

DIALOGIZING IDENTITIES THROUGH A PARSEE NARRATOR IN

BAPSI SIDHWA'S THE ICE-CANDY-MAN

SYRRINA AHSAN ALI HAQUE¹ & RIZWAN AKHTAR²

¹Lecturer, Kinnaird College for Women, Pakistan

²Research Scholar, University of the Punjab, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This research explores the dialogizing identities through a Parsee narrator in BapsiSishwa's *The Ice-Candy-Man*. The study proves that novels on the event of India- Pakistan partition have dialogic possibilities, thus, different perspectives of the event provide multiple yet distinct perspective of the event. In this case, BapsiSidhwa's novel provides a Parsee perspective of the event of Partition. The objective is to show how novels are dialogic in nature and depict dialogue through shared symbols of coexistence in the subcontinent rather than being dialectic and monologic. There is a gap in exploration of Indo-Pak novels as dialogic sites as a means of displaying integration of shared existence.

The theoretical background used was M. M. Bakhtin's Dialogism. The approach was inductive and showed that novels from subcontinent by Indo-Pak writers suggest dialogue as a possibility and portray distinct and multiple identities as a means of integration of plural yet distinct ideas. The study would facilitate future researchers in exploration of Indo-Pak novels.

KEYWORDS: Dialogic, Indo-Pak Literature, Integration, Shared Symbols

INTRODUCTION

This research explores and analyzes partition of India into a Hindu state and a Muslim state from the eyes of a Parsee narrator, who is entrapped in this division being an Indian, despite allegiance and amiability to all religious identities belonging to the united India. The study covers the story of a Parsee child, her understanding of religion, differences due to religion and the means and tools of maintaining dialogue between the different religious identities. Thus, the primary text for discussion in this research is *The Ice-Candy-Man* by BapsiSidhwa. In this novel, Sidhwa chronicles the events of the partition of the subcontinent, the ensuing riots and massacres. Her narrator is a Parsee child who depicts the violence perpetuated by Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities, as she sees it. The religious impartiality of a Parsee child narrator to the violent groups, comprising adults, facilitates a terrestrial view of the event of partition. *The Ice-Candy-Man* is a story of a child and her relationship to her group of friends, older, belonging to different faiths and classes. Their relationship is affected by the event of partition, which not only divides Lenny's country geographically but also her friends socially, psychologically but most importantly religiously. Lenny becomes aware of religious differences and how this awareness leads to hostilities among friends. Lenny narrates the events of Partition as she experiences them as an eight year old not belonging to the Muslim, Hindu or Sikh faith. However, she feels they all belong together as friends. Nevertheless, Lenny is a child and her friends are adults, who see the world differently. For the child, acts of violence are unnerving and she cannot comprehend hostility between friends or her countrymen. Dismemberment of her country leaves

her feeling shredded. Her impartiality is a source of bondage between the friends, who have turned violent and hostile to each other, recognizing differences rather than similarities, which initially bonded them. Lenny has to unlearn her experiences of social amicability, interaction and friendship to understand the world. Yet, she retains the desire for assimilation. Sidhwa empowers the child perspective by giving it the narrator's voice, which leads to possibilities of dialogue among friends turned enemies.

This study aims to show how Sidhwa's character, Lenny is a means of Dialogue between the different religious groups. Firstly, her Parsee identity distances her from the religious strife and provides a neutral yet affected perspective. Secondly, since Lenny is a child narrator depicting events as remembered by Bapsi Sidhwa, she chronicles the reality as perceived by a child untarnished by political and religious ideologies. The study thus, fills the gap in research on Indo-Pak novels as dialogic sites providing multiple yet distinct perspectives of the event of Partition.

METHODS

The research is exploratory and explanatory. The approach is inductive. The primary text used is Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Ice-Candy-Man*. The secondary sources used are scholarly articles, critical analysis on Child Narration and Parsee religion as well as the event of Partition. The tool used is the Theory of Dialogism to unfold the dialogizing identities of characters in the novel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Anne Burke in "Empowering Children's Voices Through the Narrative of Drawings" illustrates how a child learns and understands his/her world through, "Their rich social interactions, found through play, provide opportunities for both rehearsals and re-enactments of roles and experiences" (Burke1). The Parsee child narrator, Lenny, is a link between all the characters of the novel. They meet and confer with each other in the presence of Lenny. Lenny's Ayah takes Lenny to the park for strolls and exercise. These characters, who are her friends gather around at the park and discuss their daily lives. They belong to different religious groups. As the characters meet and communicate through Lenny, this communication among the characters reveals the shared experiences of the multiple communities inside India at the time of partition. She shows the varied effects of partition on different characters of different faiths. Lenny's life revolves around Ayah, her maidservant, and the multi-religious group centers around the activities of Ayah as well. Ayah attracts men regardless of their age, ethnicity or religion.

Ayah's character becomes a dialogic site on which Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs interact. Here, the character of Ayah can be seen as a metaphorical representation of India, which is symbolically and literally desired, seduced and raped. It is just like the character of Ayah, that India is a dialogic site, where Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees and Christians co-exist under the English Colonizer, wishing to possess more of this exotic land.

For the English, "by the late nineteenth century India had become the greatest, most durable, and most profitable of all British, perhaps even European, colonial possessions"(Said 160). According to Edward Said, "India had a massive influence on British life, in commerce and trade, industry and politics, ideology and war, culture and the life of imagination"(Said 160). The words "Indian" and "native" coalesced Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in one umbrella term and differentiated them from the English. However, in Sidhwa's novel, *The Ice-Candy-Man*, India is projected by a child who observes India through her Ayah, a "goddess" loved and yearned for by all, English Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Parsee and

Sikh. Even the English soldier is subdued by this “goddess”. The English “gaze” at her which renders a particular godliness to her, rather than inferiority. At the park, where Ayah’s admirers meet for discussions, the group around Ayah remains loyal to each other, regardless of ethnicity, caste or creed, while all other groups remain scattered. Lenny reflects how “the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees are, always unified around her”(Sidhwa 97) .

