



## **Analysing Reasons for the Communal Anguish and Violence Represented in Bapsi Sidhwa's Novel *Ice-Candy Man*: A New Historical Study**

<sup>1</sup>Abdul Sattar Memon, <sup>2</sup>Muhammad Khan Sangi, <sup>3</sup>Muhammad Tufail Chandio

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Government Boys Degree College Thatta.

<sup>2</sup> Dean of Faculty of Arts, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan Email: [khansangi@usindh.edu.pk](mailto:khansangi@usindh.edu.pk)

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Sindh Laar Campus Badin, Sindh, Pakistan. Email: [mtufail@usindh.edu.pk](mailto:mtufail@usindh.edu.pk)

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Corresponding authors:

A. Memon

Email: [ab.sattarmemon@gmail.com](mailto:ab.sattarmemon@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This research paper critically analyses the underlying factors behind the estrangement, maladjustment, and communal violence represented in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) from the perspective of Neo Historicism. It delves deep into the critical study of the pre-partitioned people of various religious communities i.e., the Muslims, the Hindus, and the Sikhs of the Indian subcontinent. British rule in the Indian subcontinent ended in 1947; consequently, two independent countries appeared on the map of the world. The partition caused various religious and political conflicts, which degenerated into bloody riots and violence, ripping apart the amicably co-existing pluralistic phenomenon into religious bigotry. This study critically analyses the main reasons for the attitudinal shift in the relationship of the various religious communities, leading to communal violence in the name of religion during and after the partition. The qualitative data reviewed from the text of the novel have been analyzed by employing textual analysis techniques. This paper draws the conclusion based on the findings that religion is not the central cause of communal riots or may not be held solely responsible for the communal violence, but it may be the land issue and the geographical division, which augmented the communal violence and estrangement during the partition. The study reveals that political polemics and maladjustments, partition, and inequitable division of Punjab remain the leading causes of communal violence. It is further found that the amicable, peaceful religious coexistence also got distorted and antagonized because of political polemics and the division of agricultural land. Hence, communal violence – generally known as religious violence – may be revisited and re-termed as 'religio-political violence' in the Indian subcontinent perspective.

### **Keywords:**

Communal violence; *Ice-Candy Man*; Partition; Political polemics; Religion; The British Rule; The Indian Subcontinent.

### **Introduction**

The British rule ended in 1947, and the Indian subcontinent was partitioned into two independent states i.e., Pakistan and India. The partition of the Indian subcontinent was experienced as a terrible and painful event in Indian history. It resulted in a mass exodus; consequently, the people, migrating from and to the newly established states, experienced the terrible consequences of the partition, including slaughter, burglary, arson attacks, sexual assault, and forced abductions. In addition to the huge loss of property of millions worth, around one million people lost their lives. Such violence committed in the name of religion during the partition is considered as the communal violence which culminated and reached the climax on the eve of the partition of the Indian subcontinent. However, before the partition, the people of various religious communities, including the Muslims, the Hindus, the Sikhs, and the Christians, co-existed amicably. These amicably co-existing people turned to be inimical against one another; this gradual attitudinal shift towards one another ultimately degenerated into cataclysmic violence during the partition.

The communal violence, in the context of this study, refers to the fatal conflicts between different religious groups i.e. the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs in addition to the killings, looting, burning alive, raping, enslaving, exploiting and compelling one another to conversion. These clashes and conflicts were mostly between the Muslims

and the Hindus. Thus, the term communalism, in the Indian context, covers this problematic area of the clashes between different religious groups, which begot a historical communal construct in which members of either party condoned the mistakes of their heroes and unnecessarily eulogized their achievements, whereas the good acts of the other community were condemned, marred and belittled. Varshney (2002) believes that an event will be identified as a communal riot, if there is violence and two or more communally identified groups confront each other or the members of the other group at some point during the violence. Engineer (1991) further maintains that communal violence, on the basis of religion, is a spontaneous outburst of religious frenzy. He further believes that religious riots are executed with neat planning to achieve the targeted result. While defining communal violence during the partition, he argues that it was not the product of religious passions but was used as a means to get some motives served.

As discussed above, these riots and violence in the Indian context have been termed communal violence. This communal trouble not only made India a diabolical region but also exerted a strong influence on creative writing. The communal riots and violence have been the predominant theme of the partition literature. The creative literature represented and painted the traumatic picture of the suffering and migrating people. The blood-soaked partition produced the heart-rending literature.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-candy Man* (1988) was written in the backdrop of the partition of the Indian subcontinent. It narrates the tale of torture, trauma, communal anguish and violence during the partition. It is an account of the vicious communal clashes among diversified religious communities during the partition of the Indian subcontinent. The novel is undertaken for the critical analysis of the communal violence during the partition of the Indian subcontinent and traces various factors behind this estrangement and maladjustment among the diversified religious communities represented in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) from the perspective of the Neo Historicism.

### **Significance of the Study**

It is a general notion that communal violence in the Indian subcontinent was committed because of religious differences and hatred among the diversified religious communities; however, the undertaken study will help to understand the pre- and post-partition relationships among various religious communities and the reasons leading to the communal violence. Thus, the study aims to present a wider understanding of the phenomenon and how literature in circumstances as such has the best to offer for the world to avoid the devastation and horrible consequences that the Indian subcontinent underwent during the tumultuous time of the partition.

### **Research Objective**

1. To analyze the reasons for the communal violence in the Indian subcontinent during the partition represented in *Ice-candy Man* in the light of the New Historical approach.

### **Research Question**

1. What are the main reasons for the communal anguish and violence represented in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-candy Man*?

