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**Home and Belonging: Migration Memories and Identity Complexities in the Fictional
Narratives of the 1947 Partition**

Abstract –

In this paper, two short stories, dealing with the consequences of the partition of India in 1947 are examined for their negation of the concepts of ‘home’ and ‘memory’. These narratives reflect the ambiguity that came along with the decision of whether to dislocate after the partition and the dilemma to establish another ‘home’ in the new nation states. ‘Here and There’ (Epar Opar) originally written in Bangla by Manoj Basu is a non-linear narrative in which the protagonist, a member of the religious minority, is contemplating whether to sell his house to his friends from the religious majority community of the neighborhood. This would allow him to escape from the violence and chaos of the Noakhali riots, which happened just before the partition was announced. He struggles with the legal aspects of property transfer and his emotional attachments to his home and his belonging. The story juxtaposes the physicality of home and land with its psychological manifestations. The second story, ‘Acharya Kripalani Colony’ originally written in Bangla by Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay investigates the fear and insecurities that come with spatial dislocation. The story deals with the ‘realities’ of the promised land that was advertised post-partition for the newly nation states. This story evokes the sense of rupture that the displaced experienced in their attempt to develop a sense of belonging. In this essay, I will examine how the idea of memory and nostalgia relates to a ‘sense of home’ and how these concepts are a means to

negotiate identity and identity crisis as a result of the rupture caused by dislocation. It will further investigate how these literary texts explore the formation of migration memories with reference to pre-migration memories in which a person is 'at ease' with the physicality of their home.

Partition literature becomes a medium of representing the narratives of post-colonial societal structures of the Indian subcontinent and the dilemmas associated with belonging and assimilating with the collective cultures post the process of displacement. A critical reading of these two stories, in a larger discourse of Migration Studies, can bring forth the dilemmas that arise because of the process of displacement and 'putting' people in their 'correct' nation states. These accounts also question whether the assigned nation state to a person can actually be their home or does 'home' have different meanings. The purpose of this paper is to examine how displacement and uprooting, both physically and psychologically, affect collective memory, nostalgia, sense of belonging, and identity that people experience when they lose a space/place they consider home.

OUTLINE

Affect Theory

the use of emotions as a narrative strategy within literary writing of Partition's short memory as the means for a kind of subaltern expression. The recent development of Affect Studies and the "affective turn" in different fields and disciplines (notably History) offer new perspectives in the comprehension of collective tragedies. This sheds new light on the issue of the narration and thus the memory of these tragedies constructed through narrative which often remain subservient (as was particularly the case for Partition) to ideological 'grand' narratives, within which individual

and even more so collective emotions have been considered as interfering (or “troubling”, in Alok Bhalla’s words) to “objective” narratives. Highlighting the intimate relationship among emotion, memory and narrative of the experience of collective tragedies, and showing that literature represents a privileged medium of this experience, this paper aims to open new perspectives on the history of Partition and, more specifically, on the analysis of its memory, as constituted and conveyed by fictional material.

Historical Fiction

there are two ways to conceptualize the historical novel regarding the representation of facts: the first one is seeing the genre as transformation of facts into fiction, thus getting away from them, and giving “false” information to the reader about the past. The second way is to conceive the process as shaping history with dramatic and artistic effects and thus making it much more effective, much more “historical”, more “humane”, and thus, paradoxically, truer to reality.

“[These] are far from life. [. . .] The most homely and intimate and personal

things slip through the hands of the historian. [. . .] About the closest human

things, history only tells us enough to set us guessing and wondering. (H. Butterfield, *The Historical Novel*, Cambridge, 1924, p. 6.)

Narrative Summery

Here and There (Epar Opar)

Manoj Basu

Noakhali Riots (October–November 1946) led to the Bihar violence, which then had repercussion in other districts in East Bengal. The minority community of the well-to-do Hindus like

