

REFUGEE, MIGRATION, DIASPORA

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Lecture 23

Lecture 23: Understanding Bapsi Sidhwa's Cracking India

Thank you. Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Refugees, Migration, and Diaspora. So, today we are going to start our discussion on a new text and see how displacement has been understood against the backdrop of the partition of India in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India*. So, *Cracking India* very poignantly and elaborately engages with the topic of partition. It shows the emigration of Hindu and Sikh families from Lahore, burning Lahore, against the backdrop of partition.



This entire horrendous picture is captured through the eyes of a Parsi child. So, we will discuss today Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India*. So, Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani novelist of Parsi descent who writes in English, and she resides in the United States. So, Sidhwa is an

American of Pakistani origin. Her 1991 novel *Ice Candy Man*, also known as *Cracking India*, served as the basis for Deepa Mehta's 1998 film *Earth*. So, *Cracking India*, which was adapted into the film titled *Earth*, is our topic for today. *Cracking India* is a 1991 partition novel written by Bapsi Sidhwa, and it was originally published as *Ice Candy Man*.

This novel by Bapsi Sidhwa is narrated from the perspective of Lenny Sethi, who is the child protagonist in the novel, a four-year-old Parsi girl living in the Punjabi city of Lahore.

She is five at the beginning of the novel and turns ten at the novel's close. So, the entire novel spans five years in Lenny's life—Lenny's, you know, it's a coming-of-age narrative, which shows Lenny maturing through learning the adult ways of life between the ages of five and ten. Lenny recounts her childhood memories after being struck by polio in infancy. She spends most of her time with her ayah, Shanta, an 18-year-old Hindu girl from Amritsar.

She learns a lot about adult relationships. As I said, the story spans five years of Lenny's life, between the ages of five and ten. And so we see the rites of passage. We see how she's becoming more mature. She's learning the adult ways of life.

She spends most of her time with Shantabai, an 18-year-old Hindu girl from Amritsar, who happens to be her nanny. Lenny learns a lot about adult relationships from staying close to this voluptuous nanny, as well as her diverse group of admirers. With rising political tensions that give way to mob riots, fires, and violent murders, we see Lenny's narrative about her family drastically shift its focus to her observations of a burning Lahore—a Lahore amid incendiary chaos. And we see that, gradually, as the narrative proceeds, Lahore is consumed by violence. So, Lenny has a polio-stricken leg.

She is unable to walk properly and is forced to undergo multiple surgeries in which her foot is broken and recast into a functional position. So, through a number of operations, Lenny's right leg and foot are recast into the landscape of her body as pathetically thin, wrinkled, gratifyingly abnormal, and far from banal. Lenny fears that the surgeries will completely reshape her foot, return it to normal, and in a way transform her otherwise unique identity. Many scholars who have read *Cracking India* and critically analyzed this novel argue that Lenny's broken body allegorically embodies the breaking of Pakistan from India. Basically, the dismemberment of the Indian subcontinent is symbolized through Lenny's broken body.

And so, this leg tells the story of a broken nation. Through the broken leg, we allegorically understand the story of a broken India, as well as the story of this new nation, which is born out of the violent divide—the new nation called Pakistan. When the Second World War ends, Lenny describes how the elders of her generation are responsible for the destructive and war-ridden children of the current generation during the war as well as during the

partition. So, she blames the adults for giving the children a very, you know, pathetic childhood.

She blames the elders of her generation for giving the children a childhood that is so painful, always stricken by fear, anxiety, and war tensions. Something that no child deserves to see or know so early in life. So, she refers to how dominant the atmosphere of war pervades her childhood. To quote Lenny, 'I realized I was born with an awareness of the war, and I recall the dim, faraway fear of bombs that tinged with bitterness my mother's milk.' No wonder I was a colicky baby.

Unquote. So, Leni as a young narrator helps the reader delve into the confused perspective of children during the Partition. How, you know, encountering new things, getting to know things like man-woman relationships, Partition. Bodily violence, murder, incendiary acts, rape—all these things, when children learn about them very early in life, shape their lives in a very different way. It shapes their psyche in a very different way.

The concept of Partition for Leni is merely digging a deep canal between the two countries. So, to begin with, Leni is very innocent when the story opens, and she hears from Shanta Bai, her nanny, that Partition would mean digging a deep canal between the two countries, and that's how the two countries would be physically divided. So she says, I quote, 'A new nation is born.' 'India has been divided after all.' 'Did they dig the long, long canal Aya mentioned?'