### **Review of Literature: The Historical Perspective of the Communal Violence**

The Indian subcontinent remained under indirect and direct colonial rule for about three centuries, which ended with great violence among the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs during the partition in 1947. Stephens (1964) holds that "in the blood-soaked partition about 500,000 persons died and 14,000,000 had to migrate" (15). The massive exodus and the casualties during the partition of the Indian subcontinent are generally associated with the riots and the communal violence that took place before and after the partition. Mostly, the riots and the communal violence erupted in Punjab and Bengal region. The following factors fueled communal violence and anguish.

### **Incidents Leading to the Communal Violence**

#### ***Birth of the Congress***

Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan, in his book, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, stated that the gap in communication between the colonizers and the colonized was the chief cause of the revolt; furthermore, he stated that the government tried to win the friendship of the subjects rather than the subjects trying prevalence of the government. Therefore, the then Viceroy Lord Dufferin, in 1885 entrusted Allan Octavian Hume, a retired English civil servant, to establish an organization to reflect the opinion of the Indian public. Thus, Hume founded the Indian National Congress in the same year.

Similarly, Mustafa (1961) also maintains that the Congress developed as a Hindu body. In accordance with the revivalist tendencies in Hinduism, the tone and demeanour of Congress also turned to become Hindu. The attitude of the extremist wing of Congress was not only anti-government but also anti-Muslim. According to Qureshi (1961), the anti-Muslim movements were started by Hindu leaders based on inimical and unfair attitude towards Islam and Christianity. Thus, Qureshi (1961) considers the Nationalism and Hindu communalism as twin sisters.

#### ***The Partition of Bengal (1905): An Episode of Divide and Rule***

The partition of Bengal (1905) was another episode to fuel the political anguish between the Muslims and the Hindus. However, Stephens (1964) opines that Lord Curzon's primary purpose for the partition of Bengal was for

administrative convenience. Because Bengal was thickly populated and the Muslim-majority areas remained neglected for a long, hence, the local Muslims welcomed the decision, whereas the Hindus considered it as a planned attack on their interests. The Hindus openly opposed the partition of Bengal. Mahmood (1975) calls the partition of the Bengal “an eyesore for the Hindus” (37). In this context, Qureshi (1961) succinctly establishes that the campaign of the Hindus against the partition of Bengal was directed not only against the British but also against the Muslims because their monopoly was at stake. On the contrary, Gopal (1963) rejects the partition of Bengal on the grounds of administrative convenience and levels the charges of the divide and rule on the British. Like Lytton, Curzon brought the vision of creating a schism between the Hindus and the Muslims and called it ‘the crowning act of mischief’. Furthermore, he affirms that Lord Curzon got success in his plan. The peaceful Bengal, with two communities living in perfect harmony, was put into a whirlpool of violence. Thus, religious fanatics of two opposite groups, hooligans, and plunderers violated the peace and harmony of the city.

#### ***Birth of the All-India Muslim League: A Political Divide***

The All-India Muslim League was formed on December 30, 1906, in Dhaka to represent the Muslims of the subcontinent. Stephens (1964) considers it as a potential rival to the Congress. Bhargava (1977) calls it a parallel organization to Congress. Nagarkar (1957) establishes that the All-India Muslim League adopted the Two-Nation Theory as its political philosophy in the 1940’s, moreover; it was formed to promote the religio-communal approach for the interests of the Muslims. Hence, the Hindus did not welcome the birth of the All-India Muslim League and the Muslims and the Hindus were divided on political grounds. The political antagonism subsequently resulted in the partition of the Indian subcontinent.

#### ***The Nehru Report: A Cleavage to the Communities***

Zaman (1967) points out that the All-India Muslim League emphasized Hindu-Muslim unity and vainly strove to meet such ends in its annual sessions in 1924, 1925 and 1926, but to no avail. Finally, the All-Parties Conference was held in 1928. It was decided in the conference to make the draft for the future constitution of the country, which later became famous as the Nehru Report. Aziz (1977) considers it as the final irrecoverable rift between the Hindus and the Muslims because the Nehru Report recommended a fully representative government in which the majority would be sovereign. The separate electorate system was recommended to be abolished. Nehru envisaged the Hindu Raj; consequently, the Hindu-Muslim unity was buried deep under the debris of communal rift. From 1928 onwards, the Congress turned out to be a Hindu body and Muslim leadership got disillusioned. The Muslim leaders considered the Congress an archenemy of Muslim interests and claims. Thus, in the wake of the Nehru Report, the Muslims got consolidated and their earlier yearning for Indian Nationalism was replaced with a rude awakening to have a separate state for Muslims. Toosy (1978) calls the Nehru Report as the final word from the side of the Hindus, and it realized the Muslims that their interests had been completely ignored. Pirzada (1995) considers that “the Nehru Report made the cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims wider than ever” (19), moreover, he calls it a “notorious report” (120). Consequently, Jinnah was given the authority to make a draft for the Muslims; he presented his demands known as ‘fourteen points’ to counter the Nehru Report.

#### ***The Lahore Resolution: A Step towards the Partition***

A famous resolution in favour of the partition of the Indian subcontinent was put forward and passed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940, at Lahore, known as the Lahore Resolution. Through this resolution, the Muslims demanded a separate country for them. According to Siddiqui (1972), the demand of Pakistan was the result of the failure of the Hindu and Muslim elite groups’ agreement on the share of the fruit of office and independence. He further maintains that the Muslim League did not envisage the concept of Pakistan during the thirties because its leaders still hoped for guaranteed patronage from the Congress. Thus, in 1940, the hope vanished, and the Muslim thinkers realized that there were two nations in India.

