

UNVEILING CULTURAL DIFFERENTIALISM IN PAKISTANI ENGLISH FICTION: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF BAPSI SIDHWA'S *ICE-CANDY MAN*

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore cultural differentialism in Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man (1988). In the novel, during the pre-partition days, Indian multicultural society is depicted as tolerant and peaceful, because the multicultural group of Ayah Shanta, Lenny, Ice-Candy Man, and other minor characters live in harmony and peace. However, the bloody episode of partition unveils the rift of cultural differences in the multicultural group replicating the cultural divergence in the multicultural society of India. For the interpretation of data, qualitative research methodology is employed, and moreover, theoretical framework is based on George Ritzer (2011) and Samuel Huntington's (1993) views of cultural differentialism. This paper will pinpoint cultural differences of different cultural communities, including Parsees, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, during pre-partition and post-partition days in united India. This study will also guide researchers to uncover other dimensions of the novel apropos to cultural differentialism. In addition, it will help people of multicultural societies to tolerate cultural differences for promoting peaceful coexistence in today's globalised world.

Keywords: Cultural differentialism, multicultural societies, multicultural group, pre-partition, post-partition, peaceful coexistence.

INTRODUCTION

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) depicts central social issues including partition, minority problems, feminism, and women power; it also appeals to those who are keenly engrossed in cultural differentialism. George Ritzer's book *Globalization the Essentials* (2011) states that cultural differentialism focuses on those obstacles which avoid different cultures to converge; consequently, globalization or any other phenomenon cannot bridge the lasting differences between different cultures in multicultural societies. However, cultural differences heighten the cultural barriers among different cultures, which probably cause conflicts in multicultural societies. *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993), an essay of Samuel Huntington, also supports the view that the prime source of conflicts will be cultural differences in future.

In 1988, Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* was first published in London, but the title was changed into *Cracking India* in 1991 for Americans. Gida (2006) argues that Sidhwa reveals her apprehension on the title of *Ice-Candy Man* when Americans' readers translate it as "ice crystal" (p.68). Thus, due to the culturally different meaning of the title, she changes it into *Cracking India* (Rehman & Karim, 2016, p. 92). It shows that the title of the novel itself contains cultural differentialism which creates confusion for the American readers as they relate *Ice-Candy Man* with drugs and narcotics. In addition, the novel is also replete with incidents of popular saga of brutal Indian partition, hence a Canadian director, Deepa Mehta, filmed it as "Earth: 1947".

The narrator, Lenny, is a polio-inflicted eight years Parsee child. In the novel, she observes a Brahmin Pandit's vermilion caste mark on his forehead (p.118) which symbolizes the ominous cultural

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divergence in Indian multicultural society. However, Ayah Shanta, Lenny's caring maid, exercises authority in her multicultural group of twelve people hailing from different cultures: Ice-Candy-Man, Masseur, Sher Singh, the Falletities Hotel Cook, Sherbat Khan etc. This multicultural group includes people of different cultures — Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Parsees. But, they live in harmony and peace regardless of cultural discrepancies. The protagonist character of *ICM*, Ayah Shanta, controls the members of her multicultural group to dispel cultural disagreements and differences. Her authority can be inferred from her command: she threatens her multicultural group to avoid talk of "Hindu-Muslim business"; otherwise, she will stop coming to the park (*ICM*, p.92).

Lenny, the mouthpiece and autobiographical character of Sidhwa, is a Parsee child who narrates the ambivalence of her community in deciding their future masters —Muslims or Hindus. Similarly, Colonel Bharucha, a medical practitioner and spokesman of Parsees in Lahore, also stops his community from political involvement. Owing to palpable cultural differences between Hindus and Muslims, he prohibits Parsees from siding with anyone and advises them to keep a neutral stance (*ICM*, p. 37). Hence, Bharucha directs his community neither to favour Hindus nor Muslims in political matters. But Indian partition unearths cultural rifts between different cultural communities in united India leading to cultural intolerance and communal riots at the time of partition.

