

**'[H]UNT WITH THE HOUNDS AND RUN
WITH THE HARE': BAPSI SIDHWA'S
ICE-CANDY-MAN AS A CASE STUDY OF
SITUATIONAL ETHNICITY**

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Ethnic identities are constructed and maintained by collectivities to maximise social, economic and political benefits and hence are fluid and situational. The present article discusses the changing contours of the ethnic identity of the Parsi community during the partition with reference to Bapsi Sidhwa's novel, *Ice-Candy-Man*. The Parsi community, which rose to prominence during the colonial period, had to confront a sudden change in their fortune when the British decided to declare independence. They had to prepare for the sudden decline from the zenith of their social, political and economic prosperity which required serious reconfiguration of their ethnic identity. This article analyses the dynamics involved in such a reconfiguration of identity, drawing certain general conclusions about the nature of ethnic identity itself.

The Lahore-born, Pakistani-Punjabi Parsi writer Bapsi Sidhwa is credited with popularising the new genre of English fiction called the Parsi English Novel. Sidhwa has given a new and refreshing presence to the Parsi community in the mindscape of the Indian English reader. Three of her five novels directly deal with the life of Parsi community before, during and after Independence. Her first novel, *The Crow Eaters*, was self-published in 1978 amidst threats and protests from sections of her own community, allegedly for the caricatured representation of it. Her second published novel, *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), which deals with non-Parsi subject matter, is chronologically her first written novel. Her third novel, *Ice-*

Candy-Man (1988), deals with the Partition of India, narrated from the perspective of a Parsi girl. Her fourth novel, *An American Brat* (2006), again foregrounds the Parsi theme. Her last novel, *Water* (2006), is a fictional rendering of the movie of the same name by Deepa Mehta. Even though she has written two novels dealing with non Parsi themes, *Pakistani Bride* and *Water*, Sidhwa is identified mainly as a Parsi writer. There is a definite attempt, in her novels, at portraying the community in certain stereotypical ways. The objective was to give her community an identity along ethnic lines. She realises a clear need for highlighting the ethnic identity of her small community and does it quite successfully. This article analyses the nature of ethnic identity in general and how Sidhwa portrays the changing contours of Parsi ethnic identity during the partition with reference to *Ice-Candy-Man*. It also attempts to provide a Parsi-Pakistani perspective of partition, and refutes the claim of the novelist that it is a neutral account of partition.

Three of Sidhwa's Parsi novels, *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat*, are set against the milieu of pre-independence and post-Independence Pakistan, which has a small Parsi community that had come and settled there during the British rule, primarily for trading purposes. During the British rule, the Parsis of Pakistan who had settled primarily in Karachi, a thriving port then, felt safe and secure, and carried out their trade very successfully. But, with the independence of India and the formation of Pakistan, the Parsis lost the advantage they once had in trade, and became an insignificant minority in Pakistan. Sidhwa reflects on some of the difficulties faced by the minorities in general and the Parsis in particular in her fiction. The community is at the centre of Sidhwa's fiction even though her novels deal with diverse themes. As she claims in the "Author's Note" of *The Crow Eaters*, the novel was

written out of a “deep rooted admiration” for her “diminishing community and an enormous affection for it.” All her novels dealing with the Parsi theme invariably stress the centrality of ethnic identity to the community and her unquestionable love for her community. In the process of writing novels, she has explored issues of identity, status and the problems faced by her community and the possible future of her community which, she realises, is seriously under threat.

For Sidhwa, writing is an attempt at creating an identity for her community and presenting it to the world at large. *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat* in particular, are three novels that discuss, in detail, the various factors involved in the construction of the present Parsi ethnic identity and the difficulties posed by such an ethnic identity after the Partition in 1947. They record the zenith of Parsi glory after migrating to India, the period of transformation, indecision, and passage to a relatively insignificant and subordinate role, and the conflict within and the threats from outside after the withdrawal of the British from the Indian subcontinent. The first phase is picturesquely drawn in *The Crow Eaters*, which is set in pre-Partition India, and presents the zenith of Parsi success in India. The second novel dealing with Parsi life, *Ice-Candy-Man*, discusses the transformational phase of the Parsi identity in India, as the community was forced to choose between India and Pakistan during Partition. The novel incorporates the turmoil within the Parsi community, regarding the choices they needed to make as the country was preparing itself for the post British period. *An American Brat* positions the Parsi identity in the contemporary world where, the community, recovering from the loss of social prestige in the post-Independence phase, is trying to remap its priorities and assimilate into the host society.