#### ***The Direct Action Day (Great Calcutta Killing): A Political Reason for the Communal Violence***

According to Allan et al (1958), in 1944 Mr. Rajagopal Archi, with the approval of Gandhi, brought the formula of Pakistan but Mr. Jinnah turned down the proposal terming it “a maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan, without the industrial areas of West Bengal, the river headwaters of the East Punjab and unexploited wealth of Assam Valley” (722). He wanted six provinces including Sindh, Punjab, the N.W.F.P, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam, with adjusted boundaries. The Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) brought the formula of a united India, which was rejected by the Congress. In the wake of its failure, the Cabinet Mission concluded that Pakistan was not a feasible and acceptable solution to the communal problem. According to Toosy (1978), the Cabinet Mission admitted its failure and left India. When the Cabinet Mission failed to bring a constitutional solution, the Muslim League decided a Direct Action to get Pakistan and to get rid of both British rule and Hindu dominance. Hence, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1946 was fixed as Direct Action Day. This resulted in a massacre in Calcutta and Sylhet, followed by the same happenings in Noakhali and Tipperah including killings, abductions, forced marriages, rapes and conversions to Islam. Baig (1962) calls it a peaceful protest, whereas Clymer (2013) holds Jinnah responsible for the trouble in Calcutta because the Muslim League government

in Bengal declared the Direct Action Day a public holiday. Consequently, the violence and riots took place across Bengal and in Calcutta. On the other hand, Stephens (1964) establishes that the League's Central leadership did not plan anything much except big meetings. Jinnah declared that it was no declaration of war on anybody. It was termed as a new order in disorder and it was not anti-western but communal one. However, it was unique in intensity, size and savageness that no one had imagined. The scene of slaughter and destruction was termed as 'Great Calcutta Killing'. According to Toosy (1978), Jinnah had given clear instructions to the Muslims to behave in a disciplined manner and not play in the hands of their enemies. Unfortunately, the processions coming out from different parts of Calcutta and assembling in a common *maidan* were obstructed, attacked and routed. The result was communal clashes, about 5000 people were killed, more than 10000 were injured, and millions worth of property was destroyed. He further maintains that the official estimated ratio of Muslims killed was four times that of Hindus. Besides, the first case of the wounded brought into hospitals was of Muslim and 90 per cent of admissions on the first day were Muslims. It was a planned and subtle move to slaughter the Muslims and make the Direct Action Day responsible.

#### ***Noakhali Day (Noakhali Killing): A Political Revenge and Path to the Partition***

In the wake of the Direct Action Day, a Noakhali Day was observed in Bihar as revenge on the Muslims. Stephens (1964) establishes that the Noakhali Day was observed and sponsored by the Provincial Congress Ministry. Unlike the Calcutta killing, the Noakhali massacre was spread far and wide to the villages and it was difficult for the authorities to deal with and control the situation. He gives different estimations of the death toll, the Congress itself admitted 2000, whereas Jinnah claimed 30000. Stephens (1964) considers the Bihar tragedy as a decisive role in the partition controversy; the huge slaughter was a sign of the cold-blooded partition, and the hope of harmony turned into a poignant nightmare. The goodwill among the political parties failed, and the communal violence continued in Punjab, and it became difficult to maintain the law-and-order situation. According to Symond (1987), the new Viceroy found a desperate situation. Because the central cabinet was divided and powerless, the Unionist government in Punjab was tottering under the attacks of the Muslim League, the Muslim League civil disobedience campaign in the North-West Frontier, the country was under fierce communal clashes and the private armies decided the final struggle for the power.

The partition of the Indian subcontinent equally divided the people on religious and political grounds. In this regard, Jalal (1966) regrets that "the psychological legacy of the partition has left a much deeper impact on people's minds than the social, economic and political dynamics that led to the division" (681). Hassan (1995) calls the partition of India "an epic human tragedy, a man-made catastrophe by cynical and hot-headed politicians who lacked the imagination to resolve their disputes and the foresight to grasp the implications of dividing their country along religious lines" (10). Hence, the political polemics and maladjustment created a gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Congress and the Muslim League could not settle the issue because they had different political agendas. The Muslims and the Hindus could not trust each other on political grounds, consequently, the political polemics and maladjustment turned to communal polemics and maladjustment. Both communities stood together against the British during the struggle for independence but turned against each other at the time of the partition. Consequently, the British remained safe but the indigenous people fell upon one another.

#### ***Ice-Candy Man (ICM) as Political and Communal Controversy***

Deb (2011) regards *ICM* as a subject of the Holocaust and traumatic moments at the time of the partition of the Indian subcontinent. Religion played a key role in the moments of historical disaster. It includes the horrors of various religious riots and massacres. He further considers it as an important document to present the entire partition picture from the standpoint of a member of a silent minority who was neither involved nor even visible to the national politics of the partition. Like other novels, it also narrates the fiction and pain of the national history of the Indian subcontinent and opens the critical dimensions of human suffering of innocent people in an unbiased manner. Bharucha (1995) establishes that *ICM* is a sophisticated narrative principally concerned with the partitioning of India with many postmodernist features like fantasy, fragmentation of time and allegory. At the level of allegory, the novel presents the political duplicity and the symbolic rape of a hapless colony by the departing colonial power. Kumar (2015) holds that *ICM* represents both partition and its aftermath presenting myriad incidents of brutal murders, killing, migrations, rapes of women, arsenal attacks, and riots among the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. It also demonstrates how the British policy of divide and rule disintegrated the Hindu-Muslim unity. Seethalaksmi (2016) calls it an autobiographical novel. It depicts the political pre-occupation i.e. the violence and the fragmentation due to the partition. It reveals both the ruptured political construct and families and communities in the pattern of the banal violence given in the text.

