

**Literature, Culture and Media**  
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**Lecture – 55**

**Representation of Partition in Different Media: A Historical and Cultural Analysis II**

Dear participants, in this module we are continuing our discussion of how literature tries to represent the trauma of partition over the generations and how the different nature of media has also impacted the presentation of partition in different media. The public domain media had emphasised the role of nation building in its analysis and reporting.

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**Literature and Partition: Contexts**

- The public domain emphasized nation-building
  - Official versions of history and historiography underpin nationalist themes—silence around human dimensions of loss and suffering of minorities, commoners and women; appropriation of historical facts for ideological means; silence on reciprocal violence during partition
  - Censorship codes and dominance of official and authorized versions of the past impeded storytelling about partition
- The collective shame and numbing of psyche after brutality
  - 'A kind of excess marked the outpouring of accounts of violence in the public domain. This 'pornography of violence' was characterized by a preoccupation with cataloguing instances of debasement and degradation, often with a vicarious investment in horrific episodes involving women from the other community' (Saint)

The official versions of history and historiography highlight the nationalist theme and normally there is a silence about the human dimensions of loss and suffering of people, commoners, women, minorities. So, there is an appropriation of historical facts for ideological means and normally there is a silence on reciprocal violence during partition. At the same time, we find that the codes of censorship and dominance of official and authorised versions of the past impeded story telling about partition.

In contrast to that, we find that literary representation of partition was seen as a possible way of coming to terms with the experience of violence people had faced during these days. There was a sense of collective shame and numbing of psyche after the brutality, which they had to witness. I would quote saint here who says, “a kind of excess mark the outpouring of accounts of violence in the public domain. This ‘pornography of violence’ was characterized

by a preoccupation with cataloguing instances of debasement and degradation often with a vicarious investment of horrific episodes involving women from the other community”.

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### Strategies of Representation in Partition Writing

- Testimonial writing coeval with Partition. The imperative of ‘witnessing’; the anxiety about representation given the magnitude of horror and raw brutality of violence
- Performing acts of collective mourning. ‘Fictional representations may serve as an antidote to official narratives about the past, as well as to ersatz or artificially constructed memory’ (Saint 2010)
- Literary modes of witnessing and remembrance reconstitute archival forms of historical records; ethical act of remembering:
  - Use of a range of strategies to depict multiple levels of violence (physical, emotional and psychological): allegory, symbolism, use of irony and black humour
  - Reflections on exile, notion of the ‘home’, feeling of ‘homelessness’ as a result of mass migration and displacement
  - Self-reflexive assessment of the very act of witnessing; limits of fictive testimonies; ‘grey zone’ of memory, ambiguous moral terrain of victims-turned-perpetrators. Writings both challenge and reinforce communal violence

The writing of testimonial coevals with partition. The imperative of witnessing the anxiety about representation given the magnitude of horror and raw brutality of violence also affected the literary figures. There was also a performing act of collective mourning, a particular perspective with which literature was viewed. So, fictional representations may also serve as an antidote to official narrative about the past as well as to ersatz or artificially constructed memory.

Literary modes of witnessing and remembrance reconstitute archival forms of historical records. These literary moods use a wide range of strategies to depict the multiple level of violence; violence which had taken place simultaneously at physical, emotional and psychological levels. Literary modes of representation have used allegory, symbolism, irony as well as black humour.

Use of allegories and symbols is often there to represent the traumatic memory of people. They are also reflections on exile, notion of the home which has been lost forever. A feeling of homelessness as a result of forced migration and displacement. There is also a self-reflexive assessment of the very act of witnessing and the limits of testimonies and the grey zone of memory often results into the ambiguous moral terrain of victims turned perpetrators.

So writings both challenge and reinforce communal violence often in literary representations too.

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#### First Generation Writing on Partition: Literary works of the 40s and 50s

- Few major novels about Partition before 1960 in Urdu, Hindi and English
- Common preoccupations of these early novels:
  - Manifestations of communal violence. Representation of violence in raw and brutal forms; 'pornography of violence'; clichéd and banal stories about violence
  - Overwhelming sense of bewilderment, psychological numbness. Sense of guilt and shame because of the proximity to the events of 1947
  - The act of witnessing; fictive testimony—first generation writers had witnessed the trauma first hand; experienced loss of homeland; exile and homelessness; migration and displacement
- Self-reflexive mode of testimonial writing in the immediate aftermath of the Partition: Short stories of Manto and Intizar Husain



We can also say that different generations on the writing on partition have also responded in different ways. If we look at the first generation of literary production on partition the literary works which had come out in 40s and 50s we find that they more or less try to present a graphic idea, a graphic representation of the violence which they were looking at around them in its raw and brutal nature.

