victim of communal violence for her Hindu identity. She "is chocolate-brown and short. Everything about her is eighteen years old and round and plump" (Sidhwa 3). Because of her beauty and sharpness, irrespective of religion or community, Ayah is the cynosure for all her admirers in pre-partition India. She "becomes the symbol of the compositional unity of the various religion, sects and communities of India" (Shyam 6).

The declaration of partition and the emergence of new identities causes rifts in the social world of Ayah and her admirers. Lenny states, "[t]hings have become topsy-turvy. We've stopped going to the Queen's Garden altogether. We've also stopped going to the wrestler's restaurant. There is dissension in the ranks of Ayah's admirers" (Sidhwa 147). At the eruption of communal violence, inhuman killings, and bloodshed, Ayah (because of her Hindu identity) yearns to escape and leave

Lahore; once a peaceful abode for her and her admirers. Lahore, once a peaceful abode for all communities, is burning due to new ethnic and religious boundaries set after partition. The situation of Lahore corresponds to Bhabha's description of a city: "Attacks of terror, and incidents of communal rioting have tragically left their mark on a city that seems, on the surface, to work busily against, and across, such ethnic and religious boundaries" (xxiv). "Crying softly. 'I must get out of here,' Ayah says, 'I have relatives in Amritsar I can go to'" (Sidhwa 158). The social world of Ayah and her admirers is disrupted, her true lover Masseur has been murdered and she "has stopped receiving visitors. Her closest friends have fled Lahore. She trusts no one. And Masseur's death has left in her the great empty ache" (Sidhwa 177). Ayah's loss and pain are beyond Lenny's understanding as she observes, "I know there is an added dimension to her loss I cannot comprehend" (Sidhwa 177). The worst thing happens next when Ayah is abducted by Ice-candy-man and a violent mob, which brings disastrous effects on her social state. The emergence of new religious and national identities leads to Ayah's abduction, as she is now 'other' for her lover and admirers. Her socio-psychological life is shattered. Lenny observes her mental pangs during the abduction, "[t]he last thing I noticed was Ayah, her mouth slack and piteously gaping, her disheveled hair flying into her kidnappers' faces, staring at us as if she wanted to leave behind her wide-open and terrified eyes" (Sidhwa 184). Ayah is brutally raped by the abductors and forced by Ice-candy-man to "become the opposite of Virgin Mary. She's become a dancing-girl!" (Sidhwa 191). Pin-chia Feng notes, "[t]he abduction and subsequent forced prostitution of the Hindu Ayah by the Muslim mob exemplify such a symbolic warfare played out on the female body" (232). It is noted that vengeance is taken on a woman's body and victory is celebrated on a woman's body, and "[f]or both countries it seemed almost as if the loss of women to the 'other' religion meant more than any other loss. This feeling seemed to be shared by both men and women" (Butalia 58). Pradeep likewise points out, "Ice Candy Man successfully strips Ayah of her identity as a woman and as a Hindu. Whatever love he has for Ayah is smothered by his complete subjugation of her. He keeps her in the brothel even after marrying her" (144). From a domestic maid she has been compelled to become a professional sex worker: "[t]he men pay them to dance and sing... and to do things with their bodies" (Sidhwa 240). Lenny finds a transformed Ayah when she meets her after a few months, her charm is gone and her soul is empty:

Where have the radiance and the animation gone? Can the soul be extracted from its living body? Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever: wide-opened with what they've seen and felt: wider even than the frightening saucers and dinner plates that describe the watchful orbs of the three dogs who guard the wicked Tinder Box witches' treasures in underground chambers. (Sidhwa 260)

When Godmother advises Ayah to forget about the past which cannot be undone, that to "[h]urt, happiness ... all fade impartially ... to make way for fresh joy and new sorrow. That's the way of life," Ayah replies, "I am past that, I'm not alive" (Sidhwa 262). Her socio-psychological life has been sapped and the lively beautiful Ayah is "[e]mptied of life? Despairing?" (Sidhwa 264). Shamrao argues that "Ice-candy-man has killed her soul and her warmth is gone" (137). Her "tragedy speaks for the collective suffering of female victims during Partition" (Feng 232). According to Mall, Ayah's "experience mirrors that of some 85,000 women who have generically been termed 'the abducted women.' Women such as Ayah, were often not only abducted and raped, but 'forced into unpaid labor and converted' so as to better assimilate as wives of their abductors" (9).

