

Trauma and Literature
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Lecture - 02
Manto's Toba Tek Singh - Part 1

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[Toba Tek Singh](#) ([article/toba-tek-singh](#))



Two or three years after Partition, the governments of Pakistan and India decided to exchange lunatics in the same way that they had exchanged civilian prisoners. In other words, Muslim lunatics in Indian madhouses would be sent to Pakistan, while Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani madhouses would be handed over to India.

I can't say whether this decision made sense or not. In any event, a date for the lunatic exchange was fixed after high level conferences on both sides of the border. All the details were carefully worked out. On the Indian side, Muslim lunatics with relatives in India would be allowed to stay. The remainder would be sent to the frontier. Here in Pakistan nearly all the Hindus and Sikhs were gone, so the question of retaining non-Muslim lunatics did not arise. All the Hindu and Sikh lunatics would be sent to the frontier in police custody.

I don't know what happened over there. When news of the lunatic exchange reached the madhouse here in Lahore, however, it became an absorbing topic of discussion among the inmates. There was one Muslim lunatic who had read the newspaper *Zamindar*¹ every day for twelve years. One of his friends asked him: "Maulvi Sahib! What is Pakistan?" After careful thought he replied: "It's a place in India where they make razors."

Hearing this, his friend was content.

One Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh: "Sardar ji, why are they sending us to India? We don't even speak the language."

"I understand the Indian language," the other replied, smiling. "Indians are devilish people who strut around haughtily," he added.

While bathing, a Muslim lunatic shouted "Long live Pakistan!" with such vigor that he slipped on the floor and knocked himself out.



So hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Trauma and Literature. We will start with the first text which happens to be Saadat Hasan Manto's short story Toba Tek Singh, which is a story about partition. We talked about in the last lecture how the partition plays a very important component in any study, which engages through the relationship in trauma and literature, or rather how trauma is represented in literature.

The key word here is representation. How does the author, the writer, the narrator, choose to narrate or represent the whole idea and experience of trauma? There are different kinds of narrations that we can think about. We talked about how Manto's narration appears to take a pseudo journalistic stance. It almost appears to be a detached clinical observer of the crisis or the confusion.

It does not get inside the mind of the characters. It does not get inside the interiority of the consciousness of the characters as it were. However, it gives you a detached view, a bit of a flattened view of the entire crisis, entire confusion, cognitive, experiential and political. The coolness of it and the clinical detachment of it, makes it almost sinister in quality.

Almost like it becomes complicit to a certain extent with the whole violence of partition, which makes it a very complex narrative style, a very complex narrative strategy. In this story, Toba Tek Singh we find that there is an omniscient character, an omniscient narrator who happens to know everything that is taking place in the entire story.

What happens throughout the backdrop of each person's life, what happens in the backstory of each character. He is prepping us and informing us on little nuggets of information in terms of what is happening now, what happened before and what probably will take place later.

We need to pay a very close attention to the journalistic quality of this narration, the detached flattened quality of this narration, which is obviously a very deliberate strategy on the part of Manto to appropriate this kind of narrative style. This story Toba Tek Singh, as I mentioned, is a partition short story. It is one of the most famous, one of the most iconic stories about partition.

What makes it interesting, especially the context of this goes trauma and literature is how it is also a story of what event, and I will use the word event in the way the philosopher Alain Badiou uses the word. I mean in terms of something which is transformative, something which changes the before and the after or something rather which causes change in the order of temporality.

The entire experience of time changes through the event. And the partition can be seen as such an event where the whole idea of your sense of belonging changed. Millions of people who are rooted in certain parts, their spatial and temporal components got suddenly de-rooted or unrooted. There were two things which they could not comprehend.

They were asked to go to places which they could not understand. So the whole idea and experience of partition should be seen as a crisis, not just politically, not just culturally, not just in terms of religion, but also experientially and also cognitively. In this particular story, we will see how that can be extended into another form of crisis, which is epistemic crisis, or crisis which happens in a level of knowledge.