Research Question

How does cultural differentialism unravel in *ICM*?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rehman and Karim (2016) state that 'gender' is a culturally fabricated term which shows contrast between male and female, yet it is employed for discrimination in a society. Furthermore, the writers use Judith Butler's deconstructive approach stating that sex is a socially constructed term for gender. Bapsi Sidhwa's *ICM* also challenges this construction representing both masculinity and femininity in a society. Indeed, disability and gender hinder creativity; but Sidhwa in the novel tries to dismiss disability and gender as cultural taboos and tacitly proposes that intellectual endeavour can help a woman to overcome subservient domestic obligations.

Gida (2006) mentions Rashmi Gaur's comments of women's suppression on two levels. They are intimidated by violence; they are also exploited by patriarchy. Ice- Candy Man expresses love for Shanta publically, yet he abducts and later rapes her. He forces marriage on her and compels her to earn money for him at Hira Mandi.

Peter Coveney deems that a child can represent frustration of an artist (Najar and Banik, (2016). It means that unlike the practical purposes of the mechanical world, a child represents receptivity and fanciful thinking. Therefore, a child narrator can altruistically observe and sense the immediate clashes between different communities without the influence of social pressures. Thus, Sidhwa's child narrator, Lenny, appears thoughtful and sensitive; furthermore, the writer also furnishes her with the mandatory abilities to detect impartially the vicious and pitiless events of partition. Similarly, Najar and Banik (2016) also mention Rousseau who advocates the neutrality of a child's perception (p. 176). Those who fight against each other are observed with impartial perception of Lenny. Moreover, she can also state the increasing Indian nationalism and highlight the culpability of the British in India's destruction. The child character of Lenny is the mouthpiece of Sidhwa because the former records the political issue of Swaraj or independence. The child narrator also fathoms the callousness of communal riots owing to the Indian partition.

Patwa (2013) quotes Sidhwa that an author's perception stimulates a writer to write than his mental power. Therefore, Sidhwa articulates consternation in her works. Historians narrate historical events in terms of social, national, and political viewpoints, but novelists depict details of events in an appealing way. Additionally, Patwa (2013) contends that a creative writer represents past, present, and future facets of a historical event through perception. Indian partition is the most important event in the Indian history because it alters the culture, public harmony, future, and life of Indians. It also upsets the destinies of both nations. Soon after partition, Pakistan and India become arch adversaries, and they perpetrate horrendous holocaust on both sides of the border.

Ved (2016) refers to Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (1989) who claim that the identity of Parsee characters in *ICM* is fundamentally a 'hybridized phenomenon'; they have association with Indian culture, European culture, and Parsee culture (p.358). Parsees also assimilate comfortably in multicultural society of India due to their education and liberal thinking. In addition,

Parsees are both politically and religiously tolerant as they are slightly interested in politics, and they have less inclination to cajole people to embrace their religion.

Ahmad (2009) argues that *ICM* embodies Pakistani account of partition (p.151); however, Khushwant Singh's (1988) *Train to Pakistan* depicts the Indian version. The latter is linked to Sikhs; hence, he narrates Sikhs' perception of partition. However, Sidhwa belongs to Parsees; therefore, her point of view is impartial. But being a Pakistani, her perception of partition is leaned towards Pakistan. Thus, she praises Jinnah and criticizes Mahatma Gandhi.

METHODOLOGY

Interpretative research methodology is used for the analysis of major characters including Ayah Shanta, Ice-Candy Man, Lenny, and other minor characters. George Ritzer's book *Globalization the Essentials* (2011) states that 'culture differentialism' acts as a hurdle for bringing peace and harmony among different cultures (p.154). Likewise, *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993), an essay of Samuel Huntington, also deems cultural differences as the contributing factors for future conflicts. Because one dominant culture in a multicultural society will try to erase the identity of other minority cultures to establish its hegemony (p. 22). Hence, these two works will be used as a tool to detect cultural differences in *ICM*.