However, Ayah's insistence on leaving Lahore to unite with her relatives in Amritsar alludes to the retrospective cognizance of her real being, reasons for her pains and suffering, and the realization of her identity consciousness. These changes are in line with what Erikson posits:

in psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself [. . .]. This process is, luckily, and necessarily, for the most part unconscious except where inner conditions and outer circumstances combine to aggravate a painful, or elated, 'identity-consciousness'. (22-23)

A socio-psychologically transformed Ayah, looking for her identity consciousness, with the help of Godmother, can leave Lahore for Amritsar but the scars of partition and communal violence cannot be elapsed easily. Ayah's decision to leave Lahore is due to her retroactive experiences of emotional pain and mental suffering. Carter theorizes that such "experience(s) are traumatic because they are emotionally painful . . . or because they involve the threat of emotional pain. In this case, the negative valence is related to the psychological meaning of the event to the individual, not the physical consequences of the event" (34). Though Ayah (with the help and efforts of Lenny's family) rejoins her family at Amritsar at the end of the novel, yet the scars of partition in the post-colonial India will remain intact in her memories.

Lenny

Lenny a polio-stricken Parsi girl, as the narrator of the novel witnesses the harrowing incidents, and represents the psyche of millions of children who suffered during the partition. "Through the first-person account of an eight-year-old girl, Lenny, in Sidhwa's work," Pradeep notes, "we feel the unease and insecurity experienced by this ethnic and religious minority group – the Parsis" (140). Such essential discourses can be elucidated in Homi Bhabha's terms as "the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective" (3). A Parsi doctor, Colonel Bharucha, connects her suffering from polio with colonial treachery: "Lenny is weak. Some child with only the symptoms of a severe cold could have passed the virus." And then he roars a shocking postscript: "If anyone's to blame, blame the British! There was no polio in India till they brought it here!" (Sidhwa 16). Lenny as a child identifies the overwhelming power of the colonizer before partition when she observes, "Queen Victoria, cast in gunmetal, is majestic, massive, overpowering, ugly. Her statue imposes the English Raj in the park" (Sidhwa 18). Sidhwa in pre-partition India, with the awe-inspiring and unattractive nature of British colonial rule, as implied by Queen Victoria's statue, captures the impact of colonization on the psyche of a child. The news of partition is beyond the innocent understanding of Lenny. Her naive viewpoint about the division of India indicates her confused psychological state when she says, "There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then?" (Sidhwa 92).

Additionally, the incidents of communal violence deeply affect her psyche; understandably, she is very distressed when she learns "that the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Rogers, is dead. Murdered. His mutilated body discovered in the gutter". Her poignant reaction is worth noting: "For a moment I cannot breathe. I feel I might fall" (Sidhwa 112). Her naïve mind is unable to grasp the idea of how Punjab can be divided between India and Pakistan. She imagines "the vision of a torn Punjab" and asks, "Will the earth bleed? And what about the sundered rivers? Won't their water drain into the jagged cracks?" She concludes that they are "[n]ot satisfied by breaking India, they now want to tear the Punjab" (Sidhwa 116). Partition of India and ensuing violence, killings, and murders on the basis of religious identities intensely affect her thoughts. Everything appears to her bleak and meaningless, leading her to consider herself "a diseased maggot". And she imagines this self-hatred is felt by those around her: "I look at Yousaf [a servant]. His face is drained of joy, bleak, furious. I know he too feels himself composed of shit, crawling with maggots. Now I know

surely. One man's religion is another man's poison" (Sidhwa 117), which in Bhabha's words can be explained "as a *postcolonial* problem of the 'racialization of religion'" (328). Lenny's mental suffering and envisioned resistance intensify when she witnesses a mob of Sikhs in Lahore with their wild long hair and beard, fanatic faces, swaying swords, roaring, and displaying "[a] naked child, twitching on a spear struck between her shoulders, is waved like a flag: her screamless mouth agape, she is staring straight up at me. A crimson fury blinds me. I want to dive into the bestial creature clawing entrails, plucking eyes, tearing limbs, gouging hearts, smashing brains" (Sidhwa 134). She in poignant fury wants to attack the mob but cannot because "the creature has too many stony hearts, too many sightless eyes, deaf ears, mindless brains and tons of entwined entrails..." (Sidhwa 134-35). Lenny further witnesses the horrible events of communal violence in the company of Ayah and Ice-candy-man. She narrates how callously a Hindu Banya is torn apart by a Muslim mob:

The man is knocked down. [. . .] The men move back and in the small clearing I see his legs sticking out of his dhoti right up to the groin—each thin, brown leg tied to a jeep. Ayah, holding her hands over my eyes, collapses on the floor, pulling me down with her. There is the roar of a hundred throats: "Allah-o-Akbar!" and beneath it the growl of revving motors. Ice-candy-man stoops over us, looking concerned: the muscles in his face tight with a strange exhilaration I never again want to see. (Sidhwa 135)

When Lenny returns home, she hysterically imitates the cruel deed. She says, "I pick out a big, bloated celluloid doll. I turn it upside down and pull its legs apart" (Sidhwa 138). Mentally not satisfied with that, she calls her younger brother Adi for help:

I hold one leg out to Adi. "Here," I say, "pull it."

"Why?" asks Adi looking confused.

"Pull, damn it!" I scream, so close to hysteria that Adi blanches and hastily grabs the proffered leg. [. . .] Adi and I pull the doll's legs, stretching it in a fierce tug-of-war, until making a wrenching sound it suddenly splits. [. . .] "Ma-ma." I examine the doll's spilled insides and, holding them in my hands, collapse on the bed sobbing. (Sidhwa 138-39)

The imitation of violence reflects the acute psychological effects on Lenny's young mind. Lenny's traumatic condition insinuates Robert Carter's premise that "acute stress disorders result from exposure to an extreme . . . stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, . . . the person's response must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror"(19). Besides, children instinctively imitate what they see, and when it comes to violence, naturally, the consequences appear to be disastrous for the present and the generations to follow. The loss of murdered and fleeing friends, traumatic sights, and the burning of Lahore for months, leave indelible effects on Lenny's mind, as she states, "in my memory it is branded over an inordinate length of time: memory demands poetic license" (Sidhwa 139). Poetic license implies the departure from facts and the creation of distinct effects. Here it seems to refer to the negative and never-ending psychological imprints of partition on Lenny's young mind. Such psychological scars can lead to perennial effects on the actions and thoughts of young children like Lenny, which they may never be able to get rid of in the future.

The division of India and her new national identity is a surprise for Lenny, as it seems to her that the British gods deal out Indian cities like a pack of cards, specifically those of Punjab on the basis of religious and cultural identities: "Lahore is dealt to Pakistan, Amritsar to India. Sialkot to Pakistan. Pathankot to India." For her the sudden birth of new nations leads to an identity crisis, which is intimated when she states, "I am Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that" (Sidhwa 140).

According to Ayesha Jalal, after decolonization “Punjab reveals in stark fashion the importance of majorities claiming regional, religious and national rights [. . .] entirely in accord with a religiously informed sense of cultural identity” (5).

Lenny’s sufferings as a child are less social and more emotional and psychological. Though her abrupt new national identity is a surprise, still, her social life and status remain the same. However, the loss of Ayah and the development of post-partition horrible events, mark acute emotional and psychological impacts on her. The worst happens to Lenny when she naively reveals the hideout of Shanta to Ice-candy-man, and the mob drags out and abducts her beloved Ayah. She blames herself for the abduction of Ayah, and repeatedly tortures and wrenches her tongue for telling the truth:

For three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror staring at my tongue. I hold the vile, truth-infected thing between my fingers and try to wrench it out: but slippery and slick as a fish it slips from my fingers and mocks me with its sharp rapier tip darting as poisonous as a snake. I punish it with rigorous scourings from my prickling toothbrush until it is sore and bleeding. I’m so conscious of its unwelcome presence at all times that it swells uncomfortably in my mouth and gags and chokes me. (Sidhwa 184)

The emotional and psychological world of Lenny is awful after the abduction of Ayah. As Pradeep notes: “She is guilt-driven. [. . .] She feels much regretted for having spoken the truth which has turned out to be a curse for Ayah” (144). A deep sense of remorse and her desire for repentance are unbearable for her. She grumbles, that “Ayahless and sore-tongued I drift through the forlorn rooms of my house, and back and forth from the festive quarters. The kitchen has become a depressing hellhole filled with sighs” (Sidhwa 185). According to Carter’s supposition, Lenny’s “stress is an emotional, physical, and behavioral response to an event that is unwanted” and “stress increases if an event is ambiguous, negative, unpredictable, and uncontrollable” (25). The memories of Ayah, the unpredictable and wild violence of mobs haunt her mind; she states, “when I do fall asleep the slogans of the mobs reverberate in my dreams, pierced by women’s wails and shrieks—and I awaken screaming for Ayah” (Sidhwa 213).