Several novels about partition had come out before 1960s, in Urdu, Hindi as well as in English. The common preoccupations were related with the act of witnessing presenting 'an overwhelming sense of bewilderment' and meaninglessness, a feeling of psychological numbness also. The self-reflexive mode of testimonial writing in the immediate aftermath of the partition can particularly be seen in the short stories of Saadat Hasan Manto and Intizar Husain.

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## Works

- Mumtaz Shah Nawaz's *The Heart Divided* (Written in 1948, though published in 1957)
- Novels in Urdu—raw narratives which record the horrors and devastation: Ramanand Sagar's *Aur Insaan Mar Gaya* (And Humanity Died, 1948) and Krishan Chander's *Ghaddar* (Traitor, 1960)
- First major Hindi novel: Yashpal's *Jhoota Sach* (False Truth) published in two parts, *Watan Aur Desh* (1958) and *Desh ka Bhavishya* (1960), Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950)
- Kartar Singh Duggal's Punjabi novel *Nahun te Maas* (1951 lit. Nails and Flesh, 1951)
- Works by Manto:
  - *Siyah Hashiye* (Black Margins, 1948) –satire and black humor in the depiction of partition violence, carnage, loot
  - *Thanda Gosht* (Cold Meat), *Khol Do* (Open it)
  - *Toba Tek Singh*: allegory for the madness of partition, critique of arbitrary borders, loss of home, the critique of the absurdity of categorization of mental patients on the basis of their religion, the bureaucratic indifference in the exchange of populations

Major works which came around this time and which constitute the first phase of literary representation about partition can be listed here. Mumtaz Shah Nawaz's *The Heart Divided*, is a major work. These novels in Urdu presented a raw narrative with records of horrors and devastation and they also incorporate Ramanand Sagar's *Aur Insaan Mar Gaya* in 1948 and Krishnan Chandar's *Ghaddar*, which also came out in 1960.

The first major Hindi novel is *Jhoota Sach* by Yashpal, which is published in two parts, *Watan Aur Desh* and *Desh Ka Bhavishya*. Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar* is also a very important signature of these time. Kartar Singh Duggal's Punjabi novel *Nahun te Maas* is also an important literary work of this generation. This list would be incomplete without referring to the works of Saadat Hasan Manto.

His fiction particularly *Siyah Hashiye* uses satire and black humour to depict the partition violence, carnage and loot. Other major works of fiction by Manto are *Thanda Gosht* and *Khol Do*. His famous story *Toba Tek Singh* is an allegory for the madness of partition. It is also a critique of arbitrary borders, loss of home as well as of the absurdity of categorisation of mental patients on the basis of their religion as well as the bureaucratic indifference to the exchange of populations.

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- Khadija Mastur's *Aangan* (1952): social realist treatment of post-partition refugee experience in the Progressive mode
- Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956)
  - A redemptive narrative; primacy of love story divided along religious lines
  - Rural setup; the temporal and spatial dislocation of the political history of partition events
  - The trope of ghost trains (Dead bodies of refugees): how they bring news of communal violence
  - Loss of utopic syncretic community in the face of Partition
- Balachandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* (1958): allegory of the partition experience from the point of view of a South Indian expat



Some other major works are Khadija Mastur's *Aangan*, which has presented a social realist treatment, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, which can be viewed as a redemptive narrative and has a primacy of love story divided along religious lines. This novel is also important because it also presents the figure of a communist party worker and the helplessness of this worker in an atmosphere of communal frenzy. Balachandra Rajan's, *The Dark Dancer*, published in 1958 is the allegory of the partition experience from the point of view of a South Indian expat.