Data Analysis

Sidhwa's novel *Ice- Candy Man* represents cultural differences among Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Parsees. Lenny, a Parsee polio-stricken child, observes the cultural discrepancies between Hindus at the time of partition; the higher caste Hindus display publically their caste symbols and reckons the low caste Hindus as untouchable or no humans. Furthermore, the Christians also split into different groups. Hence, in such uncertain situation of partition, the major Indian communities exercise their cultural symbols; consequently, Parsees, a minority Indian community, are reckoned as an irrelevant cultural entity in the multicultural society of united India.

Parsees as an Irrelevant Cultural Entity

In the novel, the spokesman of Parsees in Lahore, Col. Bharucha, mentions the discrimination of Parsees who were exiled by the Arabs from Persia thirteen centuries ago; therefore, they sailed to India for shelter (p.38). He also reiterates that Parsees adopt a tolerant and liberal attitude after their arrival in India, so they comfortably assimilate in the Indian multicultural society. In addition, they also remain faithful to India, where they circumvent cultural differences and live peacefully. Therefore, at the time of partition's uprisings, Col. Bharucha warns Parsees to avoid hostilities of Hindus and Muslims owing to their cultural dominance. However, the other Parsee character in the novel, Dr. Mody, links the impartiality of Parsees as tantamount to infidelity with Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs (*ICM*, p.38).

In a meeting at Waris Road, Parsees underscore the predicament of political clash between Congress and Muslim League—the two major political parties. They express their apprehensions at the partition of India because the division of India puts them into a trouble. It will become a difficult decision for them to which political side the minority community will put their political weightage. Col. Bharucha articulates his dilemma of Indian partition at that time when a poor Muslim brings his child to his clinic for the treatment of severe coughing. He asks the man about the duration of his child's coughing, but the former consults his wife several times to know his child's disease. Consequently, Bharucha admonishes the man for obliviousness and blames Muslims that how they can administer a separate state of Pakistan if they cannot manage their houses (*ICM*, p.12). Hence, Col. Bharucha supports the existence of multicultural united India. But partition compels Parsees to choose their future masters in the newly established countries. He also condemns the exploitation of Parsees when Gandhi protests against the British of consuming Indian salt. Resultantly, protestors are incarcerated. The imprisoned protestors of Congress are provided with free accommodation, whereas the imprisoned Parsees are deprived of lodging (*ICM*, p.37). Hence, Parsee community lodges a complaint to the Inspector General Police to protect minority rights. This event in the novel displays that overriding culture of Hindus corners a minority on the basis of minority status.

ICM also portrays Parsees' cultural practices that are different from Hindus and Muslims. The powerful sibling of Lenny, Godmother, apprises Lenny about the unfamiliar funeral rites of Parsees: the former says that instead of burying dead bodies, or squandering fuel on cremation, Parsees nourish God's creatures (*ICM*, p.115). After the death of a Parsee, his dead body is kept in Tower of Silence. Here the crows and vultures eat the flesh of dead bodies; meanwhile, the souls rise to the heaven to talk with God. In addition, at the time of the partition, Lenny listens that children of Hindu community

scream the words of “Parsees, Parsees, crow eaters” (*ICM*, p.101). This shows that Hindus follow a culturally different tradition of cremating dead bodies at Shamshanghat, whereas Parsees throw away the dead bodies at Tower of Silence, and Muslims and Christians bury their dead bodies with different religious and cultural traditions.

Lenny, the autobiographical child narrator of Sidhwa, also personally experiences cultural differences in the multicultural society of India at the time of partition. Besides her name, Lenny, her initial name is Bhandra, which resembles like a Hindu name. Hence, in the company of Muslims, she considers herself a Hindu owing to the resemblance of her name with Hindu cultural names. In the same way, at the post-partition days, some intruders mistakenly enter into Lenny’s house as they misinterpret the Sethi’s nameplate with a Hindu family living in the house. However, Imam Din, Parsees’ family cook, mediates and explains to the robbers derisively that Sethis are Parsees (*ICM*, p.184). But, Lenny’s family members are hassled for some time due to the misinterpretation of Sethi’s name with Hindu culture.