It is this unification that inculcates a sense of wholeness among Sidhwa’s characters which allows dialogue. Mikhail Bakhtin in *Dialogic Imagination* delegates the importance of *recognizing* groups as “whole entity” in creating a site for dialogue. The group forms a “whole entity”, which is eventually severed by the act of partition of India. The possibilities of dialogue are inherent in the unification of the group and its affiliation with each other. However, the brutal death of Masseur, and the abduction of Ayah by the Ice-candy-man terminate the dialogue between the friends temporarily. At the same time, the country is being sliced into parts too. Lenny is haunted by the idea of “a torn Punjab”, and she questions, “Will the earth bleed? And what about the sundered rivers? Won’t their water drain into the jagged cracks? Not satisfied by breaking India, they now want to tear the Punjab” (Sidhwa 116). Further on, upon seeing a crowd holding “knives, choppers, daggers, axes, staves and scythes”, Lenny wonders whether they have “A lot of meat to cut”(Sidhwa 150). This crowd was once a group of friends, neighbors and countrymen, now ready to cut meat of their own kind. These visions of dismemberment, of slicing resonate in Lenny’s head as nightmares. Even as a child the thought of slicing a piece of land was to make it bleed. This “religious arsenal”(Sidhwa 150), which the crowd carries is prophetic of “Cracking India”. Each “breast they cut off “ (Sidhwa 156) signifies the bleeding earth. Thus, the “whole entity” of the subcontinent is threatened by the “religious arsenal”. Friends and neighbors are suddenly equipped with a new kind of weaponry which is prompted by religious differences. Literally and metaphorically, the arsenal delineates religious distinctions. The Sikhs equip themselves with *kirpans*¹, and the Muslims with knives, the Hindus with scythes. Hence, the group which indulges in dialogue suddenly opts for non-dialogic tools, like knives, choppers and scythes. Nevertheless, the novel depicts the “dialogic negotiation of power” (Pechey 24). The significance of dialogue is embedded in the “ideology of the text” (Pechey 25), when Lenny realizes that it is in forgetting a past “none of us control” that one can keep “whole” (Sidhwa 211). The yearning for wholeness is prevalent throughout the text. Lenny’s physical anatomy of a polio-ridden child depicts her incompleteness, however, she negotiates with her physical condition through her social “wholeness” of belonging to a united group, where “Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims form a thick circle round us” (Sidhwa 99). Lenny dreams of physically mutated bodies which symbolically represent her mental trauma when she sees her friends dismembering body parts of each other for a newly found ideology of religious differences.

The consequences of religious and sectarian conflagration are also voiced in political narratives on the division of the sub-continent. Jaswant Singh, in his most recent work, *Jinnah: India-Partition Independence* describes the “surgical operation” (Singh *Jinnah* 305) of dividing a United India like splitting a family home into pieces. Just as Lenny fears dismemberment as a character in the plot created by politicians, the politicians themselves fear such a vivisection of land through “surgical operation”. According to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, an eminent Indian leader, the “division” could be one like “between two brothers”(Singh *Jinnah* 321). He claimed, “Children of the same family, dissatisfied with one another by reason of change of religion, if they wished, could separate, but then the separation would be within themselves and not separation in the face of the whole world”. Gandhi explained, “when two brothers separate, they do not become

¹ A ceremonial sword or dagger carried by baptized Sikhs. “Kirpan” .Web. 1 Mar 2015

enemies...in the eyes of the world. The world would still recognize them as brothers”(Singh 321). Therefore, Gandhi’s vision is dialogic and open as opposed to the ideology of splitting one from the other, and shredding parts of oneself as is metaphorically represented in Jaswant Singh’s perception of partition as a “surgical operation” or Lenny’s vision of dismemberment of limbs. The other exists only as a separate entity not as part of the “whole entity”. The dialogue between the two brothers would remain intact. The relationship between the brothers is further analyzed as a relationship between self and other, while both remaining part of each other, thus, inculcating a never ending dialogue.