Your knowledge of your reality changes. Your realization of reality changes, your consumption of reality changes. Along with that your sensory embodiment changes. And I obviously use the word embodiment in a very loaded way. Embodiment as in the neural cognitive phenomenon, but also the extended engagement we have with reality. There are two kinds of movements we are looking at when we use the word embodiment.

One is obviously the inward movement, the neural movement, the cognitive movement, the psychological movement, which is exemplified in the story with the idea of madness. The asylum itself becomes an example of interrupted embodiment. I will come back to the word interruption later, because this is really about interruption, and different kinds of interruptions take place.

There is a very interesting relationship that one can sort of establish between trauma and interruption. I think I mentioned this in my previous lecture, trauma can be seen as an interruption, biologically and medically, but also the level of narrative. It brings the interruption to a life story. It brings the interruption to your sense of self, knowledge of who you are.

Knowledge of everything around us like the surroundings. So you know everything gets interrupted. What happens in the case of trauma or in a traumatic experience, as your realization of reality, as I mentioned, is interrupted suddenly. It does not abrupt ad hoc quality about trauma; something happens very clinically. It is like a strike, a surgical strike, on the body, on the mind.

There are obviously the two ways of looking at trauma like there are two ways of looking at embodiment. One is the embedded idea of trauma which is a psychological neural, medical, and also there exist existential quality of trauma which extends out in the sense that, you know your sense of your reality changes, your sense of your surroundings change, etc. Then we have both happening in this story.

That is why it is such a complex short story about partition. Obviously, you can play with the word partition a little bit and talk about how the very idea of the experience of partition is known as the geopolitical phenomenon but also an existential phenomenon. Your sense of self is partitioned. Your sense of identity is partitioned. So identities are partitioned.

It becomes fractured identities or rather we should say interrupted identities. Again, we come back to the word interruption. It is medical as well as political. So this medical, political, or bio-political quality of interruption is something we are interested in in this particular story, especially in the way it connects the relationship between trauma and literature.

We will look at trauma as a bio-political event, a bio-political experience, something which happens in the body, something which happens biologically, but also quite politically. If we take a look at some of the texts we will do subsequently, for example Toni Morrison's *Beloved* or *Nervous Conditions*, another fantastic novel. Again, these are about traumatic conditions, which are caused politically, which are caused culturally, which are caused externally.

That obviously affects the internal system of the self. That system which itself gets interrupted, sometimes properly, sometimes accidentally, and almost always violently. That violence is also important because this is also a story about violence, a partition. We will see this, whether we do partition or Holocaust, the First World War or slavery or imperialism, anything.

The violence becomes a very important factor; and what is violence directed at? The violence is not directed only at the level of the human body, but also as I mentioned, at the level of human

knowledge. Our idea, the knowledge of your reality, the knowledge of your narratives around you, that suffers of violence, suffers of strike, which makes it interrupted, sometimes permanently, sometimes irreparably.

That irreparability is something which is interesting. The irrevocability becomes something which is interesting in the case of trauma studies. You cannot recover it, it is irrevocable. That quality is something which we keep seeing in trauma fiction. And we will see that when we look at the philosophies of trauma. For example, we will look at Catherine Malabou.

We will look at series of Cathy Caruth. We will look at different kinds of philosophers who work on trauma at different points of time. And you know that is one constant factor, that is one recursive marker of trauma, an idea of interruption, something which happens in the body to the self, to the awareness of the self, or the self's awareness of itself. It is a very metacognitive quality that gets interrupted as well.

Now if you take that medical political discourse and map it onto this particular story about partition, and as I mentioned, we need to be careful about using the word partition in a way because it is not just about geopolitical partitions or just about physical partition on the level of religion or politics, but also as I mentioned, it is about partition of the self from the sense of itself.