Lenny’s emotional and psychological suffering further intensifies when she learns of Ayah’s humiliation, that she is raped by the mob, and compelled into prostitution by Ice-candy-man. The blurred images of Ayah’s humiliation appear before Lenny and her body shivers violently, and with a breathless face, she says, “I cling to Godmother. And stretch like bubble gum [. . .] And I, rubbing my face in Godmother’s tightly bound bosom, grind the cloth between my teeth and shake my head till the khaddar tears and I smell blood and taste it” (Sidhwa 251). The emotional storm rages in Lenny for Ayah’s humiliation. She wants to see her; “to comfort and kiss her ugly experiences away”; and she says, “I have never cried this way before. It is how grown-ups cry when their hearts are breaking” (Sidhwa 254). Carter theorizes “that one’s reaction to trauma is expressed through several modalities: The reaction may be in the person’s subconscious and come to consciousness by way of flashbacks or nightmares; [. . .] or make the person feel restless and become frustrated easily” (92). Likewise, awful echoes of Ayah’s mortification vibrate in Lenny’s guilty conscience, she cries like a grown-up, and her restlessness and frustration result in acute psychological traumatic experiences, even though her intentions were not to cause any harm. Witnessing violence and its consequences forces young Lenny to grow up before age, and reminiscence of the bloody partition and its emotional and psychological scars will last long as she understands the harsh realities of life. Lenny’s sufferings also speak for the traumas and tortures endured by the children during partition, inflicted on them in the post-colonial newborn countries of India and Pakistan.

Ranna

Ranna, a small boy from the family of Lenny's cook Imam Din, in the middle of the novel narrates the painful events of his village Pir Pindo, which is forty miles from Lahore. As a child, he witnesses and suffers the gruesome agonies and the bloody havoc inflicted on his family and Muslims of Pir Pindo by the brutal Sikh mob. Pin-chia Feng points out that "[t]he third-person narrative of 'Ranna's Story,' inserted into the middle of the novel, is clearly an attempt to speak for these lost and traumatized children. Moreover, Ranna's narrative provides a testimony of what Lenny cannot possibly have witnessed because of their class differences and communal identities" (233).

Muslims and Sikhs have coexisted peacefully for centuries in Pir Pindo and nearby villages and when they learn that communal violence is on the rise in cities, they pledge to unite and protect each other in times of trouble. A Sikh granthi from Pir Pindo in the village gathering proclaims, "our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?" (Sidhwa 56). The village Muslim Chaudhry equally reciprocates, "our relationships with the Hindus are bound by strong ties. The city folk can afford to fight... we can't. We are dependent on each other: bound by our toil; by Mandi prices set by the Banyas—. To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Sikh?" (Sidhwa 56).

However, the centuries-old brotherhood and fraternities are blown by the tempest of abruptly changed identities and religious differences. Accordingly, thousands of wild Sikhs, like swarms of locusts, storm the village of Pir Pindo at midnight. Ranna's account of the horrifying deaths and slaughter scenes reflects the psychological anguish the young boy experiences.