Multicultural United India: A Cauldron of Cultural Differences

In *ICM*, undivided India is represented as a multicultural society; although, the bloody saga of Indian partition uncovers the cultural dissimilarities of Indian communities. In the novel when the silhouettes of Lenny and Yousaf bodies fall on a Pandit’s victuals, he thinks that it has infected with maggots. Lenny loathes the red caste mark on the Pandit’s temple resembling an evil eye (*ICM*, p.118). The obvious incompatibility between Pandit and Lenny’s perceptions symbolise a perilous hiatus among Indian communities.

In the first half of *ICM*, united India is portrayed as a multicultural society, where Indian communities live with harmony and peace. The main character of the novel, Ayah Shanta, keeps the multicultural group — the cook of Falletities Hotel, Masseur, Sher Singh, Ice-Candy Man, and Sherbat Khan — intact before the riots of partition. But, the bloody episode of partition unravels the cultural rifts of different Indian communities; hence, the admirers of Ayah Shanta’s multicultural group shrink into the narrow symbols representing different cultures and religions. Similarly, Sen states that people are usually divided into religious or cultural categories; this phenomenon paves way for future conflicts in the modern world (Escherle, 2013). Ayah Shanta’s earlier clout on her multicultural group dissipates, and she is no longer reckoned as an all-inclusive authority of her group; but she is attributed the symbol of her Hindu culture and religion (*ICM*, p.94). The former lover of Ayah, Ice-Candy Man, rips apart her modesty at the Diamond Market and imposes upon her forced marriage, religion, and prostitution. Ice-Candy Man also alters her cultural name; she is named as Mumtaz, a name after the Mughal queen, at the Diamond Market (*ICM*, p.264). The novel also portrays the difference between the culture of mainstream society and Diamond Market or Hira Mandi. At the mainstream society, Ayah’s modesty dignity is revered, but at the Diamond Market, she is stigmatised with the everlasting label of prostitute which haunts her throughout her life.

Similarly, Lenny also witnesses palpable cultural differences in her surrounding during partition. The minor low caste Hindu characters i.e. Hari, Moti, Muccho, Hari, and Papoo become untouchable in united India. But the higher caste Hindus such as Brahmins, Sharmas, and Daulatrams display their caste marks regarding low caste Hindus as no humans (*ICM* 95). Furthermore, Christians also divide into groups. The Rogers of Queen Victoria, Birdwood barracks, and King George disdain the Anglo- Christians. Therefore, the latter detest the Non-Christians. The Indian majority communities also expose their symbols in terms of culture and religion. Hence, Parsees, a minority community, are cornered as an irrelevant cultural entity in undivided India (*ICM*, p.95).

The Parsees’ household cook, Imam Din, predicts that Muslims of Pir Pindo and Sikhs of Dera Tek Singh will rip apart peace and tranquility of both communities in the communal riots. But, Jagjeet Singh, a Sikh granthi, dismisses this threat that people of both villages live peacefully for centuries, and they also belong to the common race of Jats (*ICM*, p.57). But the friendliness of Muslims of Pir Pindo and Sikhs of Dera Tek Singh changes into hostility during the partition. Both cultural and religious differences overthrow the common racial bond of friendship, and the extremist Sikh militant gang of Dera Tek, Akalis, butchers the Muslims of Pir Pindo.

Despite cultural differences, Lenny’s family celebrates all the cultural festivals including Baishaki, Christmas, Easter, Holy, Divali, and Eid in the pre-partition days (*ICM*, p.106). These cultural ceremonies illustrate the multicultural nature of Indian society. But owing to the riots of partition, conviviality between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs disappears abruptly, and they become arch enemies.