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## Second Generation Writings

- Writings of 1960s and 1970s; temporal distance from the Partition enabled complex narratives to emerge; engage with the effects and legacy of Partition through the trope of memory, shift away from the social realist depictions of massacres and migration
- Experimentation with new representational techniques
  - Nuanced complex negotiation of personal and collective memory, identity crisis
  - Negotiation of the afterlife of Partition: formation of Bangladesh in 1971; disembodied forms of historical trauma continues to circulate
  - The perseverance of a form of postmemory; excavation of memories of suppressed forms of reciprocal violence amongst survivors
  - Creation of reflective writings: negotiation of broader social, cultural, political and civilizational questions
  - Rahi Masoom Raza: nostalgic remembrance of shared cultural life in small communities despite religious and political unrest



In the second-generation writings, which came out after 1960s and during 1970s, we find that the temporal distance from the partition enable complex narratives to emerge. It also enable the literary writers to engage with effects and legacy of partition through the troupe of

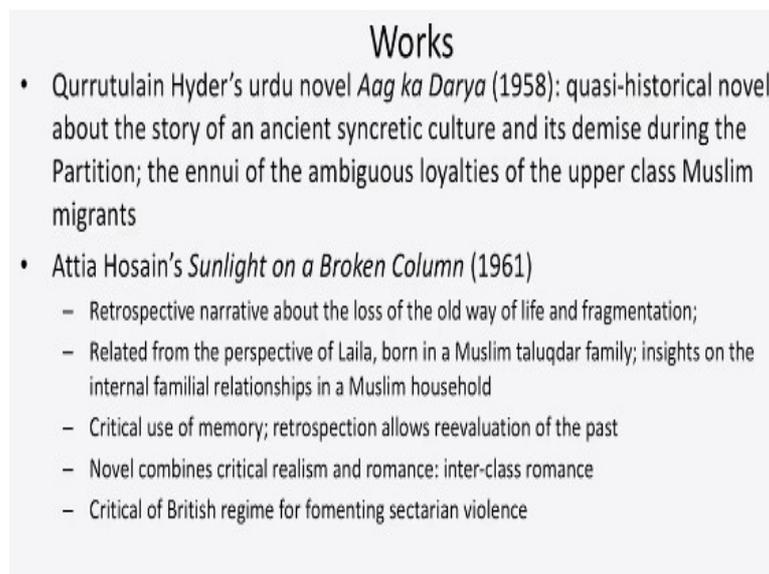
memory and there was a shift away from the social realist depictions of massacres and migration.

The second generation novelists and short story writers started to experiment with new representational techniques and there was a nuanced complex negotiation of personnel and collective memory as well as of identity crisis. There was a negotiation of the afterlife of partition and particularly after the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 several writers tried to look at the continuation of the legacy of partition.

The disembodied forms of historical trauma continues to circulate even in the second generation, but at the same time we find that there is a perseverance of a form of post memory. Excavation of memories of hitherto suppressed forms of reciprocal violence among survivals. At the same time, we find that there is a creation of reflective writings. Negotiation of broader social, cultural, political and civilizational questions.

For example, the works of Rahi Masoom *Raza* are a nostalgic remembrance of a sheared cultural life in small communities despite having religious differences.

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### Works

- Qurratulain Hyder's urdu novel *Aag ka Darya* (1958): quasi-historical novel about the story of an ancient syncretic culture and its demise during the Partition; the ennui of the ambiguous loyalties of the upper class Muslim migrants
- Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961)
  - Retrospective narrative about the loss of the old way of life and fragmentation;
  - Related from the perspective of Laila, born in a Muslim taluqdar family; insights on the internal familial relationships in a Muslim household
  - Critical use of memory; retrospection allows reevaluation of the past
  - Novel combines critical realism and romance: inter-class romance
  - Critical of British regime for fomenting sectarian violence

The major works of the second generation which can be listed are Qurratulain Hyder's novel *Aag Ka Darya* as well as Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*.

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- Rahi Masoom Raza –
  - *Adha Goon* (1966): deal with historical memory from the POV of an Indian Muslim
  - *Topi Shukla*: portrays the life and death of a Hindi scholar Balbhadra Narayan or Topi Shukla at Aligarh Muslim University. His peculiar friendship with the Muslim history professor and his wife Sakeena, forms the emotional crux of the novel
- Abdulla Hussain's *The Weary Generations* (1963)
- Manohar Mangolkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964)
- Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1974)
- Intizar Hussain's *Basti* (1979)



We have already referred to the works of Rahi Masoom's *Raza* and his prominent works include *Adha Goon* as well as *Topi Shukla*. Abdulla Hussain's *The Weary Generations*, Manohar Mangolkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*, which came out in 1974 and Intizar Hussain's *Basti*, which came out in 1979 are the important signatures of this time.