Following the anticipated Sikh invasion, the village's Muslims have decided that "women and girls will gather at the Chaudhry's. Rather than face the brutality of the mob, they will pour kerosene around the house and burn themselves" (Sidhwa 198-99). In the decolonized subcontinent, "[t]here are any number of such stories, of both men and women - although the number of women is much larger than those of men - offering themselves up for death, or simply being killed, in an attempt to protect the 'purity' and 'sanctity' of religion" (Butalia 39). The attack on Pir Pindo is so sudden that before burning themselves, young girls and women become victims of brutal rapes and torture. Ranna "heard a woman cry, 'Do anything you want with me, but don't torment me ... For God's sake, don't torture me!' And then an intolerable screaming. 'Oh God!' a man whispered on a sobbing intake of breath. 'Oh God, she is the mullah's daughter!' The narrator notes then that "[t]he men covered their ears—and the boys' ears—sobbing unaffectedly like little children" (Sidhwa 200). Hence, young women and children whose voices are less heard, underwent acute physical suffering and psychological traumas due to religious hatred and violence. The traumatic scenes in Pir Pindo are unbearable for the young children and "a teenager, his cracked voice resounding like the honk of geese, started wailing: 'I don't want to die ... I don't want to die!' Catching his fear, Ranna and the other children set to whimpering: 'I don't want to die ... Abba, I don't want to die!'" (Sidhwa 200). Not a single soul is spared and the Sikhs butcher everyone who comes their way. Ranna's father implores them, "I beg you in the name of all you hold sacred, don't kill the little ones [...], Make them Sikhs ... Let them live ... they are so little..." (Sidhwa 201). Ranna's social and psychological world is badly impacted, as the innocent child witnesses the most agonizing sights of his family's extermination, which can never be erased from his memory. The invaders are likely those who claimed to protect each other in times of trouble, as:

Ranna saw his uncles beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons, wielding bloodied swords, [. . .] their faces vaguely familiar, pointed out and identified the Mussulmans by name. He felt a blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood. Ranna fell just inside the door on a tangled pile of unrecognizable bodies. (Sidhwa 201)

Ranna miraculously survives, and when he regains consciousness, he sees even more gruesome sights of Muslim young women, including the mullah's daughter, being tortured, raped, and hanged in the mosque by the Sikh Gurus. His small body heaves with rage at the loathsome desecration of Muslim women and the Sikhs' presence in the mosque. His young mind is unable to comprehend the fact that emerging national and religious identities are the reason for rape, murders, and marauding. As Amartya Sen notes, “for a bewildered child, the violence of identity was extraordinarily hard to grasp. It is not particularly easy even for a still bewildered elderly adult” (172).

Hence, Ranna's agonies represent the socio-psychological sufferings of millions of children during the partition, because “[t]here were too many ugly and abandoned children like him scavenging in the looted houses and the rubble of burnt-out buildings” (Sidhwa 207). Ranna “[e]ducated by violence and atrocity, the wandering waif is charged with the burden of witnessing the enactment of the perverse logic of the improbable” (Feng 235). Keeping in view the pathetic socio-psychological condition of Ranna, one can imagine how the young children in the decolonized subcontinent would have suffered physically and mentally during the partition. The sufferings of Ranna signify the anguishes, somatic and mental tortures faced by the children during the bloody historical event:

His rags clinging to his wounds, [. . .] Ranna wandered through the lanes stealing chapattis and grain from houses strewn with dead bodies, [. . .] He ate anything. Raw potatoes, uncooked grains, wheat flour, rotting peels and vegetables. No one minded the semi-naked specter as he looked in doors with his knowing, wideset peasant eyes as men copulated with wailing children—old and young women. [. . .] He saw babies, snatched from their mothers, smashed against walls and their howling mothers brutally raped and killed. (Sidhwa 207)

Ranna's physical and mental sufferings, his horrible social state and indistinct future can be summarized in the light of Carter's proposition that “the extent the person is biologically vulnerable . . . is younger, the trauma is more severe (e.g., multiple, highly intense events of long duration), the social context is unsupportive, and previous or subsequent life events are very stressful, there would be a more pronounced and long-lasting traumatic response” (36). Lenny observes, “like Ranna, Pir Pindo is brutally altered... that his family, as I knew it, has ceased to exist ...” (Sidhwa 195). The extermination of Ranna's family and his afflictions, irrespective of religion, speak of the atrocities undergone by millions of children, women, minorities, and socially weaker classes of all the communities during the partition. In particular, for youngsters, it is hard to erase the indelible emotional and psychological scars from their memories.

Conclusion

To sum up, *Cracking India* tells the horrifying story of the days of partition and highlights how the lofty ideal of nationalism was abruptly swapped by communal tribalism, causing immense destruction, psychological trauma, and distorted social sensibilities (Pradeep 138). The novel at the juncture of decolonization gives us an insight into the upheaval that accompanied the partition of the Indian subcontinent. From Bapsi Sidhwa's vivid depiction of the traumatic events and scenes

in *Cracking India*, it can be assumed that with the emergence of new identities, religious complexities, and the resistance and reactions of the characters; the partition caused unbearable suffering to all the communities. In particular, the social and psychological lives of youth and children were affected immensely.

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