Now that becomes a very important sort of a symbolic sight. The entire presence, the physicality of this madhouse, a lunatic asylum in Lahore, that becomes a very symbolic site of the partition. Then your idea of your surroundings change. The Lahore asylum becomes, symbolically the space for irrationality, the space for this very interstitial quality about rationality and irrationality.

Having said all that, there is this cough gas absurdist quality about the story as well, despite a sort of gritty realism, despite its omniscient narration. Beneath the surface of all that there is this

idea of absurdity where bureaucracy, which is obviously meant to be rational, sometimes hyper rational, emerges or is revealed as the most irrational and most insane of all projects.

The idea of nationalism, the whole idea of nation division, the whole idea of violence, these all emerge as rational projects. Whereas irrationality in the form of madness over here, that sometimes emerges as the most human response to this entire violence of partition. The point is, the whole binary between humanity and non humanity, with the rationality and irrationality is problematically sort of blurred in this particular story.

We do not quite know which side to take as readers. We obviously are meant to sympathize with the mad people. We are meant to sympathize, sometimes perhaps empathize also with the madmen who ask very fundamental questions about the rootedness, about the home, about the identity, about the family to which there is no response.

The whole machinery, the mindless machinery of bureaucracy is something which is parodied over and over again in the story albeit in a very tongue in cheek style, in a very flat kind of a manner because there is that journalistic quality of the narration. You are just getting a report of what had happened.

Beneath that journalistic quality there is that very sad melancholic quality where the whole idea of rationality and bureaucracy are being mimicked and are being parodied at. This is the backdrop of the story. There is a Lahore asylum, where people are just told one fine day that there are two countries now, India and Pakistan.

According to some bureaucratic principles and bureaucratic decisions made at some top level of the governments of both countries to which these people have no access to, rather no one has any access to. Again, there is a question of agency which comes and you have no agency or no access in terms of the decision making bodies of each government.

Suddenly some law was passed, some bill was passed and you are meant to go to another country, because the governments decided accordingly. This is the backdrop of the partition in which the story is set. Now as the bill is passed, both the governments over here know that there should be an exchange of mad men as well, just like the exchange of civilians and sometimes a very bloody exchange, as we all know.

A lot of dead bodies were sent across the borders from either inside. Now both the governments woke up to the fact that there may be madmen. Let us also exchange the madmen to make the transformation, to make the national information complete. As we can see that there is a degree of complicity that the state has over here with the entire absurdity of violence or the entire absurdity of displacement, with the entire absurdity of partition.

The government's complicity is quite deliberately parodied and described the way in the sense that both governments India and Pakistan decide, they agree mutually. There is complete agreement, there is complete consensus that the madmen should also be exchanged.

The Muslim mad man from India should go to Pakistan, and the Hindu mad man from Pakistan should come to India as per the decisions of some complete embodies higher up in the government ladder to which no one has any access. This inaccessibility, this whole idea of agency-lessness becomes a very human and melancholic condition in the story.

The madmen may be seen as metabolic representations or extreme representations of civilians who have zero agency. No one is asking them where they want to go, no one is asking them in terms of what the choices are. They are just given two options, two narratives India and Pakistan and it is pre-decided for them. It is predetermined for them depending on the religious marker.

Depending on their religious location they are sent across the border on either side. So the whole idea is to achieve a symmetry, a very crude mathematical symmetry on the part of both governments and the whole story is about how that mathematical precision, the mathematical,

symmetrical state is something which is completely incompatible with human desire, and emotion.

There is that massive incompatibility between what the human emotions want and what the bureaucracy decides for them. So this constant detachment, this constant inaccessibility to bureaucracy, this inaccessibility to the higher orders, who behave like Gods is like the King Lear line, As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; They kill us for their sport.

So the entire whimsical quality about the godlike, the whimsical quality about the governments are being parodied over here. That is something which is mimicked over and over again. And as some of you would know, Manto's writings were almost always very controversial, because he wrote on topics, which were, sexual in quality. Some people say he wrote pornographic short stories.