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### Partition Literature Since 1980s

- The afterlife of the partition and the persistence and dominance of the 'time of partition'
- Deschaumes and Ivekovic: the time of partition invades the present, structures mentalities and modes of representation around before/after--hazy zones
- Recurrence of communal violence, sectarian/ethnic unrest in Pakistan harks back to the memory of Partition—the legacy
- Conception of blurred temporalities and spatiality as an aesthetic/representational mode to understand the interconnections between the past and the present
- Secondary and tertiary modes of witnessing



There is a major shift in the partition literature after 1980s. It is also pertinent here to refer to Deschaumes and Ivekovic, who say that the time of partition invades the present structure mentalities and modes of representation around before and after the recurrence of communal violence. Sectarian or ethnic unrest in Pakistan harks back to the memory of partition which is often considered as the legacy of the partition by the more contemporary writers.

The conception of blurred temporalities and specialities as an aesthetic or representational mode to understand the interconnections between the past and present are also an important feature of the partition literature since 1980s. At the same time, we find that this literature is dominated by the secondary and tertiary modes of witnessing.

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- Reliance on testimonies of former refugees, oral histories, archival and historical documents to represent the past
- These narratives often feature protagonists who face intractable ethical and moral dilemmas in personal relationships, rooted in or inherited from past tangles and conflicts and the effects of historical trauma (Saint 2010)
- Excavation of silenced and alternative narratives of partition through postmodern techniques
- Famous works:
- Krishna Baldev Vaid's *Guzara Hua Zamana* (1981), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* (1981), Manzoor Ahtesham's *Sukha Bargad* (1983), Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines* (1988), Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) and *Clear Light of Day* (1980), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* (1988), Joginder Paul's Urdu novel *Khwabrau* (1990), Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998), Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* (1999)

In the literary works of this time we find that there is a Reliance on testimonies of former refugees, a Reliance on oral histories archival and historical documents to represent the past. These narratives often feature protagonists, who face intractable ethical and moral dilemmas in personal relationships, rooted in the past or inherited from the past tangles and conflicts and the effects of a historical trauma.

The excavation of silenced and alternative narratives of partition through postmodern techniques has also been taken up during this time. Some of the famous works which can be mentioned here are Krishna Baldev Vaid's *Guzara Hua Zamana*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, Manzoor Ahtesham's *Sukha Bargad*, Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*, Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* and *Clear Light of Day*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* and Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*. So we find that the impact of post-modern techniques is disenable in the literature produced in the third generation.

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## Oral History Projects and Digitization

- Oral history: memory work as an alternative to archive-based history
  - People's history; alternative to official history; personal stories foregrounded
  - Effects of political history on ordinary people
- Luisa Passerini argues '[I]t may be that our attempt to retrieve memories...can contribute to the emergence of freer cultural attitudes and the instatement of the problem of freedom at the center of history'.
- Technology, digital media and social media have allowed individuals as well as organizations to collect, process and preserve Partition history through oral narratives of refugees and survivors
  - Promotes interface outside mainstream textbooks and across political borders
  - A new conception of history: Living, interactive and participatory



It is around this time that several oral history projects and the digitisation of the history of partition has also been taken up. When we talk about the oral history, we find that it is linked with the memory work as an alternative to history which is based on archives. So, it is people's history which is seen as an alternative to the official history. So, it is a foregrounding of the personal stories of people and it also suggests what has been the impact of political history on the lives of ordinary people.

Luisa Passerini argues that “it may be that our attempt to retrieve memories... can contribute to the emergence of freer cultural attitudes and the instatement of the problem of freedom at the centre of history”.

In the third generation of people who are attempting to write about partition we find that technology, digital media and social media have allowed them as well as organisations to collect process and preserve partition history through oral narratives of refugees and survivors. The new media also promotes an interface outside mainstream textbooks and a cross political borders and a new conception of history which is living, which is interactive and participatory is gradually being build.

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- Projects:
  - The 1947 Partition Archive,
  - The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP) and
  - *Bolti Khidki*
- These oral history and digital archival and resource centers also facilitate exchange of ideas, material and allow communication between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh
- Harness power of storytelling to create a different kind of museum; a memorialization of personal/micro histories
  - Use of personal artefacts, photographs, documents



Major projects which we can refer are the 1947 partition archive, the citizens archive of Pakistan or CAP and *Bolti Khidki*. These oral history and digital archival and resource centers also facilitate exchange of ideas, material and allow communication between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These projects attempt to harness power of storytelling to create a different kind of museum, a memorization of personal and micro histories, use of personal artifacts, photographs and documents to record the personal stories of people.