Master Tara Singh, the leader of Akalis, addresses to a huge rally outside the Assembly Chambers in Lahore, where he provokes his community with incendiary cultural slogans: "Raj karega Khalsa, akirahina koi" (*ICM*, p.137). Consequently, the provoked mob waves kirpans, swords, and hockey-sticks and roars the biased slogans: "Sat Siri Akaal! Bolay se nihaall" (*ICM*, p.137). Muslims also reiterate to kill Hindus with their cultural slogans (*ICM*, p.137). Similarly, Feng (2011) also refers to Quaid-e-Azam's speech which was delivered in 1940. He predicts the final destruction of united India if one community is kept as minority and the other as majority (p.228).

In the novel, the arguments between Mr. Singh and Inspector General of Police, Mr. Rogers, also point out cultural differences between Indian communities. Mr. Rogers warns Mr. Singh about the slaughter of Indians by Indians after the withdrawal of British from India (*ICM*, p.63). However, the latter disagrees with the former and argues that Indians can sort out their disparities if the British withdraw from India. But Mr. Rogers asserts that the Sikh extremist militants or Akalis are killers (*ICM*, p.64). Mr. Singh reminds Mr. Rogers that Sikh's soldiers play an instrumental role for the British to win World War II. Thus, he furthers his argument and claims that if Indians can win wars, then they can also regulate governance in united India without the support of the British. Subsequently, he blames the British for the policy of divide and rule in India. Col. The discourse of Bharucha and Lenny's mother also gives a clue that British execute the policy of divide and rule in India. Lenny's mother, being mother of a polio-stricken child, curses her fortune, yet Dr. Bharucha assures her speedy recuperation of her child. The doctor also alleges British of transmitting polio into India (*ICM*, p.16). The doctor compares Lenny's paralysed leg with Indian politics. He blames that the British try to divulge cultural and religious disparities among Indians through 'divide and rule' policy.

Cultural Dichotomies between Indians and English

In *ICM*, Lenny notices the unfamiliar faces of the British Army's men and women parading in the shape of caterpillars wearing white saris and red jackets in Lahore (p.17). The novel depicts the physical variation of Englishmen and Indians. In the novel, Ayah Shanta and Ice-Candy Man prefer Indian culture, and it can be illustrated with certain events: one evening Ayah visits to Simla-Pahari along with Lenny and her brother Adi, a white-faced and red-lipped child. For a common man, Adi resembles an Englishman's son owing to his white complexion and red lips, but Shanta says Adi's face is not like the dough faces of Englishmen (*ICM*, p.26). Hence, she likes Indian culture, hospitality, and colour. She believes that Englishmen are inhospitable and have less attractive faces.

Ice-Candy Man, the eponymous character of the novel also ridicules the colonisers' language. He uses deliberately the wrong forms of words such as "got-pit sot-pit" (p.29). He regards Subas Chandra Bose, an Indian patriot, to free India from the British occupation. He pines hope that Bose's partnership with Japanese government will free India from British. Mr. Singh's American wife is incompatible in her looks and habits from the former (*ICM*, p.61). Her face is calm and white with emerald eyes; she is oblivious about her environs. Nonetheless, Mr. Singh's behavior resembles a Jat who loudly converses in Punjabi. He milks buffaloes and sputter to clean his throat. Dissimilarities of physical appearance and behavior between Singh and his wife portray cultural difference of Englishmen and Indians. The novel also alludes to certain colonial names of places which reflect the imposition of British rule in pre-partition India. These colonial names include Queen Victoria, Birdwood barracks etc. which have no semblance to the Indian culture. Edward Said also argues that colonized are forced to follow western culture and religion, however eastern culture and religion is different from the former (Hamadi, 2014).

In *ICM*, Ice-Candy Man acts different roles, but as a disguised mystic, he refers to the spiritual nature of Indian society. In the garb of mystic, he exploits the naivety of a veiled Muslim woman. He assures her the birth of a male child after four female children (*ICM*, p.100). The gullible woman believes in his persuasive oratory and gives him money. The naïve woman does not regard her position secure, without a male child, in a patriarchal society. It suggests that Indian society is spiritual in nature, where gullible people can be blackmailed by the ploy of religion. Therefore, in such patriarchal societies, mothers of male children have more security and influence.