In order to understand the concept of dialogue in fiction and nonfiction, it is important to penetrate the theory of Dialogism with reference to novel. According to Michael Holquist’s interpretation of Mikhail Bakhtin’s Dialogism, “In dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based on *otherness*. This otherness is not merely a dialectical alienation on its way to a sublation that will endow it with a unifying identity in higher consciousness. On the contrary, in dialogism consciousness *is* otherness” (Holquist 18). The terms self and other are “relative” rather than “absolute” (Holquist 18). So, where “Dialogism argues that all meaning is relative”, there is a relationship between “physical”, “political” and “ideological bodies” “occupying *simultaneous but different* space” (Holquist 20-21). In nonfiction, political discourse of Jaswant Singh, it is seen that the recognition of the existence of otherness contributes to a dialectical alienation of all three types of bodies. In Sidhwa’s novel, the group of friends is like Gandhi’s analogy of brothers living together, separated only when their common factors are removed consciously from the group. Their common factors which make them a family, a unit and part of a whole entity are Lenny’s impartiality to religion, Ayah, regional and symbolic affinity and anti-English political ideology. However, there is an unbreakable relationship between the characters which binds them together despite dismemberment and separation. With reference to the theory of Dialogism also, as Holquist writes, “It cannot be stressed enough that for him [Bakhtin] ‘self’ is dialogic, a relation. And because it is so fundamental a relation, dialogue can help us understand how other relationships work”. He further explains how these relationships are “binary oppositions, but asymmetrical dualisms”. For Bakhtin, thus, the “key to understanding all such artificially isolated dualisms is the dialogue between self and other”, making self/other a “relation of simultaneity”, and “simultaneity deals with ratios of same and different in space/time, which is why Bakhtin was always concerned with space/time”(Holquist 19). Hence when there is a relationship and a dialogue is open between different people, their concepts and beliefs also reflect similarities. Where dialects focus on sublation, and elimination of the other, “dialogue knows no sublation”, rather it focuses on merging to encompass a whole entity as opposed to subtraction of one from the other. Bakhtin “insists on differences that cannot be overcome: separateness and simultaneity are basic conditions of existence”, making dialogism “a version of relativity” (Holquist 20). Therefore, reiterating that “Dialogism argues” “all meaning is relative ...it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying *simultaneous but different* space”. Furthermore, “bodies may be... ranging from the immediacy of our physical bodies”, as is apparent in the physical relationship between the Masseur and the Ayah as well as the Ice-candy-man and Ayah “to political bodies” as Congress and Muslim League and “to bodies of ideologies”(Holquist 20-21) in this case, the ideology behind creating a new Islamic state for Muslims and the ideology of living as united Indians. There is an affiliation present in the concept of bodies living together whether in the same house, neighborhood, country or the same mindset for a particular ideology. For Bakhtin, “reality is always experienced, not conceived, and further it is always experienced from a particular position”. This position is integral for dialogism, and Bakhtin “conceives the position in kinetic terms as a situation, an event, the event of being a self”(Holquist 21).

In Sidhwa's novel, the event of partition is conceived as a proclamation of self of the physical body, political body and body of ideology. Instances relating to these different types of bodies as means of proclamation of self are: acquiring Ayah's body, delineating political affiliations to Hindus or Muslims, and proclaiming a separatist ideology based on religion but actually supporting a political stance of separate electorates according to religious differences. Consequently, splitting of these bodies, whether these are physical, political or ideological proves to be dialectical in nature.

Hence, the act of murder and rape whether in real life or depicted in a novel are dialectical. However, Bakhtin claims in his essay, "Methodology", that once "born of a dialogue" must "return again to dialogue on a higher level" (Holquist 162), which means that despite the dialectical nature of violent acts, dialogue is possible. In the same way, Masseur in *The Ice-Candy-Man*, professes that there is simultaneity in ideologies, and says, "The holy Koran lies next to the Granth Sahib in the Golden Temple. The shift Guru Nanik wore carried inscriptions from the Koran In fact, the Sikh faith came about to create Hindu-Muslim harmony! There are no differences among friends We shall stand by each other" (Sidhwa 131). He highlights the capacity and extent of a dialogue that is accommodative and internalized by different communities and faiths. Dialogism is not "just dualism" but is necessary for "*multiplicity* in human perception"(Holquist 22). There is a multiplicity of the beliefs and ideologies of the group which circles around Ayah, and this "manifests itself as a series of distinctions between categories appropriate to the perceiver on the one hand and categories appropriate to whatever is being perceived on the other" (Holquist 22). The relationship between the multiple-religious group is perceived by the reader as a source of harmony.

Therefore, Sidhwa's novel elucidates that the partition on the one hand exposes cultural and religious gulfs and on the other hand creates space for renewing interaction across different faiths. The novel re-appropriates the ambivalences and contradictions post-partition societies come to terms with on a dialogic platform, which in the absolutist sense is neither religiously codified nor culturally-inflected. In national and official discourse the event of partition configure as a hermeneutically sealed and homogenized concept while in literary domain, primarily in the novels, it affords a flexible and dialogic interpretation much to the interest and urgency of seeing the ideological causalities, stalemates, and complications which the geographical division of Indian subcontinent produced.

In the official discourse, for instance Stanley Walport's *India Pakistan: Continued Conflict or Cooperation?*, Chattha's *Partition and Reality*, and Jaswant Singh's *Jinnah: India -Partition Independence*, the partition is seen as a monologic event. The novel, on the other hand, carries within the genre the concept of dialogic answerability. However, "'monologism' is not so much an opposition, as a complement to dialogism. Actually,... 'monologism' is but the structure of a particular event that is 'waiting' to be *understood dialogically*"(Brandist, Shepherd & Tihanov 25). This act of "waiting" can be related to the anticipation of utterances in a novel. In Sidhwa's novel, Parsee utterances anticipate the voice of the other in an attempt to comprehend events. It is a cyclical process in a novel, newer utterances anticipate newer answers. However, the notion of dialogism as it appears in theoretical, political and alternative discourses can also be employed to elicit its literary version from fictional narratives. Non-fictional texts can also be employed as alternative templates to deconstruct fictional narratives. Despite Jaswant Singh's claim that he does not "write as a cold, linear narrator of events alone"(Singh Jinnah xv), he primarily writes as a Sikh and a "political figure from India" to "fill the gap" of non-Muslim historiographies written on Jinnah. Singh's perspective is cold because he records the "vivisection" (xv) of his India with a certain element of contempt, it is linear because of the nature of his discourse, which is political only. In the

same manner, Walport provides an eagle eye view of partition by a non-participant of the event. He never experienced the event, despite his theoretical knowledge of the event. He was not part of the space or time of partition. His view is credible for its impartiality to a religious or political group; however, it is distant and parallels not a correlation to the subjective views of writers who experience the event. Bapsi Sidhwa's personal involvement with the event of partition is impacted in the story as well as the character of Lenny. Lenny provides a subjacent as well as a terrestrial view of the event.