Kumar (2014) opines that *ICM* examines the inexorable logic of the partition of the Indian subcontinent as the consequence of fundamentalism generated by communal hatred. The novel focuses on the partition as a means of widespread disharmony that ended in frenzy and chaos, where the partition had left even sane people and friends helpless and ineffective. Besides the partition, Sidhwa discussed several issues related to the partition including



conflicting attitudes of the Muslim League and Congress, riots in Punjab and its partition and communal disharmony. He concludes that the novel presents the sight of the events of turmoil of the Indian subcontinent during the partition. It has distilled the love-hate relationship of the Hindus and Muslims through the narrations of an eight-year-old girl, Lenny; moreover, it has brought to life the spiritual, emotional and real implications of the partition of India. Likewise, Bhaskar (2016) maintains that *ICM* is one of the most serious and popular novels of Bapsi Sidhwa, which critically depicts the altering socio-political realities of the Indian subcontinent just before its partition. The novelist has presented the story of the partition and the incidents of Hindu- Muslim riots from an impartial perspective. The writer has presented the gloomy and sordid tale of the partition through the power of the characters. The dark and sordid tale has turned into a powerful truth-telling narrative. Furthermore, he considers that Sidhwa is Pakistani and, therefore, presents the Pakistani version of the partition. Similarly, Singh (2015) is also of the opinion that *ICM* presents the Pakistani version of the partition as Sidhwa intentionally attempts to counter Indian and European discourses of history and attempts to resurrect the culture and identity of her own country.

Hence, the undertaken novel is considered to be the most representative novel of the partition literature. The researchers believe that Sidhwa has presented her personal view of the partition and has presented the Pakistani version of the partition. However, the novel is widely appreciated due to its theme and construct, in the backdrop of the partition.

### Research Methodology

The textual Analysis method is used to analyse the reasons for the communal violence represented in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man*. Frey et al (1999) illustrate textual analysis as a method where the researcher describes and interprets the given message in the text. The textual analysis aims to explain the content, structure and functions of the text that carries with it. The important element of the textual analysis is to select the text types to be studied, the appropriate text to be acquired then a particular approach to be used to analyze them. Therefore, the researchers have attempted to analyze and interpret the data of the text of the undertaken novel from the vantage point of the new historicism. The content and the body of the text of the undertaken novel are studied and analyzed to determine the reasons for the communal violence manifested during the partition. The text of the novel has been read along with historical facts to analyze how Bapsi Sidhwa has historicized the fiction and how she has fictionalized the history. Thus, the drawn conclusions are based on the textual analysis of the undertaken novel.

### The New Historicism: Theoretical Framework

The present study is conducted from the vantage point of the new historical approach. While analysing a literary work, the traditional historical approach focuses on biographical aspects of the author's life and the historical period in which the text is written to reveal the spirit of the time. It considers literature purely subjective and history purely objective. Hence, traditional historians establish that literature and history are interdependent. However, New Criticism rejects the traditional historical approach on the basis that literature has nothing to do with history, history can only provide valid/ reasonable background material for creative works. New Critics consider literary works as autonomous and timeless objects beyond the sphere of history. New Criticism dominated literary studies between 1940 and 1960, but New Historicism emerged in the late 1970s and rejected the traditional historical approach and New Criticism altogether. It argues that both literary work and historical situations, in which the text is produced, are equally important. In this regard, Tyson (2006) believes that the text as a literary work and historical conditions as a context give birth to literature, and they are equally important and constitutive. Hence, to a new historical critic, both the creative works as text and the historical conditions as context are equally important to critique and analyse literary works. According to Barry (1999) "New Historicism refuses to privilege literary text: instead of a literary foreground and a historical background, it envisages and practices a mode of study in which literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform and interrogate each other" (172).

According to Krishnaswamy (2001), New Historicism suggests a parallel reading of the literary and non-literary text of the same given historical period. Both the texts are considered important in their context. According to Bhat (2014) whatever the name of the term may be its chief aim is to investigate a literary work from the perspective of historical background and to focus on socio-cultural circumstances.

Tyson (2006) holds that history can be understood with the help of available written forms including documents, articles, letters, diaries, letters, speeches, legal codes etc., which are recorded in a given time and place, and their findings are based on the aforementioned primary sources than the interpretation of the other historians as secondary sources. Similarly, they require the same kind of analysis literary critics perform on a literary text. The new historicists consider primary and secondary sources as forms of historical narratives. The historical narratives of the marginalized people are considered one of the most important features of the New Historicism. Sharma (2014) maintains that the main ground of New Historicists is to accentuate the subversive forces of marginalized communities of society such as female, bourgeoisie and ethnic communities of non-European origin. Sharma (2014) maintains that the main motive of "New Historicists" is to find out subversive voices in the literary text so that society may be

awakened regarding the exploitation of marginalized community” (09). Thus, New Historicism focuses on the marginalized community in literary texts.

Tyson (2006) summarizes the key concepts of New Historicism for literary criticism:

- i. The writing of history is not a matter of facts but of interpretations, thus, all historical accounts are narratives, and a literary critic can use many tools for analyzing those narratives.
- ii. History is neither progressive nor linear.
- iii. A single person or a single level of society cannot hold power solely, but in culture, power circulates via exchanges of material goods, exchanges of human beings and most important exchanges of ideas through the various discourses produced in a culture.
- iv. There is neither a monolithic spirit of age i.e. single, unified and universal spirit, nor an adequate totalizing explanation of history i.e. single key to all aspects. The single-sided analysis of a historian will be incomplete.
- v. Personal identity emerges from culture and is shaped by the culture
- vi. All historical analysis is unavoidably subjective.