Joke of Lenny's father, in the company of Mr. Singh and Mr. Rogers, also depicts cultural difference between Indian and British communities. He narrates that a turbaned Indian travels with a British soldier in Khyber Mail. The Indian drinks, possibly brew, from the bottle. When the former attends toilet, the English soldier clandestinely drinks a few sips from the bottle. Later, with the increasing familiarity and companionship on the journey, the British soldier discloses his secret sips to

the Indian. But the Indian surprises his English companion with the discovery that he drinks his urine for the treatment of Syphilis, which is prescribed by the Hakeem (*ICM*, p.63). Mr. Singh enjoys the joke; however, Mr. Rogers perceives it as humiliation because Mr. Rogers's community does not approve this Indian's eating habit and manner of treatment.

In the first half of *ICM*, before partition, Shanta enjoys clout over her multicultural group. She keeps intact her modesty and chastity. However, she willingly entertains the avaricious looks of Ice-Candy Man and Masseur. But Ice-Candy Man and his accomplices tear apart her chastity at Hira Mandi or Diamond Market; she is stigmatized as a 'fallen woman' (*ICM*, p.219). She is labeled with the stigma of 'prostitute' in the society. Ayah Shanta, after abduction of Ice-Candy man, is replaced with Hamida at Lenny's House. In the bloody partition's riots, Hamida is also raped and labeled with the stigma of a 'fate-smitten woman'. She is expelled from her home. Her husband divorces her and denies her to meet her children. Traditionally, the Indian society does not accommodate those women who lose their purity and honour. But western societies are culturally and religiously less conservative; thus, they do not think chastity as a benchmark for the accommodation of a woman. In western societies, raped women such as Shanta and Hamida and sex dens like Hira Mandi are not culturally thought as taboos. *ICM* represents that Indian society is more spiritual than the western society. Escherle (2013) also states that Indian culture is more spiritual than the Western culture (p.74).

CONCLUSION

The novel *Ice-Candy Man* highlights a contemporary issue of culture differences which is usually found in modern world's multicultural societies. Nowadays, people live in multicultural societies; consequently, they cannot avoid the presence of diverse beliefs, rituals, customs, languages, and cultural values. But due to cultural differences of different cultural entities in multicultural societies, tolerance of different cultural values and beliefs have been substituted with the hateful feelings of bigotry and dogmatic thinking; resultantly, peaceful coexistence of different cultural communities is at risk in multicultural societies. This paper has tried to unveil different events of cultural differences, where major characters including Ayah Shanta, Lenny, Ice-Candy Man, and other minor characters bear the brunt of cultural differences in one way or the other. The former peaceful coexistence of multicultural India is altered with abhorrence, intolerance, rapes, and communal riots owing to the discovery of cultural differences between different characters hailing from different communities. Ayah Shanta, the central character and all-encompassing authority of the multicultural group, is no longer considered as an exercising authority over the members of her group, and during partition and post-partition days, she is labeled with a cultural identity — a Hindu.

The eponymous Ice-Candy Man of the novel also points out the cultural rift of multicultural Indian society. Before partition, he echoes with pride his Indian identity during the occupation of colonisers, but after partition, he molests his Indian beloved, Ayah Shanta, due to the cultural differences between Hindus and Muslims. Lenny, the mouthpiece of minority Parsee community in India, also articulates her community's consternations while opting for their future masters at the time of partition. Moreover, the colonisers divide Indian communities on the basis of cultural discrepancies which lead Indians to a political tug of war. Therefore, the earlier peaceful coexistence of different cultural entities has disappeared, and they become arch rivals in the newly independent states of Pakistan and India. So, in the contemporary world, there is no room for cultural differences. Therefore, we have to create tolerance for dissimilar cultures which will help us to promote peaceful coexistence in the multicultural societies globally.

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