Therefore, in novels written on the event of partition, one can access the plurality of ontological and cosmological truths with multiple characters voicing their perspective and the natural element of answerability in utterances embedded within the language and content of the novel. In a novel, "there is an intimate connection between the project of language and the project of selfhood: they both exist in order to mean", which is a "drive to meaning" of self. The "self for Bakhtin is a cognitive necessity" (Holquist *Dialogism* 22-23). In the case of fiction, there is a demand for answer inherent in the word, utterance and narrative as all words are uttered in anticipation of an answer. The dialogic potential in the novels, therefore, offers multiple answers to questions regarding division, cause of division and consequences of division of the subcontinent into two different countries. Geographically and politically, partition led to disconnection of one unit-the pre-partition India, which is also seen as a psychological division of self from other. Bakhtin declares, "The novel is the characteristic text of a particular stage in the history of consciousness not because it marks the self's discovery of itself, but because it manifests the self's discovery of the other" (75). In Bapsi Sidhwa's novel it is the other's religion that is the point of dialectic, however, dialogue always returns with the discovery of self as a separate entity due to its alterity or otherness, and "other-voicedness", since this is the "condition for the voice, ... The solitary voice, full of itself and the intentions of a subject-speaker, like the notion of a closed linguistic system and the concept of form derived from it, depends on the denial of an 'original' dialogic condition, on the suppression of the traces of other voices from every voice" (Carroll 71). In the novel there are many sites of dialogue in the voices present, absent or dead despite the discordant act of partition. This study analyses these sites as means and tools of dialogue in the novel.

Means of Dialogue

One of the means of initiating and maintaining dialogue is Parsee Narration. The Parsees form an unbreakable link between the different religious groups. In order to understand this, it is important to comprehend the traits of Parsees and their religion. The Parsee religion is one of the "oldest if not the oldest revealed religion in the world-Zoroastrianism". The number of Parsees in the world is "barely a hundred thousand". They may be very few in numbers but Gandhi recognized their importance, he claimed "I am proud of my country, India, for having produced the splendid Zoroastrian stock, in numbers beneath contempt, but in charity and philanthropy, perhaps unequalled, certainly unsurpassed" (qtd. Dadrawala 1). The Parsees came to India in the tenth century A.D to seek protection from the Arabs in Persia. Despite their ill treatment in Persia by the Arab Muslims, the Parsees decided to opt for a neutral position in India with respect to the religious politics. When they moved to India, in order to "preserve their identity, religion and culture" (qtd. Dadrawala 1), they ensured their survival and presence through public acts of charity instead of directly becoming involved in commerce and politics. Colonel Bharucha, in *The Ice-Candy-Man*, tells the story of Parsee migration to India, "When we were kicked out of Persia by the Arabs thirteen hundred years ago, what did we do? Did we shout and argue? No!... We got into boats and sailed to India!" He further explains, "Do you think it was easy to be accepted into a new country? No!... Our forefathers were not given permission even to disembark!" The colonel continues the story, "Our forefathers and foremothers waited

for four days, not knowing what was to become of them. Then, at last, the Grand *Vazir*² appeared on deck with a glass of milk filled to the brim". Colonel Bharucha asks his audience, "Do you know what it meant?", then explains,

It was a polite message from the Prince, meaning 'No, you are not welcome. My land is full and prosperous and we don't want outsiders with a different religion and alien ways to disturb the harmony!' He thought we were missionaries. (Sidhwa 38)

A unique aspect in the Parsee religion is that it is not a missionary creed. Thus, there is no element of hostility towards other religions, nor a zest to multiply their numbers through warfare, aggression or any kind of manipulation. This makes them genial yet perceptible. The Parsees consider themselves a minority. However, as M. J. Akbar explains in his essay, "The Major Minority", "A minority,...., is not a consequence of numbers, but a definition of empowerment"(qtd. Singh 489) Since, Parsees do not aspire for power they remain a minority by definition. They live in the land assimilated with the others although adding significantly to the social structure of the land through their charitable acts as Colonel Bharucha explained how, the Parsees eventually convinced the rulers of India. Continuing his story, he narrates, "Our forefathers carefully stirred a teaspoon of sugar into the milk and sent it back". The Prince, immediately understood the meaning of this act, "The refugees would get absorbed into his country like sugar in the milk And with their decency and industry sweeten the lives of the subjects"(Sidhwa 39). Hence, it is integral for the Parsees of India to "move with the times", and "Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian!"(Sidhwa 39). Bharucha cajoles the audience,

We will abide by the rules of their land! As long as we do not interfere we have nothing to fear! As long as we respect the customs of our rulers-as we always have- we'll be all right! Ahura Mazda has looked after us for thirteen hundred years: he will look after us for another thirteen hundred years We will cast our lots with whoever rules Lahore! (Sidhwa 39)

This may not be a neutral position but it is a neutral stance which the Parsees adopted with respect to Partition. They are fully aware of their position, they "are the smallest minority in India...Only a hundred and twenty thousand in the whole world", they have to be "extra wary", or they will be "neither here nor there"(Sidhwa 16). Under the Muslim Moguls, the Parsees "prospered", Emperor Akbar "invited Zarasthushti scholars to *darbar*" and said " he'd become a Parsee if he could"(Sidhwa 40). The Parsee cannot proselytize; hence, they remain small in number but "sweet as sugar". Even under the English rule the Parsees "served the English faithfully, and earned their trust"(Sidhwa 16), and as long as the Parsees "conduct" their "lives quietly", they are "no threat to anybody". However, as the banker points out, "don't ever try to exercise real power"(Sidhwa 40), it is this power struggle which leads to aggression, hostility and in the end rifts, divides and separation. As there is no aspiration for gaining control or exercising power, it is easier for the Parsees to maintain dialogue. It is also easier for others to mingle and interact through Parsees, with their seemingly unbiased position.