The Parsis had come to India from Persia, fearing forced

religious conversion and extinction under the Muslim rulers of Persia during the ninth century AD. They remained largely unnoticed in India and adopted Indian ways of life to the extent that was necessary for them to be in harmony with the host society while retaining customs and practices that were fundamental to their Persian and Zoroastrian identity. The insignificance of their presence in India, despite the memories of their great ancestral achievements in Persia and martial traits, could be explained by their small numbers or the possibility of being visible to the enemies (Muslim rulers of India) who once had dispossessed them of their homeland. The Parsis remained rather invisible till the arrival of the British (Hodivala 52, Briggs 6, Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville 45). However invisible the Parsis were in the political, economic and social life of India, they prospered and increased in numbers. They took to many professions, chiefly agriculture and small scale trading.

The Parsis were not part of the rigid Indian caste system, but were well equipped to handle the social and economic hierarchies of India. However, it must be said that they had internalised the norms of Indian caste system and were quite like the upper class Hindus or Muslims in their interactions with the members of various castes especially the lower castes. The road to Parsi identity that Bapsi Sidhwa portrays in her earlier novels is however a phenomenon of the colonial period. This is an identity rooted in the commercial success of the Parsis after they were given special preferences by the Europeans. By the 1930s, the Parsi community had risen to such significant social, economic and religious heights that they had become very visible as a community. During the early centuries of colonial rule, they made use of the possibilities offered by their distinct ethnic identity as a non-Indian community, and tried to become the cronies of the British by imitating them in very possible

way. The popularity of cricket among the early Parsis is an example.

Parsi ethnic resurrection coincided with their rise in economic, political and social significance. They felt the need for a visible and powerful ethnic identity to advance their interests, especially in commerce. This drove them to look back at their past and construct a history which, in spite of many oppositions and debates within the community regarding the authenticity of various past and present practices, helped to project an ethnically distinct identity. As Eriksen points out, “knowledge of one's own history (whether fabricated or not) can be highly important in the fashioning of ethnic identity” (85). Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville draw the attention of readers to the relatively unreliable historical documents on which Parsi history is constructed: “A description of the earliest phases of Parsi history would in any case be a hazardous undertaking, since very few reliable sources are available at present” (44). Primordial myths and blood ties seemed to suddenly get an emphasis in their literature and debates. They refused to admit new converts into their fold, and endogamy became central to their religious and social practice. Throughout colonial rule, they drifted away from mainstream Indian society. The assimilation that had characterised this community was looked down upon as a weak strategy. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Parsis were definitely far removed from their original and secondary identities; their original identity being the one that they carried when they came to India, which they renounced in exchange for safety and shelter and their second identity was the one that they assumed and lived with from the time of their settling down in India until the point of their encounter with the British. When they agreed to discard the original identity as the Persian Zoroastrian community, it was an act of sudden transformation forced by circumstances. They had to give assurance

to the local Raja who gave them asylum that the community would live by the law of the land. This commitment was not only a political act, accepting the sovereignty of a local Hindu king over their life, but it also carried cultural and religious implications. They agreed not to project a visible cultural and religious life. This promise, according to Parsi historiography, was kept under all the rulers who ruled them till the arrival of the British. There was hardly any effort shown by the community to keep their religious, cultural and political heritage intact. This martial race, that claims to have fought the Greeks once, never seriously tried to celebrate their heroes and warlike traits. Despite one or two instances to the contrary, they celebrated peace as the visible trait of the community.

However, the patronage of the European powers changed all these. History became very important to them both in the aftermath of serious attempts at conversion by the European missionaries, and as an internal dynamic towards gaining respectability from the colonial masters. A new ethnic identity as a superior Indian community was constructed, and a new history was created to champion the new claims of the community. Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville rightly observe:

For a long time, it seems, the religious life of Zoroastrian communities was such that this caused few problems; this changed in the early nineteenth century, when confrontations with Christianity and challenges posed by western religious concepts and attitudes had the effect of calling into question the validity of traditional religion generally, and priestly learning in particular” (Preface viii).

Their new economic prosperity, brought through the generous patronage of the British, was used to create and sustain this new identity. New schools for religious education were founded, the

pay for the clergy was increased, schools that encouraged a western system of education were funded and a lot of charity acts were done. This definitely had the intended effect, namely, to raise the status of the community in society. Even though they were always loyal to the British, they used constitutional means of gaining political power within and outside India. By the turn of the twentieth century, they were no doubt one of the most important economic and political powers in India. It is this identity that Sidhwa celebrates in her first published novel, *The Crow Eaters*.