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- The 1947 Partition Archive
  - Largest collection of oral histories of Partition: around 4,300 oral stories on digital video from more than 350 cities from across the world. Explores narratives from both sides of the border
  - Open to the public, in partnership with an association of Indian, Pakistani, British and American universities
  - Investigates stories of migration and documents memories: “[It] Created a neutral and safe atmosphere around memorializing Partition. And it also took something that was very subaltern and brought it out into the public sphere simply by getting lots of people to record stories,” says Guneeta Bhalla
- CAP: digitization of Pakistan’s history Began in 2007; digitization of 100,000 images and over 2,200 oral narratives.
- *Bolti Khidki*: A digital initiative which shares narratives of Partition survivors from India and Pakistan on its Facebook page
  - Promotes initiatives for fostering exchange programs between the two countries

The 1947 partition archive is the largest collection of oral histories of partition around 4300 oral stories on digital video from more than 350 cities from across the world are stored in it. It explores narrative from both sides of the borders and it is open to public. It also investigates stories of migration and documents memories. CAP that is the digitisation of Pakistan’s history was started in 2007.

So it is a digitisation of images and some oral narratives. *Bolti Khidki* is a digital initiative which shares narratives of partition survivors from India and Pakistan on its Facebook page and also promotes initiatives for fostering exchange program between the two countries.

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## Representation of Partition in Cinema



So we see that in the print media as well as in the literary reproduction, partition has left a deep impact on the psyche of the writers. In different generations we find that literary figures are responding to it in different way and at the same time the changing media perspectives have also impacted the way people are trying to remember and think about partition and preserve its memory.

We have looked at the two major types of media and how they look at the incidents, which were unfolding during the days of partition. We have looked at how it has been represented in the major newspapers of the time. We have also tried to look at how different generations try to represent partition in literary attempts as well as through digital media platforms. Very briefly, we would look at how the representation of partition has been done in popular cinema in India and Pakistan.

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## Partition and Popular Cinema

- Memorialization of Partition through mainstream cinema
- Influence of Partition on Cinema
  - Changed the film industries in both India and Pakistan; migration of artists, technicians, actors and filmmakers
  - Division of film industry assets; Lahore and Bombay were the major centres
  - Influences at the level of diegetic content and narrative styles of films post partition
- Films as a medium to understand historical events
  - Constitute a significant source for representation of partition events in the popular imagination



We find that the incident of partition has been memorialized through mainstream cinema. To begin with we find that the event of partition influenced cinema in several ways. It also changed the dynamics of film industry in both India and Pakistan. So there was a migration of artist, technicians, actors, filmmakers and singers et cetera. There was a division of film industry assets also.

At the time of partition Bombay and Lahore were the major centres of filmmaking. So there were influences at the level of diegetic content and narrative styles of films after the partition because of these incidents. Film itself can be treated as a medium to understand historical events as it constitutes a significant source for the representation of events in popular imagination. Still we find that the medium of film can be challenged.

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- Can films accurately represent/recreate the causes, effects and legacies of Partition? Are films legitimate historical, cultural documents of an era?
- As a site for creation of historical and cultural knowledge about the meaning of partition
  - "Interpretation" of Partition rather than the emphasis on "event" per se (Pandey 2003)
- Films as "institutionalized sites of memory": historical memory, remembrance
  - Function as mnemonic devices—films based on Partition events are 'conduits to the past of the inextricably interwoven destinies of India and Pakistan' (Viswanath and Malik 2009)
  - Themes: Cross-border love stories; separated lovers; feuding families, and the trope of long lost kin; "lost and found theme"—all these resonate with memories and experiences of the Partition of the subcontinent
  - Fusion of literature and cinema: Partition writings (Novels, short stories) of Khushwant Singh, Quratulain Haider, Saadat Hassan Manto, Saifudin Saif, and Bapsi Sidhwa adapted to films

Can films accurately represent or recreate the cause, effects and legacies of partition are the legitimate history or cultural documents of a particular era? As a site for creation of historical and cultural knowledge about the meaning of partition what is their significance, because they try to interpret partition rather than emphasize on the event per se. Films have also been treated as institutionalized sites of memory, because they also reflect the way we culturally and historically remember a particular event. They function as mnemonic devices. Films based on partition events are treated as conduits to the past of the inextricably interwoven destinies of India and Pakistan. The themes which popular cinema has taken up in the context of partition are normally related with cross border, love scenarios, lovers who have been separated, families who are feuding and the trope of long lost kin, lost and found theme, all these resonate with memories and experiences of the partition of the Indian subcontinent.

At the same time, we find that there is a fusion of literature in cinema. Partition writings of Khushwant Singh, Qurutulain Haider, Saadat Hassan Manto, Bapsi Sidhwa, Saifudin Saif et cetera have been adapted into films and in many cases we find that the fictional work as well as the film adaptation have been equally successful and sensitive.