The Parsee perspective provides a diluted perspective of the event of partition, as it entails the tales of Muslims, Hindus and Christians, encoding and decoding their versions of the prospects and eventually the outcome of division. Furthermore, the child narrator provides a terrestrial view of the event rather than an eagle eye view.

²A high officer in a Muslim government. "Vazir". Web. 25 Feb 2015.

Anne Burke in “Empowering Children’s Voices Through the Narrative of Drawings” quotes G.Well from, “Wells, Dialogic Inquiry: Towards a Sociocultural Practice and Theory of Education”, “The very essence of a child’s understanding stems from the social events that characterize each young child’s life, and their understanding of these events becomes apparent through play”(Burke 1). In the case of Lenny, her play revolves around her social circle of friends, belonging to different age and religious groups. Her understanding of the event of partition is learnt through the lens of her social group. However, she develops her own cognitive skills and questions religious and political normative and creeds. Her core question, “What is God?”(Sidhwa 94) opens yet another dialogue. Burke writes that, “Children often tell narratives along a time-line, describing self-identifying features”, and “Notably, these stories help children make sense of their world by engaging their feelings, exploring complicated feelings and emotions, or connecting them to childhood memories through their association with characters”(Burke 1). Sidhwa’s child narrator tries to make sense of her world, and conversely, Sidhwa uses the child narrator to make sense of her own world. Lenny being a child and that too a Parsee child, most importantly ought to be disconnected from the adult world, yet her social interactions connect her to the complexities of a multiple-religious group. She sees the events as a child terrestrially connected to the event yet disconnected religiously, ideologically and politically to the happenings. Sidhwa’s child narrator is an endeavor on the part of the writer to subvert an adult religiously aligned view. Postcolonial writings aim at representation of all and for all, on a secular basis. Ania Loomba, in Colonialism/ Postcolonialism quotes Neil Lazarus, “ the ‘specific role’ of postcolonial intellectuals is ‘to construct a standpoint-nationalism, liberationist, internationalist-from which it is possible to assume the burden of speaking for all humanity’”(Loomba 206).Lenny’s social interactions, thus, support dialogue with the adult group with seemingly unbiased interpretations of the event of partition. Her interpretation is based on her evaluation of the event as an act of dismemberment rather than a constructive act. For the Muslims, all the murders and violence as well as the division of a country would lead to the construction of a new country. Conversely, for the Hindus and Sikhs, the violence may contribute to keeping India united. Hence, despite the claims of partition being a constructive act, it remained as the “final deconstruction of India”(Singh 277) for its participants. Sidhwa presents these varied ideologies through the eyes of a nonaligned participant, who is affected by the events, yet is not a contributor to the events.

A child becomes a medium of communication between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs with her terrestrial view grounded on the events as she sees them. Lenny’s narration has dialogic potential since she sees them herself as a nonaligned participant rather than through any religious or political leader’s lenses. Lenny is engaged with the act of partition, but does not engage *in* the act of partition. She is therefore, not a tool for separation but a tool for amalgamation. . She tries to make sense of the act of splitting a whole entity by shredding her dolls. She is particular about the dolls she wishes to shred. Some of them she finds purely Indian, so she opts for the neutral looking dolls. She examines the “sari-and dhoti-clad Indian dolls”, finds them “unreal”, “exaggerated”, “painted”, “too fragile”, and herself opts for the more neutral “life-like doll with a china face”. She considers herself Indian but neutral. There is hostility rearing inside her, which she vents through pulling the doll, which she feels represents her, Thereby, externalizing her emotions towards separation or division. She pulls “its pink legs apart”, and in doing so takes the help of her cousin till “the cloth skin is right up to its armpits spilling chunks of grayish cotton and coiled brown coir”, baring the dolls “spilled insides”. Adi, a Parsee child and Lenny’s cousin innocently but “infuriated at the pointless brutality” asks Lenny, “Why were you so cruel if you couldn’t stand it?”(Sidhwa 138-39).Sidhwa has used a child to show that the act of splitting a “whole entity” is “pointless brutality”. The children cannot understand this act of tearing apart but indulge in it, to make sense of the adult world. There is an

apparent dialogue between the child and the adult world which leads to the loss of innocence. They become part of the “pointless brutality”, just the same way as the Indians cannot comprehend the pointlessness of splitting body parts, yet, indulge in it in any case. The child narrator loses her all-pervasive neutrality by becoming a part of “brutality”(Sidhwa 16). However, throughout the novel, no Parsee is shown indulging in any violent act towards their human counterparts.

With their seemingly neutral stance towards the politics of India, Parsees are constantly maneuvering their positions to adapt, adjust and side with the ruling elite. Lenny reflects how “the Parsees have been careful to adopt a discreet and politically naïve profile”(Sidhwa 16). Nevertheless, they “must tread carefully”, as Col.Barucha, the President of Parsee community declaims in a “thunderous voice”, “We must hunt with the hounds and run with the hare!”(Sidhwa 16). Despite their endeavor to steer clear of politics they tend to reprimand the British and provide a haven for Indians of different religious affinities. Lenny’s household is an amalgamation of Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims. Lenny’s family gives protection to Raana, a Mulsimboy, they fight for Hari the Hindu manservant, and search almost endlessly for Ayah. Yet, Sidhwa’s narrator, a Parsee child, is a means to authenticate her version of the event of partition, as Sidhwa’s character, Sharbat Khan, proclaims “Children are the Devil...They only know the truth”(Sidhwa 192).