Unquote. So that's a very innocent question. And from there on, we see that new things dawn on her. She realizes that it's not only about digging a canal, but it's you know, spewing hatred among different communities.

Hindu Muslims, Sikhs actually spewing hatred. They are actually showing, displaying their hatred through this partition. So, *Cracking India* is on the BBC News list of the 100 most influential novels. In the United States, the New York Times named the novel as one of its notable books of the year. *Cracking India* also earned Bapsi Sidwa Germany's prestigious literary award, which is known as the LiBeraturepreis.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

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So, this prestigious literary award is, Bestowed on *Cracking India* by Germany, its title, LiBeraturepreis, makes, you know, the book all the more important in terms of its interventions vis-a-vis the great watershed of Indian subcontinent's partition. So Indo-Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta directed a film based on *Cracking India*. It came out in 1998 and it's entitled *Earth*. Lenny describes her family and the colorful group of suitors from various religious backgrounds who gather around her attractive Ayah Shanta Bai.

So, Shanta has many suitors. They really fall in love with this attractive woman and Ayah's flock of friends which comprise Ayah. People coming from all faiths and all backgrounds and religions from undivided India resonates a sense of communal harmony. So, towards the beginning of the narrative, we see that all these friends who are actually from different backgrounds, different faiths and religions commune together around Ayah. It shows harmony, intercommunal harmony.

As India moves closer to being split and dismembered, tensions appear both in this friend group and in Indian society as part of the macrocosmic happening. So, we have this tension reflecting in the microcosm of Ayah's friend group as well as resonating at the macrocosmic level in Indian society at large. Lenny's life and community provide a window onto this violence that occurs before, during, and even after the partition. Lenny and her Parsi family, however, are considered relatively safer from the violence, which is largely initiated by and directed towards three communities: the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.

So, Parsis in a way are safer and more invisible. They are, you know, a little insignificant. In this regard, when Lenny is trying to gauge the Parsi community's belonging or position vis-à-vis this partition—the partition riots, the partition tensions— her parents explain to

her that they are like chameleons. You know, her mother tells her that the Parsis are like chameleons, and they camouflage into the environment where they exist.

That is kind of strange. A survival skill that Parsis in India have acquired over the ages. And she also tells the story of the Parsis coming to India during the Mughal rule. And since then, the Parsis have only sweetened the population around them without becoming distinctly visible.

They are just like sugar dissolved in milk. So, they sweeten the population further without separately showing their entity or their visibility. So, that is basically the position of the Parsis. Now, the coincidence of Lenny's 8th birthday and the creation of the new nation of Pakistan in one narrative moment, you know, in one go we see that Lenny is celebrating her 8th birthday and then Pakistan is born. It inscribes a particular juncture in history at which Lenny's narrative begins to consider,

what it even means to have survived this entire, you know, this entire bloody chapter of partition. As a kid, her birthday is special for her. However, we see that the adults, the elders are too traumatized by the ongoings of partition to make her even feel special. So what happens? The children born here,

immediately before the partition, the years, you know, leading up to the partition, see a chunk of their childhood lost during all these tensions and riots. So, Bapsi Siddhwa's *Cracking India* centers around the coming of age of this young protagonist, Lenny. So, as a feminist post-colonial border narrative, the novel's portrayal of the harrowing violence of India's partition has been the primary source of its literary reputation and its critical resonance. The extent to which the novel focuses on Lenny's pre-adolescent experience and emotions allows the mundane element of her adolescent trauma to become representative of the national trauma of India's partition. So, Lenny's trauma at the microcosmic level resonates with the

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

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- Partition is an instance in which sectarian violence between men has been enacted on women's bodies in sexualized or rapacious acts. Rosemary George (2007) points out that despite the "general consensus" that Partition was an "exceptional moment of insanity in which men went mad", the violence women underwent at that time is nevertheless understood as "similar [to] but of a different magnitude than the usual fare doled out to them in a patriarchal society" (136)



National trauma—what the nation or the subcontinent underwent during the Partition. Partition is an instance in which sectarian violence between men was enacted on women's bodies through sexualized or rapacious acts, through outrageous acts. Rosemary George points out that despite the general consensus that Partition was an exceptional moment of insanity, in which men went mad, it remains that the violence women underwent at that time is very similar to violence only differing in magnitude compared to what women usually face, what is usually doled out to women in a patriarchal society.