Tiwari and Chandra (2010) establish that New Historicists put the literary text in its context to recover the hidden historical meanings i.e. historicity of the text, subsequently, to find out the relationship between the historical and cultural meanings the text carries with it and the situation of the reader to arouse his cultural wonder at resonance. The critics of this group are very much interested in history, and they interpret it in a much wider sense. They establish that literature and history cannot be separated. Hence, ‘textuality of history’ and ‘historicity of text’ are the basic concepts of New Historicism. In addition, Barry (1999) mentions that the new historicists employ the method of juxtaposing literary and non-literary texts while analyzing any literary work. They study the former in the light of the latter.

In light of the above discussion, the present study adopts the method of juxtaposing literary and non-literary texts to critically analyze the topic. The text of the novel has been studied in the light of the historical context. The text of the selected novel and the historical conditions provide significant grounds and validate the use of the new historical approach to conduct this study. Therefore, the text is analysed in the background of the history and the historical event of the partition of the Indian subcontinent.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The undertaken novel *ICM* is set in the pre-partitioned Indian subcontinent, where various religious communities i.e., the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs coexist amicably and peacefully. However, gradually the peaceful coexistence starts withering, and a gradual change and subsequent cleavage disintegrates their relationships. Consequently, that cleavage triggers communal violence during and after the partition of the Indian subcontinent.

#### **Unity and Trust Among the Non-violent People Before the Partition**

Through the character of Ayah, it is revealed that people with diversified religious affiliations co-exist peacefully and without religious bigotry, bias, prejudice, and discrimination. The Hindu woman is depicted as an epicentre of the communal harmony. This aspect of the novel rejects the doctrine that religious practices intercepted life and made it a diabolical region.

However, after the partition, the same Hindu woman suffers on religious grounds and becomes the victim of communal anguish. She suffers only because she is a ‘Hindu’. The Muslim mob in procession raising slogans *Allah-o-Akber* and *Pakistan Zindabad* enters the house of the Sethi family and enquires about the Ayah, “Where is the Hindu woman? The Ayah!” (p. 181). The Hindu Ayah is permitted “... to be raped by butchers, drunks and *goondas*” (p. 248). Her body is presented as the playground for “... the national pastime” (p. 259). The partition brings a radical change in the relationships of the diversified religious communities. Ayah’s pre-partition status of being a rivet of communal harmony degenerated into the epicentre of the seismological communal disharmony after the partition. Before the partition, she is considered as the symbol of communal harmony. On the contrary, after the partition, she is presented as the symbol of communal disharmony due to her religious identity.

The members of the various religious communities love and trust one another. They do not doubt their mutual commitment and trust, nevertheless, they discuss the communal trouble taking place in Calcutta, Delhi, and Lahore. “These are bad times ... there is a big trouble in Calcutta and Delhi: Hindu- Muslim trouble” (p. 75). Despite the impending danger of the spreading communal strife, Ayah hands over her saving and the salary of the month “forty rupees” for interest to Sharbat Khan (p. 76). He gets money as a side business, carries out transaction on her behalf, and provides her profit. This reveals that a typical Muslim and a Hindu woman trust each other irrespective of their religious differences and co-exist with harmony and trust.

In addition to the city, a strong co-existential bond between the Muslims and the Sikhs is portrayed in the surrounding villages of Lahore. They have co-existed amicably for a long time. They visit each other’s village. There are traces of religio-political trouble in the cities, yet they long to maintain the amicable prevalence in the villages

irrespective of their religious differences. To them, their mutual peaceful bond is more important than their religious identities. The data reveals the Sikh-Muslim mutual understanding regardless of their religious differences. The exchange of visits, sitting, talking, and eating together are common before the partition. The intimacy between both communities reveals that they have been enjoying co-existence for a long period and have never experienced communal trouble before the partition frenzy. The politics and the disturbing talks of the division have nothing to do with their co-existence. The Sikhs declare, "If need be, we'll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives" (p. 56). As a token of mutual declaration, the Muslims take oath on the Holy Koran to guard the Sikh brothers with no regard for their own lives. They consider it their duty to protect each other. Despite the trouble in the cities, they maintain their peaceful co-existence. This episode equally testifies that the religious identities, in villages, are not the grounds or bases of communal differences or violence.

### **Eruption of the Communal Violence: The English and The Congressmen**

The English are deemed as savages due to their inefficiency in stopping the violence. They are considered to be behind the trouble and are held accountable and equally responsible for the religious cleavage; besides, the congressmen are also held responsible for the panic. On the other hand, the Sikhs and the Muslims do not like the trouble based on their religious identities and they "erupt in protest" (p. 56). Both communities do not want the communal trouble to spread over their villages to spoil their peaceful bond of co-existence. The Sikhs declare, "We are brothers. How can we fight each other?" (p. 56)" They vow not to fight against each other in case the violence erupts in their villages.

### **Eruption of the Communal Violence in Cities vis-à-vis the Sikh-Muslim Unity in Villages**

The data reveals that the local Sikhs and the Muslims repudiate the communal strife and refuse to fight against each other in case trouble erupts in their villages. Jagjeet Singh, the Sikh *granthi* reiterates that the long-lasting co-existence and goodwill among them will prevail. He assures the Muslims of their co-existence. He says, "Brother, when the tumult subsides, our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?" (p. 56). The Sikhs do not even imagine the trouble and exclaim with doubt how the impending danger can crack and corrupt their relationships. The Sikhs consider the Muslims as brothers and they feel their insult to fight with the Muslims.

Similarly, the Muslims also believe in mutual peace with a thought that the villagers are dependent on each other; they believe that "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" (p. 56). The Muslims are quite sure that the trouble will not affect their lives. They think that they will remain out of danger until the Sikhs are with them. They believe that "... as long as our Sikh brothers are with us, what have we to fear?" (p. 56). The *granthi* responds, "I think you are right, brother, the madness will not infect the villages" (p. 56). The Muslims, being in the minority, are left at the mercy of the Sikhs.