They are very high in violence, very high in their grotesque quality. However, in this particular story, we find that this is very high in the level of satire, the level of irony, the level of sort of very biting irony and the irony is directed against both the governments. That is the interesting thing about Manto. He does not take any side.

He himself had to shift to Lahore after the partition happened, prior to which he was a very successful scriptwriter in the Bombay film industry. When the partition took place, he had to go back to Lahore, and he could not find any job because Lahore obviously became quite impoverished after partition. So he had to eke a living by doing odd jobs, writing old plays, by writing all the stories, and he became an alcoholic and became depressed.

Later, we find the writings of Manto emerging and some of his relatives talking about him in terms of his later years. His death was very sad and melancholic. He himself was a victim of partition, was a sufferer of partition. Thus, there is that empathic attachment that he ought to have with partition.

However, if we take a look at his stories, there is this very deliberate detachment from the real side of horror. We are given an omniscient narrator. We are given an omniscient narrative style and how we get to know as a report of what happened. Instead of that being the retro strategy, that being the content of the story, the story is the story about mad people in Lahore asylum who were told they have to go different places now depending on the religious location.

Obviously there was chaos in the partition, in the asylum now that some of the mad men do not want to go. All boils down to one mad person who is the protagonist of the short story, Toba Tek Singh. The point is Toba Tek Singh is also the name of a place, the village, from which he is from. His actual name is Bishan Singh.

Because he morphs into the village, he morphs into the space, his desired space, the moment he gets to know about this India and Pakistan partition, the first thing he asks is that, I do not care about India, I do not care about Pakistan. All I care about is my own village Toba Tek Singh. Can anyone say where that is now? What is the location of Toba Tek Singh now? To which no one gave a satisfactory response. Because obviously, Toba Tek Singh is a very very small village, is the main causality, it is collateral damage in this grand scheme of partition.

Maybe the name has been renamed, or it has been wiped out. Maybe there is a new territory now. No one knows for sure. That inconclusive quality is important for us to understand, because that inclusivity is exactly what the confusion is in this short story. That is what I meant when I mentioned a little while ago, the whole idea and experience of epistemic crisis, a crisis of a level of knowledge.

You do not know certain fundamental things about it. You do not know your name, you do not know your location, you do not know where you come from, you do not know your history - so you suffer an erasure. All you have is a name, all you have is a marker that you wanted to go

back to, which becomes this desired utopian marker for this particular person Bishan Singh. The marker is Toba Tek Singh.

So everyone he sees, he asks, where is Toba Tek Singh. That becomes the only marker for him. Even that is taken away from him. It is a very profoundly sad story. It is a melancholic story about human agency-lessness, about existential emptiness, and about the entire collapse of humanity, the entire exhaustion of humanity, and the burden of bureaucracy and the mindless bureaucracy, which takes over both governments on either side of the border.

The whole idea of the short story is to basically move away from taking the sides. Whether the side of India or Pakistan, who was more to be blamed, who was less to be blamed - those become very immaterial questions. The more important question is that of the common man, the civilians, the common civilians who care less about religious differences, who care less about religious communalism.

They became the sufferers. They were just told certain things to do, they were sort of directed and they were ordered and they had no choice apart from carrying out the order. In this story, Toba Tek Singh, the person Bishan Singh who becomes Toba Tek Singh is the only form of resistance .

Madness can also be seen as a form of subversion in the story. Madness becomes or emerges as the most human response, as the most emotional response to the entire irrationality of partition, for the entire machinery of partition. The whole idea of madness becomes political in quality, like I said is bio-political in quality.

But what makes it even more political in the context of this story, is the refusal to go to an assigned place, the refusal to go to a designated place. That itself becomes an act of subversion. That itself becomes an assertion of agency to a certain extent or an articulation of agency. The whole question of agency becomes really important in this short story.

The paradox of the story is this, that agency can only come with madness, because in a rational world, there is no agency. The only way you can exhibit agency is through madness, is through irrationality, is through becoming medically mad. The asylum becomes the very political space in this short story. This is the only space left, the only site left where any sense of agency can be asserted or performed.