The novel, *Ice-Candy-Man* (published under the title *Cracking India* in America), set in the 1940's Lahore, begins with the treatment of the narrator Lenny, who has a foot deformed by Polio. Despite the best efforts of the Parsi doctor Bharucha, it cannot be cured and she has to live with her deformed foot for the rest of her life. Shanta, the ayah, whose main responsibility is to look after Lenny, provides the narrator with enough opportunities to observe the world around with its changing political and religious contours, and to mingle with different characters representing various faiths. The novelist, in an interview with Bhalla explains her attempt at portraying the communal composition of Lahore, a city which she calls “a sort of mosaic of different religious communities,” and the character of Ayah who has Sikh, Afghan, Muslim and Hindu admirers, provides the perfect opportunity to sketch the “complex social and cultural mosaic” of Lahore. The various communities of Lahore lived in their own *mohallas* before Partition “but the boundaries drawn around them were never rigid. People had learnt to coexist. There was a lot of intermingling and exchange” (Bhalla 225). But Partition changes everything. Lenny witnesses the sudden change of Lahore from a very peaceful city to a place where the Sikhs, Hindus and the Muslims fight for selfish reasons patronised by their

political and religious leaders.

As the Partition mania grips the nation, violence becomes commonplace and corpses lie unburied all over Lahore. Just like Lenny and her dazed Parsi community of Lahore, most people are too shocked to understand the reason for such a sudden resurgence of violence. Deep rooted ethnic loyalties, in combination with the greed for the spoils of riots, had erased the strong inter-ethnic bonds that existed among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs for centuries. The lines read, "It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols" (93). The stories of mass murder, rape and looting are narrated from the Pakistani perspective as the author admits in an interview with David Montenegro (Kanal 39). Even though the Parsis rightly fear long term problems, Partition did not hurt them immediately as much as it hurt the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Hindus. Being a non-Hindu, non-Muslim community benefitted them during the partition crisis because they were not subjected to violence. But the Parsi meeting called to discuss the issues of Partition did bring out the fear of the Parsis that they will no longer be the successful community they were till date. Contrary to what scholars like Hinnells argue, there was definitely an atmosphere of fear among the Parsis as they got closer to the reality of Partition. Like most minorities, the Parsis also felt insecure and helpless. "The young states of India and Pakistan were born in an atmosphere of mutual suspicions and disputes over boundaries, assets, and the future status of religious minorities left on both sides," observes Malik (129). They realised that, in the scramble for power, they would be the losers. In the midst of the chaos and brutality created by Partition, the Parsis tried to help the victims of rioting, irrespective of their religion. The family of Lenny painfully collects all the petrol they can to transport the victims to places of safety. Godmother

emerges as the most powerful character in the last quarter of the novel. She uses her influence to rescue Ayah from Hira Mandi, and sends her to her family in Amritsar.

Ice-Candy-Man is definitely the story of Partition and the murder of millions of people on both sides of the newly created border. But the Parsi community is very important to the novel, as the whole catastrophe is filtered through the consciousness of Parsi characters and especially through the consciousness of the eight year old narrator, Lenny. From the perspective of the community, this story is not another success tale like *The Crow Eaters*; on the contrary it is the story of the beginning of the decline of the community. The Parsis are on the verge of losing the advantages of the identity that they had carefully constructed during the British rule. They painfully realise the alienation of their community from the surroundings which, in the past, had helped them gain significant concessions from the British. It is not the partition that affected them as much as the withdrawal of the British from India. They had to hastily prepare themselves for the reduced role they are sure to play in the post-Independence period. The handicap of the narrator, which cannot be cured by even the best doctors among the Parsis, metaphorically predicts the handicaps of the community in the new era. Characters like Colonel Bharucha and the Godmother, who represent the old generation influential Parsis, are succeeded by the new generation Parsis represented by the parents of Lenny, who can only hope that the reputation of their ancestors would help them cope with the new scenario.

Sidhwa captures the transitional phase of the Parsi community identity from its golden age to its relative insignificance with humour in her novels. The author very effectively questions some of the fundamental notions of ethnicity, its resurgence at crucial

historical moments like the Partition, and the durability of ethnic rivalry despite long traditions of friendship, cooperation and interactions. A minuscule community like the Parsis feared getting assimilated into the host population and thus losing their identity and even chance to exact special concessions from the state. They have to identify themselves as separate from the rest of the population and one of the best ways of doing so is to claim their distinctiveness on the basis of blood ties and peculiar customs: “These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves” (Hutchinson and Smith 42).