And this is something Partition scholars like Gyanendra Pandey also say—the fact that women... Partition, you know, no one owned Partition later on, no community, because what happened—the degree of animosity people saw during Partition—is not allowed by any community's values. No community's values allow one to go on a rampage—killing, plundering, looting, and raping, right? So, all communities disowned this watershed. However, later critics like Gyanendra Pandey argue that this violence had been there all along at an intrinsic level, at a more dormant level—through our language for another community, the myths we refer to when describing the other community.

And the violence toward women was only a more extreme form during Partition. So, the proportion of violence increased. However, one cannot say that society was completely violence-free or that... A patriarchal society never, you know, harbored such misogynistic values. They had always been there.

Only the proportion, the magnitude became enormous, unimaginable during the partition and went completely out of control. Now, critic like Ananya Jahanara Kabir likewise maintains that the events of partition were primarily inscribed on the bodies of women. Women's bodies became receptacle of violence because they provided a space over which the competitive games of men were played out. Kavita Daiya describes the ways in which

partition impacted male and female sexuality differently, representing women's bodies as others. So, representing the otherness of women's bodies prior to the violence, right?

While Lenny's growth is crucially influenced by the events of partition which constitute the backdrop to her coming of age, it almost runs parallelly, the partition events go parallelly with her rites of passage, and yet it predominantly occurs as a result of the sexual knowledge that she develops through her interaction with the women around. So, we see that even as partition is precipitating, even as partition is transpiring, Lenny is maturing by that time. She learns about different things, about the adult ways of life as she is in touch with the different women and men around her. She is a very intelligent and observant child and that is how she is picking up very fast about life. things that don't make her feel as a child anymore.

She is no longer thinking as a child. Once she realizes how bitter, for example, humans can be with each other, how hostile people can be with each other just because they come from different religious backgrounds, she learns about religion. She learns about man-woman relationship, and she is no longer that innocent.

So, Lenny's developmental trauma is explicitly gendered through its focus on female sexuality. In particular, we see that Lenny's naive yet precariously sexual observations of women and men around her both expose and resist the violence that exists in their lives. For example, very early on in the filmic adaptation by Deepa Mehta, we see Lenny exposed to the concept of child marriage, the fact that she plays with the gardener's daughter. And the other day, this daughter gets married to a man who is much older than her, almost her father's age or even, you know, older than her father.

So, the child is married off to a much older man, and presumably he is a dwarf. So, that kind of odd pairing through an arranged marriage surprises her, and she is starting to discover new things about society, about life, which are not really pleasurable, which do not really make her happy. The competing conservative national imaginaries that arise at the end of British rule in India intersect with the patriarchal power relations that circulate in Lenny's household and community as well. So, we have these very conservative national imaginaries that shape the fundamental values of a post-colonial nation-state. The same kinds of values are reflected, echoed, and circulated in Lenny's household and community as well.

So, Lenny's alternative female perspective is a digression, a move away from the dominant interpretations of history, which are very male-centric, obviously. So, Lenny's perspective

comes from a juvenile viewpoint, a female and a disabled person. So, she, in a way, is displaced from the mainstream male-centric historiography or history formation in terms of her interpretations, her understandings of moments, and how she understands nation and nationalism. So, her understanding—the understanding by a disabled juvenile female—discloses the patriarchal and majoritarian underpinnings of the ongoing discourses.

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- The competing conservative-national imaginaries that arise at the end of British rule in India intersect with the patriarchal power relations that circulate in Lenny's household and community. Lenny's alternative female perspective diverges from the dominant interpretations of history and nationalism at that time, disclosing the patriarchal and majoritarian underpinnings of such discourses



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What at first seems to be about a young girl's autobiographical experience during the time of the partition becomes, with the progression of the novel, a narrative about Lenny's attempt to ascribe meaning to the partition both as a historical event and as a moment of trauma—a chapter of trauma. It is within this narrative shift that Lenny's role as narrator is most poignantly complicated, because she is unable to fully experience, explore, and define what she is witnessing in the course of the incidents that lead up to the partition. She is, you know, very naive. She is still too naive to define what happens. The partition as a trauma has affected everyone, right?