Because it is a madhouse, the agency is performed and sometimes in a comical way, sometimes in grotesque ways, sometimes in a spectacular way. We have people taking out their clothes and people climbing branches of trees, or people screaming at each other. It is all very performative, it is all very spectacular. That is the only spectacle of agency left.

That is the irony of the entire narrative setting, the political setting. The only way in which you can exhibit agency. The only way in which you can assert agency is by being mad, is by being located inside a madhouse, which in this case happens to be the Lahore asylum. This being the context of the story, this being the long and short of the story, let us dive in and read Toba Tek Singh by Saadat Hasan Manto.

So that should be on your screen and I will just read out the first passages and then hopefully discuss things which are here. So here goes.

Two or three years after partition, the governments of Pakistan and India decided to exchange lunatics in the same way that they exchanged civilian prisoners. In other words, Muslim lunatics in Indian madhouses would be sent to Pakistan, while Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani madhouses will be handed over to India, right.

So it is a very bureaucratic decision, the coolness of it becomes quite evident over here. So just like the civilians were exchanged, the governments seemed to decide one fine day as an ad hoc decision to exchange the mad men as well. The Muslim mad men were to come back to Pakistan

from India, and the Hindu, mad man in Pakistan were to be sent back to India. That is the decision which has been made.

I can't say whether the decision made sense or not.

Again, this detachment from any judgment becomes important and either way is always this omniscient narrator. I can't say whether this decision made any sense or not. I am not the judge. I am just a passive commentator. I am just a passive relayer of information. I am a messenger of information.

That location is important as that is my job over here to give you the information not to interpret it. My job over here is to relay the information not to pass judgments. So therein lies the almost clinical and stubborn detachment of Manto's narrator from the site of events, from the site of horror.

I can't say whether this decision made any sense or not. In any event a date for the future, for the lunatic exchange was fixed after high level conferences on both sides of the border.

A lot of high level conferences took place, a lot of bureaucratic decisions were made. Again, the whole idea is parodied, the whole idea of bureaucracy is parodied over here.

In the sense that in the bureaucracy all these top level decisions, which are made from both government sides, are seen as very dysfunctional and completely detached from any human understanding of reality or human understanding of emotional reality. Rather, these are very hardcore mathematical political decisions, where we just see, look at a particular ethnicity and reassign a certain geopolitical location based on ethnicity or based on religion, which obviously has no bearing on the human emotional location, the subject.

In other words, we have a case of human commodification where Hindu and Muslim becomes some sort of commodifying markets. If you are Hindu you go to India, if you are a Muslim you go to Pakistan. This exchange principle is set and that principle obviously, is very commodifying, very reifying in some sense.

Along with commodification if you do a classic Marxist study, an old commodification along with reification, also generated the idea of alienation. You feel completely alienated from the final product, which in this case, is India and Pakistan. You feel completely alienated and detached from the entire discourse which was decided for you and you have zero agency in terms of decidability in terms of judgment.

A lot of top level conferences took place on both sides of the border. All the details were carefully worked out. On the Indian side, Muslim lunatics with relatives in India will be allowed to stay. The remainder would be sent to the frontier. Here in Pakistan, all the Hindus and Sikhs were gone. So the question of retaining non-Muslim lunatics did not rise. All the Hindu and Sikh lunatics will be sent to the frontier in police custody.

India retained some Muslims it did not become an entirely Hindu state. So some Muslims stayed back. So people who have Muslim relatives in India, the mad men they will be allowed to stay in India. Whereas in Pakistan because almost all non-Hindus have gone or were forced go, the Muslim mad man will also be asked to leave because there is no relative left for them in Pakistan.

They will be asked to leave the country and go to India. So they will be sent to the borders. The Sikh will be as well. The Hindu and Sikh mad men in Pakistan do not have any relatives left in Pakistan. There is no point asking them to stay back. They will be sent across the border.