The Parsis maintained a distinct religious and social identity throughout the period of their stay in India but the specific nature of their collective identity prior to the seventeenth century cannot be established as there are not enough historical documents. The claim of the community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that they are a non-Indian group with Persian origins, who survived in India without getting assimilated into Indian society, is very difficult to establish. Such claims advanced by Karaka and other Parsi historians like Modi, S. K. Hodivala and S. H. Hodivala are more in the nature of ethnic propaganda for a distinctive identity than of truth. As India was preparing itself for the postcolonial period, the Parsis became very conscious about the problems involved in such an identity. This crisis is well documented in the *Ice-Candy- Man*. There is relatively less space occupied by the Parsi story in the narrative indicating the insignificance of the community in the larger politics of India. The mythical status of the Parsi characters like Freddy in *The Crow Eaters* is replaced by ordinary Parsi characters like Dr. Bharucha, Godmother, Dr. Modi, and Lenny's parents who, despite being still influential, are not in control of their lives. These characters are the first representatives of the postcolonial Parsis. They are not sure

about the course their life should take, their loyalties and their futures. They are as helpless as their forefathers were centuries earlier, when they landed in India seeking asylum.

The declaration of Independence was a huge event in the history of the Parsis in India. A small group of Parsis was active in the freedom movement but, most of them were against the British granting freedom to India. Prior to Independence, the Parsis were divided over the political future: they were worried about their position in a land that had been divided over religion.

The discussion among the prominent Parsis in the meeting that follows the *Jashan* prayer held by the Parsis of Lahore for celebrating the victory of the British in the Second World War is a record of the Parsi conflict and confusion during the time of Indian independence and Partition. Bapsi Sidhwa very delicately portrays the identity of the Parsis before Independence in the words of Sir Easymoney: “One leg in India and one leg in England. We are citizens of the world” (*The Crow Eaters* 222). The Parsis were free to choose their identity as Indians with a declared loyalty to the British and felt secure as the citizens of the world under the protection of the British crown. But their loyalty was divided and their condition was safe only so long as the British stayed in India.

With the departure of the British, the carefully maintained balance was lost. The Parsis started questioning the wisdom of many of the decisions of their forefathers. Many of the present-day Parsis question the very logic of their forefathers' decision to sail towards India after abandoning their homeland; they criticise the British, who were held in great respect by their previous generations, for bringing polio and syphilis to India. The Parsis of Lahore hastily attempt to reconfigure their identity to remain in India after Independence. They

consider the option of migrating to England but soon realise the folly of such a move: “And what do we do?” he asks, “when the English king's Vazir stands before us with a glass full of milk? Tell him we are brown English men, come to sweeten their lives with a dash of color?” (40). The Parsis, who had boasted that they were the greatest toadies of the British (*The Crow Eaters* 12), realise that they could not migrate to England even though they were the subjects of the British queen. They hastily draw up plans for the future. From the superior sounding Parsi characters of Sidhwa's previous novel, there is a sudden transition to the helpless and frustrated characters in *Ice-Candy-Man*.

The Parsis understood their precarious position once Independence became a reality and, having nowhere else to go, they had to resign themselves to the lesser role they would have to play in the new nation. The Parsis realised the danger of having travelled far from their Indian identity during the colonial period and were now in no position to assert their Indianness. They would have to live as strangers in a land where they lived for more than a thousand years. They would once again be ruled by the communities that they once considered inferior in all respects. They realized that they did not have many options. They can neither remain loyal to the British nor to any single community of India which would invite the displeasure of other communities. The option of not getting involved in the developments taking place outside is also a difficult choice as that might send wrong messages about their loyalty: “I don't see how we can remain uninvolved,” says Dr Mody.” He says, “Our neighbours will think we are betraying them and siding with the English” (*Ice-Candy-Man* 37). Dr. Bharucha, the President of the Parsi community at Lahore, reminds them that the Parsis must be very careful not to involve themselves in the post British struggle for power among the

Muslims, Hindus and the Sikhs. “Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jokers jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney!”(36). The ethnocentric pride of the Parsis seems to have been drained out of their systems; Bharucha calls them “jokers” with no power and pride to hang on to.