She's still discovering things. So, whereas Lenny's narrative is often characterized by innocent eyes—the eyes of the juvenile that lack worldly experience— At the same time, we see that her youthful first-person narrative is interrupted by what seems like an older voice attempting to remember the time of the partition. So, we have these two voices intermingling throughout the narrative. The child Lenny, on the one hand, who witnessed the partition trauma firsthand, and then the adult Lenny, who writes all these incidents in hindsight through retrospection—through a retrospective tone.

And so, by the time this, you know, semi-autobiographical narrative is penned down by the adult Lenny, she is able to process all those memories, and perhaps there is an adult understanding—an adult realization—intervening, adding value to what she had learned, seen, and felt many, many years back as a child. So we see that the adult Lenny kind of

inserts her own commentary into the child Lenny's perspectives—that kind of mishmash, that kind of interface between the child and the adult, is happening constantly.

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- Whereas Lenny's narrative is often characterized by innocent eyes that lack worldly experience, her youthful first-person narrative is interrupted by what seems as an older voice attempting to remember the time of the Partition. These moments of narrative interruption occur during the instances in which Lenny attempts to tell about the violence tearing through her city's streets and houses. These narrative interruptions corroborate that only within the failure of fiction is testimony to the trauma of the Partition most poignantly voiced.



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So, these moments of narrative interruption occur during the instances in which Lenny attempts to tell about the violence that is tearing through Lahore's streets and houses. These narrative interruptions, you know, where the adult meets the child, corroborate that only through a failure of fiction, where fiction is fragmented, friction is cracked up, you know, and friction becomes impossible. Only through such impossibility of fiction, failure of fiction is the testimony to the trauma of the partition most poignantly and most meaningfully voiced. When we are talking about trauma, when we are talking about testimony or a child's witness of the partition,

there is a failure of fiction, failure of language at one point where we cannot explain everything effectively. So, Ayah's abduction and subsequent gang rape, apart from representing the fate of thousands of women during the events of the partition, is a specifically female traumatic experience that derives from male sexual aggression. The national trauma of partition and Lenny's traumatic adolescent development are gendered within the novel. They are essentially a female's experience, and this experience heightens through the incident of Ayah's rape. The entire feminine, you know, agony, the female's, you know, sensibility is symbolized, concentrated around Ayah's rape, which forms the climactic part of the narrative.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

- Ayah's abduction and subsequent rape, apart from representing the fate of thousands of women during the events of the Partition, is a specifically female traumatic experience deriving from male sexual aggression
- The national trauma of Partition and Lenny's traumatic adolescent development are gendered within the novel, as symbolized through Ayah's rape
- Different kinds of violence coexisted during Partition, and women's vulnerability differed according to their religion, class and caste. **Sangeeta Ray** (2000), in her influential reading, scrutinizes the novel's postcolonial, gendered depiction of India whereby Ayah becomes the symbol of the nation; she maintains that the class differences between the novel's women reveals the elitist and bourgeois underpinnings of an Indian masculinist national discourse (136)



So, different kinds of violence coexisted during partition, and women's vulnerability differed according to their religions, their class, and their caste belonging. Critic Sangeeta Ray, in her influential reading, scrutinizes the novel's post-colonial gender depiction of India, whereby Ayah becomes the symbol of the torn nation, the nation falling apart. Ray maintains that the class differences between the novel's women reveal the elitist and bourgeois underpinnings of an Indian masculinist national discourse. So, at the larger scale, we have a masculinist national discourse being written by the freedom fighters, the protagonists of the anti-colonial struggle; And against that discourse, against the background, there is an elitist bourgeois discourse.

Feminist discourse or a kind of counter-discourse that unfolds Lenny's narrative. Lenny is influenced by some very strong women in her family and in her neighborhood. We have a woman like the Godmother who symbolizes the strong women from that time. So, as Ambreen Hai puts it, it is therefore possible to expand upon the notion of Ayah as the sole representative figure of female violation in *Cracking India*, and Ayah's condition can be extended to understand the lives of the upper-middle-class women too. This novel is a slow transition

to the massacre, the abysmal pit from which there is no respite. It starts off from a period when the partition murders were mostly part of the rumors for the larger section of society, till a situation transitions slowly toward, you know, unraveling dead bodies everywhere. People, you know, common people, the civilians, start discovering dead bodies everywhere on the roadside, and the rift between the religious communities becomes more and more visible. It increases.