Himangshu's family of his village, were at the receiving end of the violence in Here and There. The passing of land and property to former tenants and servants/labors and the attempts at selling them at a later date to their new proprietors, are central to Himangshu's experience and return. The story moves back and forth in time as Himangshu dreams of past events. It shows how secular friends like Sirajul and tenants like Taj Mohammad, changed beyond recognition during those times. A way of life is disrupted as households break up and are swept away by the violence. Yet when Himangshu returns, Taj Mohammad is willing to pay for the property he enjoys and gives him a hundred rupee note as a first instalment, while Taj Mohammad's womenfolk bring provisions and Sirajul invites him to his house. One old man, a lyricist, Golam Ali, makes a hazardous and strenuous journey just to see him again. He tells him that if he had not been ill in bed during those fateful days, he would have contained the violence. Golam Ali's tears for Himangshu's desolation moves the latter to give the old man the hundred rupees to rebuild the dargah as a note of recognition of the latter's sense of justice and innate humanity. Himangshu, though faced with utter ruin and the non-realization of his dreams, gives away his all to someone of the other community from a sense of fellow feeling. In India, Himangshu knows that he will face unemployment and homelessness in the continuing struggle of the east Bengal refugee.

Idea of the heterotopia, the question of the imaginary

The ideology of return... is it even possible?

Affect theory is a theory that seeks to organize affects, sometimes used interchangeably with emotions or subjectively experienced feelings, into discrete categories and to typify their physiological, social, interpersonal, and internalized manifestations. The conversation about affect theory has been taken up in psychology, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, medicine, interpersonal

communication, literary theory, critical theory, media studies, and gender studies, among other fields. Hence, affect theory is defined in different ways, depending on the discipline.

Historical Overview

- 1947 Partition - One of the largest forced mass migrations in the human history
Refugee- 15 million+ (recorded)
Deaths- 1 million+ (recorded) (Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 2004)
 - Collective Amnesia (Ritu Menon; Kamla Bhasin; 1998)
 - 2nd and 3rd generation (the contemporary Partition subjects) absent from the discourse.
1. Pre-Partitioned Bengal (1905-1911): West Bengal / East Bengal
 2. 1947 Partitioned Bengal : West Bengal / East Pakistan
 3. 1971 War of Liberation Bengal: West Bengal / Bangladesh
- With the change in every reconfiguration of Bengal, the idea of Bengali 'Migrant' changed.
 - If the 'migrant' term is so problematic, why then are the 'Ghoti-Bangal' terms so prevalent and largely accepted?
 - Why do the terms 'Ghoti-Bangal' seem to carry a cultural heritage and associate with the concepts of language, food, football, but not with the sense of belonging and nation?
 - Today, a migrant from 'Bengal' predominantly means the 'undocumented Bangladeshi migrant', the narratives of the 1947 migrants are overlooked.

Narrative Overview

- Understanding 'narratives' in a broader sense

- Partition as depicted through ‘popular’ historical narratives

1. From Plassey to Partition and After: A History of Modern India by Sekhar

Bandyopadhyay (2004)

2. The Spoils of Partition by Joya Chatterji (2007)

- To study the ‘human perspective’ and focus on the ‘lived experiences remembered through memory’ of the historical events, emergence of alternative histories from the 1990s – studying oral histories and oral narratives.
- Before alternative histories, literature could function as representational narratives of the missing ‘human dimension’ from the ‘grand’ popularly circulated historical political narrative.
- Literary texts filled in for the lack of the ‘human dimension’ and ‘human experiences’ in Partition histories and establishes inter-relationship between historical trauma, collective memory and cultural processes.
- The experiences of violence, displacement and trauma shaped the postcolonial societies and subjectivities in the Indian subcontinent.
- Literature's relation to public memory and its place within the public sphere has changed through time, preserving the memories of Partition over time through fiction.

Research Questions and Methodology

- What are the linguistic strategies of healing, reclamation and negotiation in the second and third generation Partition subjects?

- Understand the formation and shaping of the political belonging and modern subject formations in the context of the 1947 Partition of the Indian Subcontinent and its impact on the post-partition language dynamics.
- Understand how the historical, political, and social shaping of populations after the migration during the post-partition period, determine and affect migrants' communal and social relationships and self-definition as communities and decide the attributes of the newly formed society.
- Methodology – Narrative Anthropology (Includes fieldwork in India and qualitative analysis of the oral histories)

Theoretical Framework

- Affect Theory (Castaing, Anne. 2018)
Affect theory is an approach to culture, history, and politics that focuses on nonlinguistic forces, or affects. Affects make us what we are, but they are neither under our “conscious” control nor even necessarily within our awareness—and they can only sometimes be captured in language.
- Using of emotions as a narrative strategy
- After the ‘Affect Turn’ in historical studies, it is used to understand new perspectives in the comprehension of collective tragedies. (MacMullen (2003); Vincent-Buffault (1986); Pernau and Jordheim (2015).)
- Using Affect theory to study narratives which construct the memories of the tragedies and trauma.