The criticism of the Parsis regarding their loyalty has roots in the Parsi dilemma of choosing a consistent ideological and political position during the freedom struggle. While discussing *Ice-Candy-Man*, Novy Kapadia argues that the Parsis have no fixed ideological commitment: “Ideological concerns are limited and the only concern is to preserve the status quo that class interests remain unaffected”. He criticises Bapsi Sidhwa for presenting Parsi characters whose only concern is the survival of the community. He argues that, according to Sidhwa, “. . . for most Parsis the primary concern about major upheavals is how changing political events will affect their business and class interests” (76). This lack of ideological concern is very evident in the meeting where most Parsi characters decide to stick to a neutral political stance. Sidhwa admits in an interview given to Feroza Jussawalla that, by employing a Parsi narrator, she could be objective by not being one of the affected parties, and the Parsis, as she understood them, “made the best of things. If they were in India they became patriotic Indians. Those that were left in Pakistan remained there and were loyal to Pakistanis” (201). Sangeeta Ray also thinks that, by using the Parsi narrator, the author provides a “sidelong, yet penetrating look at the events leading up to the partition” from a Parsi perspective, rather than from the usual Hindu or Muslim narrations (131). In her preference for Jinnah over Nehru and Gandhi, Sidhwa is reasserting her identity as a Pakistani chronicler, who rectifies the injustice of the Indian and western historians through her novels, by portraying the father of Pakistan as a

liberal man who advocated Hindu- Muslim unity. She states that she was aware of the sympathy of the Parsis of Lahore for Jinnah, as they considered him a “protégé of Dadabhai Naoroji” and being the husband of a Parsi girl, very secular (Bhalla 229-231). Sidhwa traces the transition of the Parsi attitude from the doubtless and firm loyalty to the British seen in *The Crow Eaters*, to the acceptance of the Swaraj, and the rule of the natives in *Ice-Candy-Man*.

What is enlightening from the perspective of the ethnic understanding of a community is that, when circumstances change, the communities can adapt themselves very quickly. Dr. Bharucha is asking the Parsis, many of whom are still not ready to accept the loss of their glory, to understand and adapt to the new situation arising out of the British decision to declare independence to India. This adaptation involves a restructuring of the present ethnic identity and a partial or complete rejection of many attributes which the community holds in great respect at present. Dr. Bharucha, who is so well respected within and outside the community, knows that the time has come for the community to prepare for the transition. Dr. Bharucha, who had earlier in the novel sharply admonished a Muslim man and wife for not bringing a sick child to him earlier than they did in the following words, “And you all want Pakistan! How will you govern a country when you don't know what goes on in your own house?” (12), has to come to terms with the reality that he is going to live in a country ruled by these people whom he had despised.

As the reconfiguration of community's perceptions and definitions of friend and foe becomes a necessity, the leaders analyse the options available to them. They discuss which community they should choose to be friends with in the new political scenario: “If we're stuck with the Hindus they'll swipe our business from under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargain: if we're stuck with the

Muslims they will convert us by the sword! And God help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs! ” (37). This fear of the Parsis expressed by a member in the meeting defines the Parsi ethnic identity in opposition to all the three major religions of India. The Parsi community which had no history of religious persecution in India, as Karaka himself says (1: xviii), is beginning to sense the possibility of religious conflicts and victimisation in the future. Adversity is an important factor in defining and uniting ethnic groups (Sarna). Threats from outside, real or imagined, can serve to unite the members of a group. The above conversation articulates the sense of hostility the Parsi community feels towards the Muslims and the Hindus, not only in terms of the present but also in terms of the past. The Parsi community psyche keeps the wounds of the past alive in order to generate a level of antagonism which would suffice to create a sense of ethnic unity. The reference to the Muslims as a community that would “convert them by the sword” has roots in the events that led to their exodus from Iran thirteen centuries ago. Their long stay in India has not erased the memories of the genocide of the sixth century AD. Ethnic communities keep such stories of mythical and historical hostility alive as part of their racial memory. Sidhwa says in an interview with Bhalla that the Parsis have “memories of what happened to them thirteen hundred years ago still deeply embedded in their psyches. They can't forget the Arab invasion of Persia. It is part of their mythologies.” The logic that it happened long back and is not relevant to contemporary communal equations and relations does not help the present generation forget those painful memories, a fact which Sidhwa admits: “It doesn't help if the young men protest and say that they weren't even alive thirteen hundred years ago and that past has nothing to do with them”. Personal memories fade easily but “historical memories of atrocities refuse to fade away” (Bhalla 238).