I do not know what happened over there. When news of the lunatic exchange reached the madhouse here in Lahore, however, it became an absorbing topic of discussion among the

inmates. There was one Muslim lunatic who had read the newspaper Zamindar every day for twelve years.

It is a very popular Pakistani newspaper Zamindar.

One of his friends asked him, “Maulvi Sahib what is Pakistan?” After careful thought he replied, it is a place in India, where they make razors.

Now this dark comic quality is something which is very pervasive throughout Manto’s fictions. Even we get a grotesque and almost graphic description of horror and violence, which sometimes is a comic voice creeping in.

There are these exchanges in the madhouse, which are serial comics in quality, but beneath the superficial comedy, what is important for us as readers of this particular text, is to look at the absurdity of the entire partition. These responses do not make any sense to us. So did the entire idea of partition to those people living at that point in time, it made absolutely no sense for them.

It was decided for them and the on scene violence happened because of their decision.

One person asks another learned madman, what do you think this Pakistan is. The answer is it is a place in India where they make razors. It is obviously a nonsense answer, a mad answer, and an irrational answer. However, the point is, there are no rational answers left. There is the rational answer but why India and Pakistan should be separate countries.

Why Muslims, Hindus should kill each other. The entire collapse of rationality has been depicted in a very extreme and metonymic way, sort of a miniaturized version of that in this Lahore asylum. We can see how the questions and answers in this particular story become nonsensical in quality. The irony is that the nonsense inside the madhouse over here sometimes makes more

sense than the rational exchanges which take place in the higher levels of bureaucracy of both governments.

We have this almost carnivalesque quality. I am using the word carnivalesque in a very Bakhtinian sense where it is an inversion of power, inversion of hierarchy, inversion of meaningfulness. The meaningless becomes meaningful, the meaningful becomes meaningless, etc. There is some such situation happening here in the story as well. Someone who gets asked where Pakistan is in India and they say it is a place in India where razors are made.

Hearing this his friend was content. One Sikh lunatic asks another Sikh, “Sardarji, why are they sending us to India? We do not even speak the language.” “I understand the Indian language,” the other replied smilingly.

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however, it became an absorbing topic of discussion among the inmates. There was one Muslim lunatic who had read the newspaper *Zamindar* every day for twelve years. One of his friends asked him: “Maulvi Sahib! What is Pakistan?” After careful thought he replied: “It’s a place in India where they make razors.”



Hearing this, his friend was content.

One Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh: “Sardar ji, why are they sending us to India? We don’t even speak the language.”

“I understand the Indian language,” the other replied, smiling. “Indians are devilish people who strut around haughtily,” he added.

While bathing, a Muslim lunatic shouted “Long live Pakistan!” with such vigor that he slipped on the floor and knocked himself out.

There were also some lunatics who weren’t really crazy. Most of these inmates were murderers whose families had bribed the madhouse officials to have them committed in order to save them from the hangman’s noose. These inmates understood something of why India had been divided, and they had heard of Pakistan. But they weren’t all that well informed. The newspapers didn’t tell them a great deal, and the illiterate guards who looked after them weren’t much help either. All they knew was that there was a man named Mohammed Ali Jinnah, whom people called the Qaid-e-Azam. He had made a separate country for the Muslims, called Pakistan. They had no idea where it was, or what its boundaries might be. This is why all the lunatics who hadn’t entirely lost their senses were perplexed as to whether they were in Pakistan or India. If they were in India, then where was Pakistan? If they were in Pakistan, then how was it that the place where they lived had until recently been known as India?

One lunatic got so involved in this India/Pakistan question that he became even crazier. One day he climbed a tree and sat on one of its branches for two hours, lecturing without pause on the complex issues of Partition. When the guards told him to come down, he climbed higher. When they tried to frighten him with threats, he replied: “I will live neither in India nor in Pakistan. I’ll live in this tree right here!” With much difficulty, they eventually coaxed him down. When he



“Indians are devilish people who strut around haughtily,” he added. While bathing, a Muslim lunatic shouted “Long live Pakistan!” with such vigor that he slipped on the floor and knocked himself down.