The Sikhs and the Muslims talk of peace and co-existence, but still, they are unaware of the boundary line to be drawn in Punjab. The cause of the communal trouble is not the religious differences, but it is the talks of the partition and political disagreement, which paves the way for the communal trouble and violence. Moreover, the inhabitants of the villages including the Sikhs and the Muslims are ready to safeguard their co-existence and unity instead of fighting against each other. Both communities consider each other as brothers and blame the city Hindus as their common enemy. The data reveals that the Sikhs are entrapped and used by the Hindus and are used as their fighting arms. Moreover, the Sikhs and the Muslims are not shown discussing the political controversies in their meetings. Both communities love peace and co-existence and wish to live in communal harmony.

### **The Political Strife Leading to the Communal Rupture**

The political strife between the Congress and the Muslim League is portrayed through a hot discussion between the English, Mr. Rogers, Inspector General of Police and Mr. Singh, a practising Sikh, at a dinner party. Nehru, Gandhi, and the Congress are bitterly criticised for their attitude towards the Muslim League. It is predicted that the religious communities will kill one another in case the British leave. Mr. Rogers says, "Nehru and the Congress will not have everything their way! They will have to reckon with Muslim League and Jinnah. If we quit India today ... you'll bloody fall at each other's throats!" (p. 62). The Congress leaders are presented as arrogant because they do not agree on a single issue with the Muslim League, equally, they are compelling Jinnah for the partition and subsequent creation of Pakistan. "Those arrogant Hindus have blown the last chance for an undivided India ... Gandhi and Nehru are forcing the League to push for Pakistan" (p. 63). The Congress leaders, specifically Nehru and Gandhi, are held responsible for the partition because they thwarted the possibility of an undivided India by rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan. It is stressed that "The Cabinet Mission proposed a Federation of the Hindu and Muslim majority provinces. Jinnah accepted it; Gandhi and Nehru didn't" (p. 62). Moreover, they rejected Lord Wavell's proposal for the Interim Government and refused to sit with Jinnah. Therefore, they are called "bloody monkeys" (p. 62). The novel depicts the reason for the ongoing violence, Gandhi and Nehru are held responsible, and the communal disharmony and violence are predicted after the departure of the English.

The rejection of the Cabinet Mission 1946 also paved the way for communal violence. After the failure of the Cabinet Mission, the Muslim League decided to fix a Direct Action Day. The political polemics created chaos and disturbance, consequently, Calcutta witnessed human slaughter, and the Hindus were killed on a large scale. Stephens (1964) maintains that on 27 July the Muslim League decided to take or to support direct action for getting Pakistan as per the decision of the Lahore Resolution 1940 and 16<sup>th</sup> August 1946 was fixed as Direct Action Day. Jinnah declared that they were forced into that position. He further establishes that Jinnah asked the people to behave serenely as it was not a declaration of war on anybody; they just wanted to announce publicly the League Council's resolution. Hence, the political frenzy degenerated into religious anger and violence, which is termed communal violence. Whereas the reason for the Calcutta killing was the political strife and rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan it had little connection with religious differences.

The government failed to stop the violence in Calcutta and due to administrative failure, the massacre was repeated in Bihar. Stephens (1964) holds that the *sarkar* did not want to stop the killings due to the sudden and complete collapse of administrative measures in Calcutta. The police service had become ineffective, effective troops were not called in by the civil power until it was too late. The data presents the same administrative failure. "Funny things are happening inside the old city ... Stabbings ... Either the police can't do anything – or they don't want to" (p. 75). Tharoor (2016) blames the Muslims were looting and killing in the streets of Calcutta and the police and army stood idle and passive as if the British had decided to leave the city at the mercy of the mob. He further adds that the British remained supportive and let horrors occur in Bengal, the horrors took the lives of almost 16000 people.

This political strife turned out to be a communal rupture, moreover, the *sarkar* is held responsible for having a hand in it. As Mr. Singh, the follower of Master Tara Singh, accuses Mr. Rogers of the trouble "... your divide-and-rule monkey tricks! ... You just give Home Rule and see. We will settle our differences and everything!" (p. 63). According to the data, the English stand behind the political trouble that is giving way to the religious cleavage. Tharoor (2006) maintains that the religious divide between the Hindus and the Muslims was shrewdly exploited by the British as a means to divide and rule, which eventually divided the country. Moreover, he calls the communalism a "colonial construction" (p.186). Therefore, the British are responsible for sowing the seeds of religious difference in the minds of the Hindus and the Muslims, and thus colonial policies hardened the communal identities. Before the colonial period, Hindus and Muslims helped each other in constructing their temples or shrines. Besides communal differences, many other kinds of social troubles were labelled as religious due to the assumption of the colonists that religion was the basic division in Indian society. Hence, the colonizers used religion as a tool to divide and disintegrate different religious communities and bring them on the verge of massacres, looting, devastation and molestation.

#### **The Land Issue: Maladjustment of the Sikhs and the Muslims**

The data reveals that the peaceful co-existence and amicable relationships started cracking due to the political agenda of the division of Punjab into West Punjab and East Punjab: West Punjab to Pakistan and East Punjab to India. The Akalis became furious at the idea of dividing Punjab. The Sikhs had rich lands in West Punjab and were in the minority, whereas the Muslims in East Punjab were poorer and were in the minority. While stating the reasons for the anger of the Sikhs, Jaijee (1998) posits that Congress did not keep its promise of safeguarding the due share of the Sikh community and agreed on the partition without their consultation. Consequently, Punjab was divided into West and East Punjab. Due to the partition of Punjab, the Sikhs of West Punjab had to leave their homes and rich lands. Therefore, the Sikhs of the Eastern Punjab turned out to be furious about their mass displacement.