Invoking the historical memories of the community at the crucial juncture of Partition, and sensing a potential threat in the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs, whom they can neither resist nor match powers with, the Parsis are desperately trying to regroup themselves as a community. Hence they summarise their plan of action to stay in independent India “we must hunt with the hounds and run with the hare” (16). The same meeting provides the occasion for redefining the myths of arrival in India and the subsequent interaction with Indian communities.

In the previous novel, *The Crow Eaters*, Freddy recollects the Parsi household version of the history of their arrival in India and the benevolence of the local Raja and the subsequent prosperity of the Parsis. But the stress of the story falls on its concluding line: “To this day we do not allow conversion to our faith or mixed marriages” (11). There is an obvious attempt in the story narrated by Freddy to emphasise how Parsis have maintained their ethnic identity without getting assimilated into the host nation. This ethnic purity that they maintained was hall mark of their superiority over the Indians during the British rule. In *Ice-Candy-Man* the same story of the Parsi arrival is ritualistically recounted but with a stress on a different aspect of their identity. The story, in Dr. Bharucha's version, ends with the very popular Parsi myth of how the local Raja symbolically indicated his refusal to accept the Parsi refugees into his kingdom by sending a bowl filled with milk suggesting that there is no space for the refugees to which the Parsi Dasturs responded by stirring a teaspoon of sugar into the milk, indicating that they would assimilate into the host society and sweeten their lives (39). This stress on the act of stirring a teaspoon of sugar into the milk is prompted by circumstances that demand that the community re-emphasise its ability to assimilate with the populations, rather than underline its

supposed cultural and genetic exclusivity. This is a case of situational ethnicity, a theory of identity which suggests that individuals or groups may adopt any of the many identities which is most useful for them in the given context (Okamura 452). There are several other instances of situational ethnicity in the novel; for example, in *Ice-Candy-Man*, Moti and Papoo convert to Christianity and Hari becomes a Muslim and changes his name to Himat Ali in order to escape from the violence of the Muslim mob; many Muslim families escaped from the attacks of the Sikhs disguised as Hindus and Sikhs. Dost Muhammad, realising that he would be killed by the violent Sikh mob pleads with the mob to convert his son to Sikhism if they so desire and spare his life: "I beg you in the name of all you hold sacred, don't kill the little ones,' Ranna heard his father plead. 'Make them Sikhs... Let them live... they are so little...'" (*Ice-Candy-Man* 201).

When Partition was imminent, the Parsis once again needed to project an image of a community which is loyal to the rulers of the land: "Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land!" says Dr. Bharucha. The use of the word "their" by Dr. Bharucha constitutes a tacit admission of the reality that Parsis are going to be strangers in the new nation. The Parsis have, for various reasons, found it difficult to consider themselves Indians. They fear getting absorbed into Indian society. This fear could be the result of losing their identity. As Freddy puts it in a remarkably striking metaphor, they fear being "a dispersed pinch of snuff sneezed from the heterogeneous nostrils of India!" (*The Crow Eaters* 12). The "us" versus "them" opposition, which is very fundamental to the survival of ethnic communities, is strengthened in every discourse.

Novy Kapadia summarises the fear expressed by the Parsis in the meeting thus: "Through this animated conversation, Bapsi

Sidhwa reveals the implicit, lurking fear of the Parsis, a vulnerable minority losing their identity and getting swamped by the majority communities either Hindus in India or Muslims in Pakistan” (94).

The narrative of the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, despite being an addition to the exhaustive collection of partition stories and a unique third community perspective on Partition, gains its power by being an intense depiction of the varying shades of ethnicity. It is a wonderful testimony to the fact that ethnic identity could be situational and hence not fixed. Sidhwa attempts to project the role played by the community during the partition in terms of the help rendered by them in taking the victims to places of safety, risking their lives. *Ice-Candy-Man* is also a fine example of an ethnic writing that shows how identities are circumstantial and hence fluid. The Parsis reconfigured their identity by stressing qualities like honesty, intelligence, etc during the British raj (*The Crow Eaters*) in place of their previous ethnic traits like military skill and agricultural intelligence. Identities can also be situational; that is, members of ethnic groups can for various reasons adopt identities of other groups under certain situations as discussed above. Situational ethnicity in many ways reveals the survival instinct of a community facing serious threat. However, the very possibility of such an identity transformation reveals the flexible nature of identity itself.

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