Those who were friends initially get divided on the basis of their religious identity. There are increasing incidents of processions, riots, murders, rapes, and the gaudy truth of the

partition gradually unfolds. It unfolds and reveals itself in the ugliest form. So, for example, in the story, we see that when Sharbat Khan tells Ayah about the unknown dead bodies being found in different parts of the city, in different parts of Lahore, Ayah inquires if they were of the Hindu religion, if they were from the Hindu religion. And Sharbat Khan tells Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, one can tell they are from prosperous eating, drinking households.

So, Ayah's inquiry is an intentional interruption by the author to remind the readers that a dead body, or even a human body, has no religion. It is only when it exists in the cultural space that one is assigned a religion, a religious identity. No one is born with religion, right? The predominance of gendered violence during the Indian Partition was due to the fact that attacks on women symbolized an attack on the honor and purity of the religion or country to which the women belonged.

So, this symbolic interpretation of material bodily harm led to two forms of violence against women. The first form of violence, which was more prevalent, was inflicted on women by men from other religious communities, a rival religious community, in order to humiliate and desecrate everything they wanted to demolish about the rival religion and nation. So, for example, violating a Hindu woman would be transcribed onto the entire Hindu community. So, for example, violence against a Hindu woman would be transcribed

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- The predominance of gendered violence during the Indian partition was due to the fact that attacks on women were symbolic of attacking the honour and purity of the religion/country to which the women belonged. This symbolic interpretation of material bodily harm led to two forms of violence against women
- The first form of violence was inflicted on women by men of the other religious community to humiliate and desecrate the rival religion and nation
- Conversely, the second form of violence constituted of male family members 'honour killing' their women or forcing them to commit suicide in order to safeguard familial and ethnic purity from getting contaminated by the other religion



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to the entire community at large. It would be like humiliating Hindu values and the Hindu nation itself, the nation of the Hindus. Conversely, the second form of violence is coming from within the women's families. It consisted of male family members honor-killing their female kin or forcing them to commit suicide to safeguard familial and ethnic purity from contamination by the rival religion.

In this context, Sidhwa's novel focuses on the first form of violence. Here, we don't get to see much of honor killings, where the male family members kill their own wives, daughters, and sisters. We just see inter-communal violence through the characters of Ayah and Hamida. The depiction of rape and abduction, followed by the rescue and rehabilitation of the survivor—the victimized women— allows one to decode various forms of religion-incited patriarchal ideology that were operative during the Partition era, which effectively exposes—which effectively debunks—the reality of women's position in society. The reality of women as individuals.

So, the novel begins just months before the Partition of India in the city of Lahore, where the prepubescent Lenny is under the charge of her Ayah. Ayah is shown as a strong woman who exercises autonomy and choice over her life; and she has a kind of influence—a kind of charismatic influence—over her multi-ethnic group of suitors. Critic Anna Bernard suggests that the Hindu Ayah's multi-confessional group of lovers represents a pre-Partition pluralist idyllic society, which is now seen as an irretrievable past in the post-colonial memory of the divided nation. Among this secular group, the most prominent suitors of Ayah are the masseur and the ice candy man.

The masseur and the ice candy man are both Muslims. But we see that this becomes a story of a love triangle, where, against the backdrop of Partition, two Muslim men vie for Ayah's love, and then they actually cross swords, and the ice candy man resultantly murders the masseur. So, it's not only the Hindu-Muslim logic that works. Sometimes, the personal emotional landscape dominates one's thoughts and actions over and above the larger political incidents. So here, we don't see two Muslim men becoming friends just by virtue of belonging to the same community.

They are rivals and competitors who are both, you know, competing for Ayah's love. So, as the partition massacres become intense, the identity of people gets limited to their religion. They are reduced to their religious ghettos. Lenny describes this transition and shift in perspective when, for the first time, as a child, she realizes that her Ayah is a Hindu woman.

It had never occurred to her which community Ayah comes from. So, with the change of events, she starts realizing these things. So, common people were away from the decision of the partition, and yet they had to bear the brunt of the great divide. Regarding the protagonists of the freedom struggle, child Lenny expresses her surprise that they actually

existed and that they are not mythic figures. So, to quote Lenny, someone we would only hear about and never see.

So, this shows the distance between the common people and the leaders, who sometimes were only part of the glorified narratives, the glorified, you know, history about India's freedom struggle, and they could not be identifiable. The common people's lives never intersected with that of the freedom fighters, the heroes. They were up on an elevated pedestal and quite distant from the ongoings of the common people's lives, the reality in the common people's lives. So, they were quite distant from the experiences that the common people were undergoing.