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### Partition Cinema's Cathartic Value

- Facilitates effective emotional engagement
  - "It helps create spaces for discourse, confrontation and debate...Cinema as such is an alternative discourse of history telling, and can in this way authenticate lived experience and cultural memory" (Ira Bhaskar)
  - In representing and confronting the trauma of Partition—it paves the way for collective mourning and reflection in a public space
- Newspapers and Magazines report as events develop and unfold; little scope for reflection; reportage is more spontaneous and caught up in the turmoil and chaos of the situation
- Temporal displacement between the event and its representation allows for consideration, contemplation and assessment in films



Partition cinema is also supposed to have as a certain cathartic value, as it facilitates an effective emotional engagement. It helps create spaces for discourse, confrontation and debate as Ira Bhaskar suggests. Cinema as such is an alternative discourse of history telling and can in this way authenticate, live, experience and cultural memory. In representing and confronting the trauma of partition, it paves the way for collective morning and reflection in public space.

Whereas newspapers and magazines report the historical incidents as they develop and unfold almost on a daily basis. There is a little scope of reflection in them. Reportage particularly newspaper and print media is a spontaneous and it is also therefore got up in the turmoil and confusion of the situation. Films allow a temporal displacement between the event and its representation which also allows a certain time for consideration and assessment.

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### Pakistani Cinema

- Pakistani cinema not as rich and vibrant as its Indian counterpart; post-Partition Pakistani cinema did produce some significant works
- Around a dozen movies have been made on the issue of Partition:
  - *Kartar Singh* (Saifudin Saif 1959), *Khaak am Khaun* (Masud Pervaiz 1979), *Tauba* (S A Hafiz 1964), *Lakhon Mein Eik* (Raza Mir 1967), *Behen Bhai* (Hasan Tariq 1968) and *Pehli Nazar* (Islam Dar 1977)
- *Kartar Singh* was a huge commercial success; very popular in India as well
  - Omar Adil on *Kartar Singh*: "It was a microcosmic representation of *Punjabism*, which overrode all other 'isms'."
- Partition of Bengal not emphasized enough
  - Ritwik Ghatak's films and the Bangladeshi film by Tanvir Mokkaamel *Chitra Nadir Pare* (On the Banks of River Chitra, 1999)—some notable exceptions



We find that the Pakistani cinema in comparison is not as rich or vibrant as the Indian cinema, post partition Pakistani cinema did produce some significant works and around a dozen movies have been made in Pakistan on the issue of partition. Main movies incorporate *Kartar Singh*, *Khaak am Khaun*, *Tauba*, *Lakhon Mein Eik* et cetera. *Kartar Singh* was a huge commercial success in Pakistan as well as in India.

It represents a microcosmic sense of being Punjabi, which overrode all otherisms as Omar Adil has written about this movie. However, we find that the patrician of Bengal has not been depicted enough. Some of interesting and notable exceptions are the movies by Ritwik Ghatak as well as a Bangladeshi film by Tanvir Mokkaamel with the title of *Chitra Nadir Pare*.

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## Indian Cinema

- Dominance of love story topos; seen as a way to resolve socio-political conflicts; tangential treatment of Partition; often used as a backdrop
- Even in these love stories, the trajectory is charted by the events of the partition: Troubles of Shanti and Kewal in *Challia* (1960); Henna and Chander in *Henna* (1991); Mehmooda Begum in *Mammo* (1994); Sakina and Tara Singh in *Gadar*
- Tendency to emphasize universal and humanist themes; gloss over political contradiction
- Few historically conscious films: fear of controversy and safety as partition is a highly sensitive subject



In comparison to the Pakistani cinema we find that Indian cinema has been able to depict the themes of partition in a very different way. In the Indian cinema we also find that there has been a dominance of the topos of love story and love stories often seen as a way to resolve the socio-political conflicts and therefore there is a tangential treatment of partition which is often used only as a back drop.

In these love stories we find that the trajectories charted by the events of the partition and these movies can also be referred to here for example *Challia* or *Henna* or *Mammo* or the box of a sensation *Gadar*. There is a tendency to emphasize universal and humanist themes in Indian cinema when it comes to the treatment of partition and the gloss over political contradictions.

There are very few movies which are conscious of the historical significance of the event. Because of the fear of controversy and safety, most of the film makers try to avoid the sensitivity of the subject and treated only in such a way as can be a success on the box office.