Apart from the child narrator, the character of Ayah is delineated by Sidhwa in such a manner, that she becomes the pivotal force around which all other characters move. Metaphorically, Ayah can be seen as the United India, melding all religious groups on the common ground. This common ground, spatially and spiritually, in the novel, *The Ice-Candy-Man* is the Park, where Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs communicate, and continue their dialogue while sitting around Ayah. She is a “magnet” imposing “tyranny over metals”(Sidhwa 20). Lenny reflects how Ayah draws “covetous glances”. The group of admirers include, “stub-handed twisted beggars and dusty old beggars” who drop their crutches to “stare” at her, “Holy men, masked in piety, shove aside their pretenses to ogle her with lust. Hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists” all are drawn towards this “Hindu goddess”(Sidhwa 3). She is the pivot of attraction which makes her a common site for interaction, intermingling and intercourse between different ethnicities, castes, religious identities and color. Interestingly, it is not merely the Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs whom Ayah attracts; even the Englishmen are attracted towards her. In the novel, Lenny observes an Englishman, from the Salvation Army, bearing the flag, marching past Lenny and the Ayah, and “Of its own volition his glance slides to Ayah and, turning purple and showing off, he wields the flag like an acrobatic baton”(Sidhwa 17-18). Again, if Ayah stands for the country, United India, the Englishmen are attracted to her exotic beauty and erotic charm, which she is fully aware of. She is “chocolate-brown and short. Everything about her is eighteen years old and round and plump...she has a rolling bouncy walk that agitates the globules of her buttocks under her cheap saris and the half-spheres beneath her short sari-blouses. The Englishman no doubt had noticed”(Sidhwa 3). Ayah’s magnetism is all-prevailing; it engulfs and envelops the entire group which revolves around her. There are no color, religious, or ethnic barriers which can separate Ayah’s admirers. So, Ayah becomes a connection between the Englishmen and the Indian men. Ania Loomba writes in *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, “from the beginning of the colonial period till its end [and beyond], female bodies symbolize the conquered land (Loomba 152). Ayah becomes a “porous frontier” which can be “penetrated” by any “race, culture” or “nation”(Loomba 159).

The group at the park is more in awe of Ayah than the “majestic, massive, overpowering, ugly “statue of Queen Victoria” imposing “English Raj”. The group includes, “The Falettis Hotel cook, the Government House gardener, and an elegant, compactly muscled head-and body masseur”. The “Ice-candy-man” sells “popsicles” to other groups, interacting

with a larger crowd. However, Lenny has full faith in Ayah's ability to seduce. Ayah, therefore, becomes another link for communication between the cook, the zoo attendant, the Ice-candy-man and the Masseur. Each character engages in conversation, keeping the Ayah as the center of attraction. When Ayah is abducted a collective search is carried out, showing how newly- created enemies could still find unity. Though, she is betrayed by her own, Ayah is a means for dialogic possibilities among the multi-religious groups living in the same region.

Therefore, one of the means of dialogue among the multi-religious group is the racial and regional affinity. India is a vast land of diversified ethnicities, cultures, and languages. The strand that kept the Indians together was their affiliation to the land of India; hence, demographically the inhabitants of one region remain bound to one another. There is a tacit bond among multi-religious groups which keeps them united even in Sidhwa's *The Ice-Candy-Man*. As a character called Jagjeet Singh pompously proclaims, "If need be, we'll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!", and the *chaudhry* declares in response, "I am prepared to take an oath on the Holy Koran", "that every man in this village will guard his Sikh brothers with no regard for his own life", while the mullah responds, "Brothers don't require oaths to fulfill their duty"(Sidhwa 56-57). Such is the unity among the group of friends living in the same village. As the *chaudhry* points out, "our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslims or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?"(Sidhwa 56). Lenny narrates her experiences with people belonging to the same region. She recounts Raana's escape from his own village, PirPindo. Sidhwa had already established Lenny's affiliation to the village and its inhabitants earlier in the novel. She visits PirPindo with Dost Mohammad and enjoys the communal ambience of the village, where, regardless of religious differences the villagers celebrate all religious festivities equally. Thus, she recognizes her affinity to Raana, another child, because of his rootedness to the land Lenny belongs to.

In order to understand, the role of regionalism in breeding dialogic possibilities, it is important to explore the role of regionalism and its definition is delineated by Louise Fawcett, In "The History and Concept of Regionalism":

The concept of regionalism has had a complex history because of its essentially contested and flexible nature and because of a divergence of views as to whether or not regionalism is an effective or desirable organizing mechanism in international politics. In respect of the concept itself there has been considerable debate, (perhaps too much debate) about what constitutes a region, how a region is operationalized and consequently, what is regionalism. Theoretically the problem has been compounded by the variety of qualitative and quantitative approaches on offer which seek both to measure and understand the process. A related issue is the inherent flexibility and evolving nature of the concept: regions and regionalisms share common features but these are subject to adaptation and change.(Fawcett 4)

There is scope for dialogue in sharing common features yet having divergent views which evolve and adapt. The characters, in *The Ice-Candy-Man*, are bound within the district of Lahore, including the villages on the periphery of the metropolis, Lahore. Hence, Lahore and PirPindo become the common sites for the characters, and they share Anti-British sentiments as well as sentiments of regional cooperation. Even, the Parsees speak of their involvement in the political strife that is engulfing the whole of India but with specific reference to Lahore. Colonel Barucha refers to their community as "Lahore Parsee", hence, they cannot "remain uninvolved", since, their "neighbors will think" they are "betraying them". A Parsee member categorically questions, the Lahore Parsee community, "Which of your neighbors are you going to betray? Hindu? Muslim? Sikh?"(Sidhwa 37). The Parsees feel threatened by each one of the religious groups, however, so far as they are all together and equally empowered, they are merely neighbors, helping each other. Even Lenny's mother, admits