So as the narrative proceeds, Ayah begins to lose her autonomy and, in a way, her choice and freedom as the social environment becomes charged with increasing communal animosity and hostility. In this regard, critic Niloufer Bharucha comments, I quote Bharucha, 'The secular landscape of Lahore is fragmented into religious enclaves,' unquote. As J. Didur notes, when the novel opens, I quote Didur, 'Ayah or Shanta is able to deflect patriarchal expectations of monogamy and conjugality, while after Partition, her actions are constrained, and her agency and body are governed by patriarchal struggles over land and identity,' unquote. Moreover, in terms of the physical setting, the secular group that previously gathered at Queen's Park beneath the statue of Queen Victoria, which symbolized the united religions under British rule, now moves to the wrestler's restaurant. It's very symbolic where they start meeting.

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- As the narrative develops, Ayah begins to lose her autonomy, as the social environment gets charged with increasing communal animosity. In this regard Nilufer E Bharucha comments: "the secular landscape of Lahore is fragmented into religious enclaves."
- As **Jill Didur** notes, when the novel opens, "Ayah/Shanta is able to deflect patriarchal expectations of monogamy and conjugality, [while] after partition, her actions are constrained and her agency and body [are] governed by patriarchal struggles over land and identity" (2006: 68)
- Moreover, in terms of the physical setting, the secular group that previously gathered at Queen's Park beneath the statue of Queen Victoria, which symbolized the united religions under British rule, now moves to the Wrestler's restaurant. This shift dislocates Ayah from the centre of the circle.



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Previously, they used to meet at Queen's Park, just beneath the Queen's statue, and they were together. Now, they are moving to a place called the wrestler's restaurant, and they start wrestling. They are verbally wrestling. They are, you know, there is a tiff among all these members of the group, among all these friends.

So this shift from the park to the wrestler's restaurant dislocates Ayah from you know, occupying the central position of that friend's circle. She's no longer the center of that circle, and the circle is no longer in harmony. Everyone is at each other's throats. The confusion regarding the new boundaries looms over the common people, and there are debates, uncertainty, especially because all these people are grassroots people.

They are workers. They are, you know, commoners. They are at the margins of society. So they are constantly speculating about the future of their country. Where would they go?

Their own future. So the fate of the commoners is supposed to be decided by a handful of elite leaders. The helplessness of the commoners regarding the new boundaries becomes evident in an argument among the locals, where the masseur says that if Punjab is divided, Lahore is bound to go to Pakistan. There is a Muslim majority here; to which the gardener replies that Lahore will stay in India. Now, another friend, the butcher, says that since there is too much Hindu money here, they own most of the property and businesses in the city,

So since the Hindus own most of the property and businesses, very likely Lahore will become part of India. And so all these conjectures, all these guesses and consequent altercations can be seen. So one part from the novel, Lenny observes, one day everyone is themselves; And the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols.

Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah. She is also a token, a Hindu. Carried away by a renewed devotional fervor, she expends a small fortune on joss sticks, flowers, and sweets for the gods and goddesses in the temples. Hence, Lenny's words indicate that the narrowing and shoring up of community identity diminishes the vitality and the complexity of social relations in a given community. So, Ayah and others reconfigured their self-presentation when they sense that their interests are in danger of being marginalized, that they will become a minority in a newly born nation;

or conversely, their sense of self is elevated to a privileged position when they sense that they would become—their community rather would become, you know, part of the majority population. So, if Lahore happens to belong to Pakistan and a person, an individual, is a Muslim, the person feels more comfortable because he is part of the majority population. So, there is a shifting dynamic. We see that there is a shifting relation of power pervading the country during and after the partition. Parsis,

we see in this context, are reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures. They are a minor community, a very small section of people. So, they become irrelevant nomenclatures between the Muslims and the Hindus, who are mobilized by nationalist rhetoric. Both the Muslims and the Hindus take up very strong positions, and the Parsis are almost invisible in this order. This leads Lenny to confront the most fundamental question: What is God?