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- "The work on Partition really began after 1984. Before that, there were novel, short stories but there wasn't any sustained discussion on these issues in films." (Ira Bhaskar)
- 3 phases of topos of Partition in Hindi Cinema (Bhaskar)
  - First Phase: From 1947-62
  - Second phase: the 1970s
  - Third Phase: From 1990s



The work on partition actually began 1984 as far as the treatment through film is concerned. Before that there were novel, short stories, but there was not any sustained discussion on these issues in films. Ira Bhaskar has also suggested that there are three phases of topos of partition in Hindi cinema. The first phase covers the time zone of 1947-1962 roughly. The second phase is the 1970s and the third phase is from 1990s.

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First Phase: From 1947 to 62

- Common narratives: migration, abduction and consequent recovery of the women
- Yash Chopra's *Dharamputra* (1961)
  - addresses communal crisis, fundamentalism and the social and political reality of Partition; use of archival footage of refugee trains and partition kafilas (caravans of thousands refugees on foot carrying their meagre possessions in search of their new homeland)
- The refugee trains and partition caravan become the defining trope of the catastrophic changes wrought upon the psyche of masses displaced from their homes; became a stock visual technique and metaphor in partition films; enormous melodramatic potential



In the first phase we find that the common narrative of films was based on migration, abduction and consequent recovery of a women. Yash Chopra's 1961 movie *Dharamputra* addresses communal crisis, fundamentalism and the social and political reality of partition. Use of archival footage of refugee trains and partition caravans has also become popular in Indian movies.

Caravans of thousands of refugees on foot carrying their meagre possessions in search of a new home land or travelling on the roofs of trains has become a stock image in these films based on partition. So these resource became a stock visual technique and a metaphor in partition films.

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These images also have a unique melodramatic value. So these stock visual techniques have been invariably used in almost all the films which are based on partition.

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Second phase: the 1970s

- Gave way to the appearance of hidden emotions
- Repressed issues in society – communal alienation and conflict, the unresolved wounds and memories of the partition violence
- The rise and popularity of arthouse or parallel cinema: Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, M S Sathyu, Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihalani
- Best known Partition films: M S Sathyu's *Garam Hawa* (1977) and Govind Nihalani's television serial *Tamas* (1989)

– *Tamas* was adapted from Bhisham Sahni's partition novel of the same name: political scheming behind violence, graphic representation of mob frenzy, critique of religious fundamentalism, the British indifference in controlling violence



The second phase is based on 1970s, so as we have seen in the context of literary reproduction. We find that the movies have also started to give way to the appearance of hidden emotions. So, the repressed issues in society which people were hesitant to talk about has come to be accepted as far as the film based discussion is concerned. The communal

alienation and conflict, the unresolved wounds and memories of the partition violence are now being depicted with more sensitivity.

At the same time, we find that in Indian cinema world there was a rise of a parallel cinema and this art house or parallel cinema also became very popular with the academic proud. So we find that movies by Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, M S Sathyu, Shyam Benegal and Govind Nihalani were becoming popular. The best known partition films of the second phase are *Garam Hawa* of M S Sathyu and the television serial turned into a movie later on that is *Tamas* by Govind Nihalani, which has come out in 1989.

*Tamas* was adapted from the partition novel of Bhisham Sahani with the same name. The novel as well as the serial as well as the film adaptation suggest that the political scheming exists behind the violence and it also graphically represented Mob Frenzy, it was a critique of religious fundamentalism as well as of the British indifference in controlling the erupting violence in Indian cities.

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- Third Phase: From 1990s
- Negotiation of issues of identity, secularism and citizenship
- "Bhaskar observes that subjects considered taboo for nearly 40 years were being talked about openly: preconceived stereotypes and prejudices against one another, communal and racial sentiments, rise of Hindutva and erosion of secular values" (Viswanath and Malik 2009)
- Partition and its fraught legacies were directly confronted in films like *Mammo* (1994), *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (released as *1947 in India*) (1998)
  - *Popular Cinema -- Refugee* (2000), *Hey Ram* (2000), *Veer Zaara* (2004) and *Partition* (2007)



The third phase starts from 1990s, in the third phase we find that there is a negotiation of issues of identity, secularism and citizenship. Bhaskar has suggested that subjects, which were considered as taboo for nearly 40 years, were being talked about openly. Preconceived stereotypes and prejudice against one another communal and racial sentiments rise of fundamentalism in different languages as well as erosion of secular values was also being questioned now.