her involvement, in the political situation. She contributes to the regional integration at a time, when the very same neighbors slit each other's throats. Lenny believes her Mother is burning Lahore with all the gasoline which she keeps transporting to an unknown place. Mother affirms her involvement not in burning Lahore but saving her friends and neighbors in Lahore. Mother admits, "We were only smuggling the rationed petrol to help our Hindu and Sikh friends to run away And also for the convoys to send kidnapped women, like your ayah, to their families across the border"(Sidhwa 242) . The regional integration and regional integrity is however, attacked by outsiders, who wish to "dismember" this "whole entity" by provoking religious differences. There are external forces with political motives which create fissures among the regionally homogeneous group, which shares the land of Lahore. These political forces whether they are "'British' not 'Christian'" (Singh 15), Hindu, Muslim or Sikh start violence to acquire power on a "local" level initially.

So, multi-religious groups which are "demographically transformed"(Chattha257) eventually fight among each other as Sikh slaughters Muslim "brother" and Muslim murders his Hindu and Sikh "brother"(Sidhwa 56). IlyasChattha explains how this hostility was fueled. He writes "weapons were stockpiled and volunteers were recruited into paramilitary units". The level of violence which was witnessed at the time of partition shows that there was a tremendous amount of "pre-planning and organization" involved. He writes, it was not "temporary madness", there were "prime perpetrators of violence" (Chattha 254) with clear motives of attaining power locally rather than any larger motive of power acquisition of India. Since, the motive was to attain power, once parted and the country was divided, "the conflict between the refugees and locals was muted, because of cultural affinity and pre-existing kinship ties" (Chattha 257). Reverting allegiance to "kinship" reinforces the importance of regional integration as a means of dialogue and coalition.

Therefore, it is proven that there is a synthesizing element of kinship in coexistence which cultivates regional integration. Sidhwa employs this as a means to invoke dialogue between the dissected populace of the same region. The Ice-candy-man infuses the spirit of regionalism in his multi-religious group, as he says, "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". Baisaki is a Sikh festival; however, it binds the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh community to the land. The land is significant as they grow their livelihood on this land. It is "the day that celebrates the birth of the Sikh religion and of the wheat harvest"(Sidhwa 104) . Lenny, Ayah, Imam Din, his son and an entire clan of nephews, uncles, cousins, brothers, grandsons and great-grandsons go to "the Baisaki Fair".

Sidhwa's individuals interact, intercommunicate and intermingle with each other as a group as well as antagonists. Regional affinity gels the community, but when their kith and kin is attacked by the Other regional group, the individuals turn against society. The Other group invokes religious affinity as a compounding force as opposed to regional. This is dialectical in nature as religion is monologic, when considered in its absoluteness. The Government House gardener proclaims, "When our friends confess they want to kill us, we have to go" (Sidhwa 157). The Ice-candy-man devastated by the loss of his sisters at the hands of vigilantes and vandals, "loses " his "senses", when he thinks of the "mutilated bodies", [2] and throws "grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs" whom he had known all his life. He screams out, "I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women"(156). The Ice-candy-man turns against his group of friends due to the prevailing frenzy, as the gardener realizes, "there are some things a man cannot look upon without going mad"(157). The Lahore group disintegrates, some change their religion while others escape and few take the routes of vengeance and violence. This fictional representation of chaos and mayhem is also represented in non-fictional

discourse on partition by Ilyas Chattha . However, after the partition, when the fury of religious madness subsides, their animosity is partially diluted on account of their shared histories of “cultural affinity and pre-existing kinship ties”(Chattha 257).

Sidhwa presents these affinities to show “commonalities”(Chattha 225) and common ground among the characters establishing the riots and manslaughter as unnatural to the region and its people. These common aspects denote tools of integration and dialogue.

Tools of Dialogue

Sidhwa presents the contentious characteristics of different religions through her Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Parsee characters. Yet, she provides an antithesis by showing integration despite religious differences. These common features are amalgamation of religious symbols and anti-English sentiment prevailing among the characters. There are inferences in the novel that there is rancor between Sikhs and Muslims, however, these feelings are instigated as Masseur rejects this calling it, “allbuckwas!”³ The holy Koran lies next to the Granth Sahib in the Golden Temple. The shift Guru Nanaik wore carried inscriptions from the Koran... In fact, the Sikh faith came about to create Hindu-Muslim harmony!”, which suggest that “there are no differences among friends...We will stand by each other”(Sidhwa130-31). Thus, Sidhwa, uses religious symbols as tools to show harmony and cordiality which existed since the time Muslims and Hindus started living together on the same land, which is India.

Sidhwa uses these shared religious symbols as tools to bridge the gaps created by discordant religio-political ideologies. These differences as Jaswant Singh points out in *Jinnah:India-Partition Independence*, “were rubbed raw by the British whenever they could do so, exploitively”(Singh 27). Concurrently, Sidhwa’s characters accentuate the differences among themselves, yet, maintain a fraternal bond. The Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians sit in a circle and discuss these differences objectively. Sidhwa presents multilateral view by showing disparate symbols. The Parsee child overviews these differences as an onlooker, observes and absorbs the differences subtly till she starts questioning the religious symbols connoting differences. With the Parsee child narration, Sidhwa further maintains a cord between the variant religious groups. Lenny questions fixed adult beliefs. The Parsee child translates these symbols objectively; she reconsiders “What is God?”[2]. She ponders about various religious symbols that designate differences, like Hari’s *bodhie*⁴, “The tuft of bodhie-hair rising like a tail from Hari’s shaven head suddenly appears fiendish and ludicrous”(Sidhwa 95). Religious symbols no more remain symbols but turn into weapons of hatred and violence. *Kirpans* and knives flourish and zealot mobsters chant religious mantras, “ *Bolay so Nihal!*⁵*Sat Siri Akal!*”⁶and “*Allah-o-Akbar*”⁷(Sidhwa 109). The same religious groups had been chanting “Allah o Akbar Om”(Singh 108) “Om Shanti”⁸, Ameen”(111) at one time. By sharing religious symbols there are possibilities of assimilation. Though, Sidhwa demarcates lines and the differences among the

³Nonsense. “Buckwas”. *Urban Dictionary*. 28 Feb 2015. Web.