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

- Parsees are "reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures" between the Muslim and Hindu communities that are mobilized by nationalist rhetoric. This leads Lenny to confront the most fundamental of questions: "What is God?"
- Regarding *Cracking India*, Jill Didur comments – prior to the escalation of Partition tensions, Ayah is able to negotiate the unequal relations of power with the men in her community around issues, such as the expression of her sexuality and community affiliation. After Partition, she is more constrained and eventually her body becomes a fulcrum for the power struggles
- As **Veena Das** argues in relation to the treatment of women during Partition violence: "[t]he woman's body . . . became a sign through which men communicated with each other" (1994, p.56)



What is religion? After all, So, regarding *Cracking India* Jill Didur comments, prior to the escalation of partition tensions, Ayah is able to negotiate the unequal relations of power with the men in her community around issues such as expression of her sexual identity or sexual agency and her desire for community affiliation. However, after partition, she is more constrained and eventually her body is turned into a fulcrum for power struggles among men. As Veena Das argues in relation to the treatment of women during partition violence, the woman's body, to quote Das, the woman's body became a sign through which men communicated with each other.

So, the woman's body becomes an essential sign through which men communicated with each other, unquote. So, Arunima De suggest that *Cracking India* demonstrates the need to re-examine narratives about women during the partition. Ayah's abduction and bodily violation are results of personal jealousy and vehemence of her rejected lover who... turns into an opportunist and uses this ethnic clash of partition, who is using the larger scenario, the larger communal turmoil that's going on to justify his vindictive actions as a valiant performance of his masculinity.

So, Ice Candy Man is actually taking advantage of the disturbed times, the communal tension between the Hindus and the Muslims and he is making use of his own community values, fellow men, he is making use of a number of Muslims a gang of Muslims to abduct and rape Ayah, and that becomes you know a show an exhibition of his masculinity at that

point in time right. It is seen as a kind of a valiant performance, his triumph as a Muslim and as a male and also as a defeated lover. Furthermore, through Hamida's character, Sidwa reveals that despite the state's paternalistic efforts to recover and rehabilitate abducted and raped women, these violated women became a reminder of the nation's shame and failure in being able to protect them amply, and such incidents occurring in women's lives led to the social death of the victimized gendered subjects; such victims you know such victims and survivors even after being recovered would never get back to their normal life, would never be able to get back to normalcy.

So, Lenny's innocence is misused by the Ice Candy Man when he extracts information about where Ayah is and then deceives Lenny. He makes use of the information that he gets from the child. And then he uses that information to abduct Ayah. Lenny realizes that her trust has been broken by her very good friend, the Ice Candy Man. So Lenny told the Ice Candy Man about Ayah's whereabouts because she thought he was a very good friend.

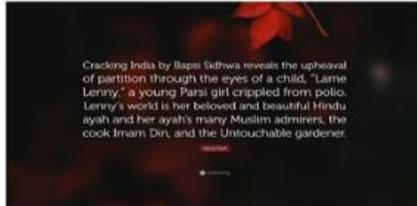
He was her hero, and he would never, you know, fail her. He would never do anything disappointing to her. Or anything that could hurt her. However, Lenny's trust is broken, and this leads to a scarring experience for her. And as a result of this entire incident that Lenny witnesses, a part of her innocence is lost forever.

A part of her innocence is lost forever. Many years later, when Lenny is writing this story about Ayah—looking back at Partition as an adult—this entire story has an underlying tone of guilt because she had betrayed Ayah. That sense of betraying her Ayah never leaves Lenny, even as an adult. So, in essence, we see that the novel *Cracking India* exposes the patriarchal nationalist agenda that dominated at the time of Partition and which used women's bodies as vehicles, as means for inscribing power relations between two rival ethnic groups. And consequently, it erases the gravity of the embodied violence that was enacted on the female body.

So, we see that when we talk about the formal history or historiography of partition, these incidents of embodied violence on the female body have been very strategically erased and expunged. We talk about positive things, about the freedom struggle, but there is hardly any discussion on what women underwent. Much later in partition scholarship, we find these feminist interventions happening and, you know, the narratives of women, the narratives of women are told by women themselves. And so a new dimension, a new direction of the past is thereby revealed,

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

- In essence, *Cracking India* allows for exposing the patriarchal nationalist agenda at the time of partition that used women's bodies as means for inscribing power relations between two opposing ethnic groups, and consequently erasing the gravity of the embodied violence enacted on the female body



and we come to face a different side of history altogether. So with this, I come to the end of today's lecture. Let us meet with a new topic in our next lecture. Thank you.