Partition and its fraught legacy were directly confronted in films like *Mammo*, *train to Pakistan* that is the 1998 movie and *Earth* which was released as 1947 in India. In a popular cinema we can refer to certain other films like *Refugee*, *Hey Ram*, *Veer Zaara* and *Partition*.

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- 'Recent research on Partition (Brass 2006) has demonstrated that several acts were local in nature, carried out for reasons other than genocide: loot, capture of property and abduction of women' (Viswanath and Malik 2009)
- The abduction of Puro in *Pinjar* and the betrayal of Shanta in *Earth 1947* are clearly not entirely communal in nature; the dominant emphasis on religious divide obscures these subtleties—bring to the fore the sexual abuse, abduction and rape of women during partition (something that remained a taboo subject)
- Some films emphasize the influence of partition on the lives of common people: In *Mammo*, displacement, indifference of immigration procedures, identity crisis are the major themes



Recent research in partition demonstrates that several acts were local in nature, and they were carried out for reasons other than genocide. For example, many people wanted to capture property and wanted to abduct women and the communal frenzy of the partition days gave them a set opportunity for it. For example, the abduction of Puro in *Pinjar* and betrayal of Shanta in *Earth 1947* are clearly not entirely communal in nature.

So the dominant emphasis on religious divide obscured these subtleties in the previous treatment of these movies. However, in the third phase of movie making we find that these subtleties are being discussed with a renewed sensitivity. Some films emphasise the influence of partition on the lives of common people and they shown the direct representation of violence. For example, in the movie *Mammo*, the displacement and indifference of immigration procedures and identity crisis are the major themes.

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## Melodrama and Partition Films

- Melodrama— ‘formal structures through which history is narrativised in Partition cinema’ (Viswanath and Malik 2009)
- Gledhill on Melodrama: “ ... with its historical associations with tragedy and realism, melodrama may be seen as a way of looking at the world” (1987: 1)
- Elsaesser: melodrama is quite successful in translating ‘political themes on to a personalized plane (1987: 47)
- Interestingly the features of melodrama ostensibly restrict the political potential of these narratives



Partition films are invariably associated with melodrama. Formal structures through which history is narrativised in partition cinema is always influenced by a certain Melodrama. Melodrama with its historical association with tragedy and realism can be seen as a way of looking at the world. It is also quite successful according to some critiques in translating ‘political themes on to a personalized plane’.

Interestingly we find that the melodramatic features of most of the Indian movies ostensibly restrict the political potential of these narrative and they want to highlight the conventional topoz which are more syllable.

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## Melodrama and Partition Films

- The epic scale of the diegetic universe; centrality of family, representation of women; rhetorical acting style
- *Diegesis vs. Mimesis*: *Mimesis* shows, rather than tells; part of stylistic devices, how the action is enacted. *Diegesis* tells the story through a narrator who may be a character/invisible voice/omniscient narrator speaking from outside
  - In filmmaking it is a story depicted on screen, not a real-time screen narrative; characters or stories within other stories
  - Film may include elements that are not intended for the primary narrative; characters and events may be referred to elsewhere or in historical contexts, and are therefore outside the main story and thus, they are presented in an *extra-diegetic* situation.



The epic scale of the diegetic universe is projected in these films through certain motives, for example the centrality of family, representation of women as well as rhetorical acting style of

different characters. Most of the partition movies are able to depict only a diegetic universe. The two terms 'diegesis' and 'mimesis' are contrasted in literature since the days of Plato. Mimesis shows rather than tells. So, it can be treated as a part of stylistic devices because it tells us how a certain action is enacted. In comparison diegesis tells the story through a narrator. The narrator maybe a character and invisible voice or an omniscient narrator who might be speaking from the outside. So, in film making it is basically a story which is depicted on a screen unlike a real time screen narrative.

So characters or stories are presented within other characters and stories. So films may include elements that are not intended for the primary narrative. Characters and events may be referred to elsewhere or an historical context and are therefore outside the main story and thus they are presented in what can be termed as an extra diegetic situation. So we have seen that the event of partition has been treated differently through different media.

In the print medium as well as in the representation through films, certain elements are being modified or added to present a particular perspective which cannot be included in a different media form. At the same time the changing nature of media and the growing interconnectivity of people the fact that the audience can also participate in creating a content has also made new forms of memory record possible in the context of partition.

So we find that the same event is being depicted through different media with certain changes which is essentially linked in an organic way with a cultural representation of a particular aspect of our national history. Thank you.