- Affect theory allowed to move away from the positivist historical school where individual and even more so collective emotions have been considered as interfering or troubling to ‘objective’ narratives. (Bhalla, Alok. “Objectifying Troubling Memories”. 2000)
- “What makes a historical narrative historical, is the active presence of a concept of history as a shaping force—acting not only upon the characters in the narrative but on the author and readers outside it.”
(Fleishman, Avrom. *The English Historical Novel*, Baltimore, 1971, p. 15)
- Is History writing also an exercise of reconstruction, rearrangement and rewriting a narrative using other primary data, which is considered to be factual?

Concept of Postmemory

“Postmemory” describes the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or one’s consciousness, is to risk having one’s own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. (Marianne Hirsch, 1990)

- Marianne Hirsch's conceptualization of 'Post-memory' was theorized in context to the second-generation memory of the Holocaust and the literary and visual legacies of the Holocaust.
- Post-memory, in context to the 1947 Partition of India and the second and third generation migrants from the Partition, undergoes the crucial question of belongingness and what 'home' actually is?
- The narratives of the Holocaust have the burden to be 'told and shared' of the gruesome genocide by the second generation, as opposed to narratives of the 1947 Partition by the second and third generation migrants that have to be 'forgotten' and thus 'get ridden' of, to form a sense of belonging.

Revisiting the Bengal 'Deshbhaag': Reading the Historiography of the 1947 Partition of India

- Historical Overview – the factual historical narrative as documented by important imperial historian
- Introduce the historiography that is based on archival data, maps, demography, police report, etc.
- Coming up of oral history as an alternative perspective post 1990s

Necessity of Oral History

- The concepts of trauma, remembering, forgetting and memory
- How orality is essential to regulate these concepts of trauma, remembering, forgetting and memory?
- How orality becomes a medium of transferring these to the next generation?
- Material memory as part of reconstructing the past

- Why focus on the 2nd/ 3rd generations? Who are they?
- Why is it important to study the continuity of the trauma? What new interesting perspectives?
- What has changed in the 2nd / 3rd generations while there has been the intergenerational transfer of memories and trauma?
- What new questions and angles do they provide to the oral histories of the 1947 Partition of India?

Psychoanalysis - Transference of Narratives, Trauma and Loss

1. Purpose behind the need to pass on these narratives.

“The mechanisms for transgenerational trauma have flourished with the recognition that trauma experienced by one generation can result in trauma-like symptomology among second-generation individuals who were neither directly exposed to the original trauma nor to the more indirect story-telling exposure; that is, the trauma is transmitted via less explicit means” (Yehuda, 2016).

2. What is ‘loss’ for 2nd generation Partition Migrants?

“While this Holocaust identity was used as a discriminator between themselves and non-Holocaust descendants, the participants also spoke of using their identity as survivors’ descendants as a framework through which to ethically situate themselves in relation to contemporary political and social issues.” (I.G. Cohn and N.M.V. Morrison, 2017)

Points of Analysis

- Breaking through the silences regarding the histories of Migration in 2nd generation

Partition Migrants

- Studying trauma through language, narratives and emotions
- Loss and gain in intergenerational transference of narratives of trauma related to Migration
- Who is the Other?
- Interestingly the narratives are actually not about either sides of the border, rather is about the in-between, the intermediate
 - ❖ Physical
 - ❖ Temporal
 - ❖ Spatial
 - ❖ Psychological
 - ❖ Indecisive about decision making
 - ❖ Establishment of two new nation-states
 - ❖ Who is the 'Other'?
- Where does the 'Home' exist? Where should one belong?
- How long does one need to get rid/shed the migrant identity and it becomes legitimate to belong to a space/place/country/nation state?
- Is being born in a country, growing up there and having lived there your entire life not enough to be considered to belong there?

- Is it not unfair and extremely rude towards the '2nd and 3rd generation migrants' as it is not even their story but is almost forced upon them both historically and institutionally?
- The connotations associated with the terms -
 - ❖ Migrant
 - ❖ Diaspora
 - ❖ Transnational

Connotations of 'Migrant'

- Uncomfortable and unsettling issues of 'migrant' identity
- Taboos/ stereotypes associated with specific terminology
- 1947 Partition Migrants
- Bangladeshi Undocumented Migrants