So we have these different antics which describe, sort of a sad comic in quality, a tragic comic in quality, but he is a man who has no idea about the reality, who is not told anything.

Who are just woken up one fine day essentially and told that because depending on your religious location he would be sent across the border. Obviously they are puzzled. This comes as a massive chaos to them, a massive confusion to them. This chaos, this constellation is something which is described in very graphic details over here. Thus people ask each other, why are we sent across the borders?

What about the language? What about the food, what about the culture? What we have over here is interestingly the different micro markers of culture as against the macro marker of culture. The macro marker of culture over here is religion and nation. Depending on the religion, that becomes the grand narrative of your cultural identity and depending on that you are sent to a certain place.

However, what that completely does away with, what that completely effaces are the different micro markers of culture like food, language, local customs, which have nothing to do with religion. These are people who grew up with each other. These are people who stayed close to each other irrespective of their religious identities and those micro markers are done away with.

Those micro markers are completely decimated by this decision. So the people ask each other about the language. So what language we will talk in when we go to India or Pakistan. Because presumably it will be a different kind of language, because they grew up speaking a different language in a particular place. Once they are dislocated, that linguistic marker will be done away with.

They may find themselves in India where they have to, you know, acclimatize to Indian languages. Again, the point being that religion becomes a grand narrative of identity, the religion becomes a grand narrative of cultural identity. And what that does, is it completely does away or decimates the local narratives of identity like food, like language, like dress, like customs, etc.

There are also some lunatics who went really crazy. We have over here a very interesting subsection in the Lahore asylums, these mad men from both religions, are completely confused about what to do when they are just told that there are two different nation states which have been formed. First of all, either nation state will become unrecognizable to them, because they would not know what nation state is.

They would not know what foreign territory is like, as that classification would have no meaning for them. Because these are people who know their villages, these are people who know their towns, these are people who know the neighborhoods. So to give this just grand narrative of space in terms of a nation would obviously mean a lot of constellations, a lot of confusion for them.

Again, the confusion, this violence over here is not just at the level of politics or religion, as you can see. It is also more immediately and more experientially, at the level of knowledge, the knowledge of reality, the knowledge of the narratives around them and that is changing very quickly. That is very improperly getting remapped. That remapping of reality, is a very quick and dramatic defamiliarization of reality, which is something which becomes interesting in this story.

When we talk about it, we will come back to the idea of dramatic defamiliarization, which is something symbolically depicted through the idea of madness. Because madness can be seen as an example of cognitive remapping. So your mapping of reality changes. It becomes dramatically defamiliarized. Now we come to people who are not really mad.

We come to people who are criminals, thugs and murderers, but are pretending to be mad all the time. Again, madness becomes not just the medical category, it also becomes a performative category. That becomes interesting for us to examine. We are told there were some lunatics also who went really crazy.

Most of those inmates were murderers whose families had bribed the madhouse officials to have them committed in order to save them from the hangman's noose. These are people who find the madhouse as a shelter, literally the asylum as a shelter in a political sense. These madhouses offer them protection against political or criminal justice. These inmates understood something of why India has been divided, and they have heard of Pakistan.

They all were not that well informed. The newspapers did not tell them a great deal. The illiterate guards who looked after them were not much help either. All they knew was there was a man named Muhammad Ali Jinnah, whom people call Qaid-e-Azam. He had made a separate country for the Muslims called Pakistan. They had no idea where it was or what its boundaries might be.

This is why all lunatics who had entirely lost their senses were perplexed as to whether they were in India or Pakistan. If they were in India then where was Pakistan. If they were in Pakistan, then how was it that the place where they lived had until recently been known as India? Now this becomes interesting, because these are people who are, maybe seen as limitedly mad.