The displacement of the Sikhs and the Muslims turned friends into foes. Tatla (1999) argues that the Sikhs, as a religious community, were displaced from their centres and the Partition of Punjab brought disaster to millions of people. Therefore, the partition of Punjab caused unprecedented communal violence and uncertainty.

It is found that communal trouble is a totally planned and engineered phenomenon. It started in the cities and spread in the villages in the wake of the communal riots of Bihar and Calcutta as the result of Noakhali day observed by the Hindus. Moreover, in the villages, the communal riots are depicted as the consequence of the partition of Punjab where the Sikhs are losing their rich lands. Before the partition, the Muslims, and the Sikhs, in the villages, are depicted as friends and having a mutual bond of peace and co-existence. Therefore, the anguish that ensued after partition degenerated into communal cleavage and subsequently into communal violence.

#### **The Boundary Commission: A Leading Factor of the Violence**

The Boundary Commission also paves the way for the violence during the partition. The division of the Indian subcontinent by the Boundary Commission is termed the drawing-room division and a game by the British. The text of the novel refers to the colonizers as "British gods" (140), playing card games "under the ceiling fans of Falettis Hotel" (p. 140). Like a random move of cards, the cities and the towns are exploited ruthlessly., "Radcliff Commission deals out Indian cities like a pack of cards. Lahore is dealt to Pakistan, Amritsar to India. Sialkot to Pakistan. Pathankot to India" (p. 140). The division is considered inequitable because the British give the Hindus favour over the Muslims. "The British favour Nehru over Jinnah. Nehru is Kashmiri; they grant him Kashmir.



Spurning logic, defying rationale, ignoring the consequences of bequeathing a Muslim state to the Hindus ... they grant Nehru Gurdaspur and Pathankot, without which Muslim Kashmir cannot be secured” (p. 159). According to Pirzada (1995), Gurdaspur was granted to India because that was a road from India to Kashmir, the land of Nehru’s ancestors. Therefore, the decision of the Boundary Commission created maladjustment among the masses.

The British are found responsible for the division that is made by “doling out favours” (p. 159), where Hindus are favoured over Muslims. Hence, the controversial division causes communal violence and riots; resultantly, the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims become daggers drawn and start killing one another. Hence, the inequitable partition becomes one of the main causes of communal violence and the Boundary Commission is also responsible for the sudden outburst of violence. Due to the hasty decision of returning to their homes, and hasty demarcations by the Boundary Commission, the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs turned upon one another with savagery and vengeance.

The Indians, just with the decision of the Boundary Commission, turn to be the citizens of the new countries; their religious identities become visibly referred to because the people are divided on the basis of religion. Meanwhile, the migrations start, and Lahore is flooded with Muslim refugees. “Within three months seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs are up-rooted in the largest and the most terrible exchange of population known to history” (p. 159). Due to the drawing-room division of Punjab, many people migrate and become dislocated. Consequently, the migrating refugees kill one another as a matter of vengeance for their dislocation and loss of ancestral places and possessions.

The hasty announcement of the Boundary Commission surprises the people, “unexpectedly... Gurdaspur’s gone to India ... they had hoisted the green Pakistani flag and all. There’s bound to be trouble” (p. 146). Their fear turns into reality and the radio reports troubles and “... there is uncontrollable butchering going on in Gurdaspur” (p. 148). Hence, the data establishes that the decision of the Boundary Commission is not justified; it rather played havoc with the lives of the people belonging to different religious communities.

The partition of Punjab becomes the main cause of the violence. Ziring (1980) argues that the partition of Punjab embittered the Sikhs who considered the Muslims solely responsible for not establishing Sikh-state Khalistan. Hence, they considered the Muslims as their foes. Similarly, Toosy (1978) holds the partition responsible for the communal disharmony; communal harmony would have existed between Pakistan and Hindu India if Punjab and Bengal had not been partitioned and if the whole of Assam had joined to Pakistan.

### Discussion

In response to the main reasons for the communal anguish and violence represented in Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel *Ice-candy Man*, it has been found that the people of diversified religious communities including the Sikhs, the Hindus, and the Muslims enjoy religious harmony, peace and co-existence in Lahore as well as villages around Lahore. Before the partition, the people of various religious groups in the city and the surrounding villages are least concerned about their religious differences.

The text of the novel has challenged the established doctrine that religious indifferences caused violence in the Indian subcontinent. On the contrary, it establishes that the peaceful relationships among various religious communities remain intact until the rise of the political agenda of the partition. Before the partition, specifically focusing on Lahore, the people of diversified religious communities including the Sikhs, the Hindus and the Muslims live in perfect communal harmony in the form of a circle around a Hindu woman. Being an epicentre of communal harmony, she plays a magnetic role by integrating various religious identities into a single sphere. The members of heterogeneous religious backgrounds live without any religious bigotry, bias, prejudice, or discrimination. They converge around her being regardless of their religious differences. Thus, the pre-partition Indian society is presented as a peaceful society because no single incident regarding the religious controversy is depicted until the political frenzy flares up.

Moreover, before the partition, the people trust, love, and help one another irrespective of their religious faith and communal identity. They have a few naughty fights, yet they care for one another. The intimacy with co-existence prevails and permeates their relationship; no aura of religious discomfiture is found that could crack and spoil their relationship.