⁴ A sanskrit word, meaning enlightenment. In Hindu tradition it is a tuft of hair on an otherwise bald head. “Bodhi”. Web. 28 Feb 2015

⁵ Whoever utters, shall be fulfilled. It is a part of the traditional greeting used by Sikhs, it is also a call to action or duty. “Bolay so Nihal” Web. 1 Mar 2015

⁶ A Punjabi greeting used mostly by the followers of the Sikh religion. It means God is the ultimate truth. “Sat Siri Akal”. Web 1 Mar 2015

⁷ God is Great. It is a part of the call to prayers for Muslims. “Allah-o-Akbar”. Web 1 Mar 2015

⁸ A Vedic Mantra. It means peace for all humankind, living, nonliving things and everything in this whole cosmic manifestation. “Om Shanti”. Web 1 Mar 2015

multi-religious group Lenny lives with, through Lenny's panoramic view, she also shows assimilative tendencies present in the symbols which separate them. Lenny acknowledges these symbols as differences and her child mind tries to find answers to questions, which the adult mind has stopped questioning. Lenny becomes aware of religious anxieties and fissures when she hears names of political players such as "Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Iqbal, Tara Singh, Mountbatten", because these names do not signify India anymore and stand for some or other kind of religious exclusivity. Communal rifts are propagated in Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs by focusing attention on the divergent symbols and suppressing the united anti-English struggle.

As the novel begins the motive behind all action and thought of the characters in Sidhwa's *The Ice-Candy-Man* is the "Quit-India sentiment" (Sidhwa 17). Whether it's the Parsees cursing the British as "The goddamn English"[2], or the Muslim poet, Iqbal, exposing them for "conjuring tricks" (111) there is resentment among all. This resentment is a source for dialogue between the "broken" Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsees. They sit together under the Queen's "statue, which imposes the English Raj in the park" (18) discussing ways of freeing India from colonial empire. However, with the removal of the Queen's statue, "the garden scene has depressingly altered"(18) and "h-o-o-l-i" is played with the "blo-o-d"(236) of friends and neighbors. So, symbolically the Queen unifies them. The English are the cause of their grievances; hence, they are all together for one cause, and ready to help each other. These are the same friends for whom the Ice-candy-man was once willing to help, that he kills later. He tells his Sikh friend, "So what if you're a Sikh? I'm 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"(122).

The group of friends is dismembered in the name of political harmony by a "religious arsenal"(150). The English colonizer turns a political strife over the issue of separate electorates into a war of religion. Singh claims in *Jinnah: India-Partition*, "The Muslim community for Jinnah became an electoral body;...the battles he fought were entirely political-between the Muslim League and the Congress...Religion in all this was entirely incidental"(486). The English believed that this demand for separate electorates for the Muslims could help demarcate a border between Muslims and Hindus, thus, dividing the two communities. According to Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, in "Reality of Divide and Rule in British India",

The policy of 'divide and rule' is seen as a mechanism used throughout history to maintain imperial rule. It identifies pre-existing ethno-religious divisions in society and then manipulates them in order to prevent subject peoples' unified challenges to rule by outsiders. Many Indian scholars have maintained that the British adopted this strategy in order to strengthen the Raj. Both communal conflict and Muslim separatism are seen as being factors which forced the Muslims to seek a homeland.(Sandhu Abstract)

The divide and rule strategy seemed like the only way possible for the English to establish hold, since the unification of the two greatest communities meant bloodshed of the English. The English had faced their unified wrath in 1857. The colonizer relied on inbred differences "within each group" (Loomba 109) and fueled their respective "religious arsenal". By "foolishly" or with connivance halving "the timetable", Lord Louis Mountbatten created panic and enemies out of friends and neighbors. The British, therefore, play gods "under the ceiling fans of the Falettis hotel-behind Queen Victoria's garden skirt-the Radcliff Commission deals out Indian cities like a pack of cards. Lahore is dealt out to Pakistan, Amritsar to India. Sialkot to Pakistan Pathankot to India"(Sidhwa 140). The colonizer dissects an Indian population of 450 million into 400 million Hindus, "the remaining quarter" Muslims, "plus six million Sikhs and a million

or so Parsis, Christians, and Jews” (Walport 9), and with this dissection geared up the religious arsenal into a nuclear arsenal sitting kilometers away from each other.

CONCLUSIONS

Sidhwa’s novel depicts this process of division of friends but maintains the need of dialogue in the utterances of her characters. As Bakhtin claims, “an utterance only acquires meaning in relation to the utterance of another...all utterances ought to anticipate the word of the other...the words of the novels are highly dialogized- that is, they are shot through with anticipation of and rejoinders to the word of an other” (Dentith 44-43)[22], therefore, dialogic. This research shows that novels are dialogic between each other too. In this study, the Parsee view of the partition of India is discussed. In conclusion, it can be asserted that despite the political motives of colonial empire the division remains only a ground reality. There is an all-pervasive allegiance to kinsmen, which is targeted by political bodies across borders. Sidhwa’s novel delineates a longing for dialogue, which is inherent in the utterances of all the characters. The Parsee perspective allows these characters a neutral ground for dialogue.

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