Not really mad entirely in the medical sense, but they have been living with the mad people for such a long time that their connection with reality is completely compromised. They have no access, as I mentioned, to information around them. This complete inaccessibility of what is really happening is interesting, especially in the world today, especially in the context of post-truth narratives today.

There is no truth, there is no manner, there is no way in which you can have access to the real ontological truth, the real ontological reality. Instead, they have been consuming this half shop logic, this half shop information about different kinds of narratives. So these pseudo mad people, these performatively mad people are told that, they get to know from the local newspapers here and there.

Very metonymically, you can see the very immaterial metonymic quality of access to information. There is hardly any computer access. There is hardly any total access. But what we have here instead is a sort of a partial incomplete, inauthentic access to reality and knowledge. That becomes an interesting point. So they are talking to illiterate guards. They do not know what is happening.

The newspapers carry half-truth. But they get to know that there is a new country called Pakistan. And also get to know Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the first leader of Pakistan, who was given the title Qaid-e-Azam, the great leader. Thus, Jinnah becomes an important figure over here because he is instrumental in the formation of Pakistan. And now these pseudo mad people, these performatively mad people, try to glean some information about Jinnah.

They are trying to glean some information about what Pakistan is. The fundamental question to which they keep coming back to in a sort of recursive fashion is, well if this is Pakistan, then how was it known as India until very recently. And if this is India, then where was Pakistan? You can see the geopolitical confusion over here becomes less important.

What is more important is the experiential confusion, the cognitive confusion. And this is a very good story where cognitive remapping and geopolitical remapping are sort of mapped into each other. However, there is a complete incompatibility as it were between cognitive remapping and geopolitical remapping.

There is a different kind of remapping going on historically, politically, and geographically. That geopolitical, historical remapping is completely out of sync with my understanding or my consumption of reality, through my cognitive self, through my sense of self. This quality of being out of sync is exactly what the story is all about. It is exactly what makes it so traumatic in quality, because among other things, trauma can be seen as a state of being out of sync.

The out of sync with reality, the out of sync with your knowledge systems, the out of sync with narratives around you and that state of being out of sync becomes one of the fundamental categories of trauma, one of the fundamental markers of trauma and that is what, makes the story obviously very medical in quality, but also profoundly political.

As I mentioned, this is a story where trauma is very biopolitical in quality. It is trauma because it is madness, and is medically mad. Also this madness is accentuated. It is almost informally affected by certain political decisions, by certain political movements, by certain political parameters. And these political parameters, the external political parameters are the ones which sort of make the madness more claustrophobic in quality.

It accentuates the madness. It gives a different dimension. So the entire ontology of madness changes. The entire ontology of trauma changes in the story, depending or informed by political parameters. So we have this very interesting blurring of the borderline between not just rationality and irrationality but also between the inside and the outside. The outside world is directly affecting your inside world and your negotiation with external reality is affected by political decisions.

We can see how certain decisions are made at certain kafkaesque castles which are the bureaucratic headquarters to which these people have no access to. Those decisions are actually informing and affecting the daily lives of these people or the people's understanding of reality, the people's consumption of reality. That itself becomes an act of madness. That becomes an act of violence.

The fact that your consumption of reality, your experience of reality is being affected abruptly, sometimes irreparably by certain cold, absurd decisions made in some kafkaesque headquarters. That distance between the political headquarter, the political agentic space and the space of madness over here is a massive distance which is completely unbridgeable.

That itself becomes a very cruel and cold commentary and very bleak commentary on the state of the common man at the time of partition. Because the common man had zero access to knowledge, reality, and political decisions. This could be seen hardly as a democracy. This is pretty much a totalitarian condition where certain decisions made in some pockets by certain state functions, certain state machineries to which common people have absolute zero access to.

This whole idea of inaccessibility and agency-lessness become very important qualities in the story to which we will come back as we move on. So I stop at this point and will hopefully carry on this discussion in the subsequent lectures. Thank you for your attention.