In addition to the city, the Sikhs and the Muslims in the villages are tied with a strong co-existential bond, and they have maintained it for a long time. They exchange visits to each other’s village, share religious festivals, have good wishes for each other and feel great concern for their family matters. Despite the news that political and communal trouble is soaring up in the cities such as Hindus being killed in Bengal and Muslims in Bihar, besides, the Sikh-Muslim trouble in the cities has erupted, both the communities react and respond pre-emptively to avert and impede its access to their villages. They rise to protest because they endeavour to keep the age-long prevailing communal harmony intact despite the alarming communal trouble. The Sikhs of the village, being in the majority, consider the Muslims as brothers and they consider it as their insult to fight with the Muslim brothers. They long their

amicable co-existence must transcend beyond their religious differences. To them, their mutual peaceful bond is more important than their religious identities. Therefore, they take a mutual oath to safeguard each other from the would-be communal troubles in the villages. Thus, the people of various religious communities are presented as living in better mutual religious harmony. Their religious practices do not intercept their relationships. However, as soon as the political frenzy reaches the boiling point and the partition draws nearer, the religious harmony is replaced with the simmering hostility. Subsequently, the religion and religious slogans are politicised. As a result, the members of the various religious communities take it as a religious obligation to kill the members of other religious groups. Hence, the political antagonism among the political parties is depicted as the leading reason for the communal disharmony.

The data rejects the established doctrine that religious ceremonial practices intercepted the life of the members of the diversified religious communities. On the contrary, the text presents the people with reciprocal harmony and amity in the city as well as in the villages before the partition. The political polemics, the partition issue, and the land issue became the main causes of the religious dissonance. The politics is depicted as having exploited the religion, which degenerated into the subsequent communal violence.

In addition to the Hindus, the Sikhs are also held responsible for the massacre of the Muslims, because they are to lose their rich land in West Punjab – the would-be part of the Pakistan territory. The Sikhs have rich lands in Punjab, and it is to be divided into East and West. The East Punjab is expected to be included in India, whereas West Punjab in Pakistan. The Sikhs commit the mistake of standing with the Hindus rather than fraternising with the Muslim League. The antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims causes the division of Punjab. Therefore, the land issue becomes one of the major causes of the Sikh violence against Muslims. Hence, the partition of the Indian subcontinent in general and the partition of Punjab in particular is one of the leading reasons for the Sikh massacre against the Muslims. Hence, the Sikhs are held accountable for the violence.

It is established that religion may not be the central cause of communal trouble, but it is the land issue and the partition that augment the communal trouble and violence in and around Lahore. Besides, the religious differences are the direct offshoot of the political polemics and the partition talks. By depicting the rumours of violence in chapter seven, Sidhwa shows the gradual change and visible religious differences, and thus, the pre-partition harmony gradually decays and gets replaced with communal differences.

The congressmen and Nehru are held responsible for the panic and are called bloody monkeys. The data establishes that Nehru and Gandhi compelled the Muslim League to struggle for the creation of Pakistan by rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan, which caused the cataclysmic communal violence in Calcutta and subsequently in Bihar. The political leadership failed to agree on one point. That political disagreement created chaos and poisoned the minds of the masses on religious grounds; hence, the partition became inevitable. Therefore, it is inferred that if the partition is the main reason for the communal violence, then the Hindus would be deemed responsible for the partition and the subsequent violence.

The Boundary Commission is also held responsible for communal violence during the partition. The commission is bitterly criticised for the hasty, unexpected, and inequitable division, taking sides with the Hindus and giving them undue favour. The commission distributes Indian cities like cards in a game. The decision of the inequitable division led the people to communal anguish, and subsequently to communal violence.

The English *Sarkar* (government) is held responsible for not stopping the violence. The English are called the savages and are responsible for all the tragic trouble and religious cleavage. The *sarkar* does not stop the violence, which implies that they have their hands in the cleavage among various religious communities; this attitude of the British is termed as divide-and-rule monkey tricks. Thus, religion is manipulated and exploited by the British. Finally, at the time of the partition, diversified religious communities fight against one another, but the British remain safe and unharmed.

### Conclusion

In an attempt to analyse reasons for the communal anguish and violence represented in *ICM* from the perspective of Neo-Historicism, it is observed that Sidhwa has presented a marginalized and fragmentary history of the partition, which is otherwise not depicted in the national historiography of the partition. She does not accentuate the political leaders like Jinnah, Gandhi, Nehru, and Master Tara Singh, but she takes almost all characters from common life and experience. The novel attempts to present communal violence manifested during the partition. It is found that the communal violence committed in the name of religious differences and bigotry is triggered by political polemics and political affairs such as the failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan, an inequitable division of land by the Boundary Commission, division of Punjab in which Sikh community was at a loss of agriculture lands, non-serious attitude of English government in addressing the issues of peace and law and order situation, which activate communal violence.

Politically, Sidhwa presents the Pakistani version of the history of the partition. Religiously, her Parsee background allows her to portray neutrally and objectively the common characters from major religious backgrounds.

However, as a Pakistani national, she shows her sympathies with the Muslim League; she bitterly criticises the Congress leaders, including Gandhi and Nehru, and Master Tara Singh, the Akhali leader, and holds them responsible for the partition and subsequent violence. The violence in Lahore is presented as the direct offshoot of the political polemics and leadership failure, whereas the violence in the villages is totally planned and plotted by the Sikh leadership sitting in the Golden Temple. The main reason for the Sikh anguish is the partition of Punjab, where they hold land, property, and religious places. The religious differences are not found as the major reason of the communal violence, neither in the city nor in the villages. However, religion may be considered as one of the reasons for the communal violence, but the text establishes that religion is politicised. Besides, the leading causes of the violence, in context with this study, are the political polemics, leadership failure, the then government, the Boundary Commission, and the land issue, i.e., the partition of Punjab. Hence, based on the study, the communal violence – generally known as religious violence – may be revisited and re-termed as ‘religio-political violence’ in the Indian subcontinent perspective.

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