Trauma and Literature
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Lecture – 41
Butalia's The Other Side of Silence – Part 5

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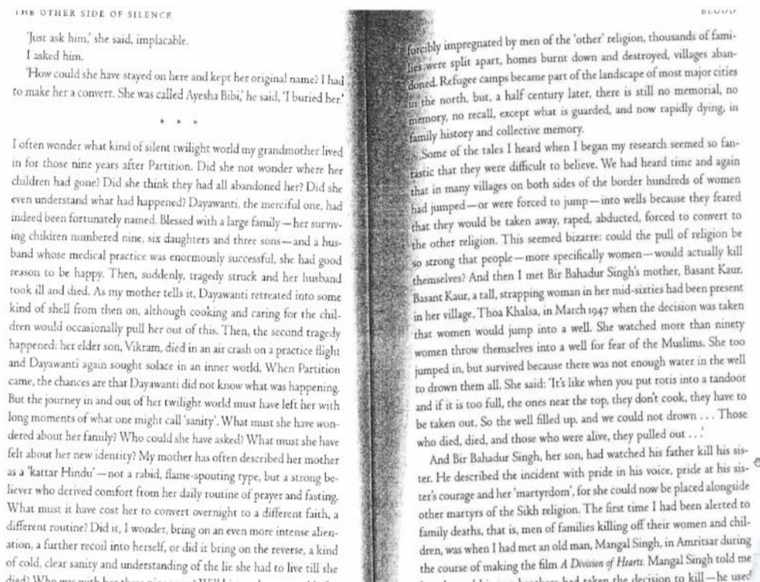
THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE

'Just ask him,' she said, implacable.

I asked him.

'How could she have stayed on here and kept her original name? I had to make her a convert. She was called Ayesha Bibi,' he said, 'I buried her.'

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I often wonder what kind of silent twilight world my grandmother lived in for those nine years after Partition. Did she not wonder where her children had gone? Did she think they had all abandoned her? Did she even understand what had happened? Dayawanti, the merciful one, had indeed been fortunately named. Blessed with a large family—her surviving children numbered nine, six daughters and three sons—and a husband whose medical practice was enormously successful, she had good reason to be happy. Then, suddenly, tragedy struck and her husband took ill and died. As my mother tells it, Dayawanti retreated into some kind of shell from then on, although cooking and caring for the children would occasionally pull her out of this. Then, the second tragedy happened: her elder son, Vikram, died in an air crash on a practice flight and Dayawanti again sought solace in an inner world. When Partition came, the chances are that Dayawanti did not know what was happening. But the journey in and out of her twilight world must have left her with long moments of what one might call 'sanity'. What must she have wondered about her family? Who could she have asked? What must she have felt about her new identity? My mother has often described her mother as a 'kattar Hindu'—not a rabid, flame-spouting type, but a strong believer who derived comfort from her daily routine of prayer and fasting. What must it have cost her to convert overnight to a different faith, a different routine? Did it, I wonder, bring on an even more intense alienation, a further recoil into herself, or did it bring on the reverse, a kind of cold, clear sanity and understanding of the lie she had to live till she died? Who was with her these nine years?

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forcibly impregnated by men of the 'other' religion, thousands of families were split apart, homes burnt down and destroyed, villages abandoned. Refugee camps became part of the landscape of most major cities in the north, but, a half century later, there is still no memorial, no memory, no recall, except what is guarded, and now rapidly dying, in family history and collective memory.

Some of the tales I heard when I began my research seemed so fantastic that they were difficult to believe. We had heard time and again that in many villages on both sides of the border hundreds of women had jumped—or were forced to jump—into wells because they feared that they would be taken away, raped, abducted, forced to convert to the other religion. This seemed bizarre: could the pull of religion be so strong that people—more specifically women—would actually kill themselves? And then I met Bir Bahadur Singh's mother, Basant Kaur. Basant Kaur, a tall, strapping woman in her mid-sixties had been present in her village, Thoa Khalsa, in March 1947 when the decision was taken that women would jump into a well. She watched more than ninety women throw themselves into a well for fear of the Muslims. She too jumped in, but survived because there was not enough water in the well to drown them all. She said: 'It's like when you put rotis into a tandoor and if it is too full, the ones near the top, they don't cook, they have to be taken out. So the well filled up, and we could not drown . . . Those who died, died, and those who were alive, they pulled out . . .'

And Bir Bahadur Singh, her son, had watched his father kill his sister. He described the incident with pride in his voice, pride at his sister's courage and her 'martyrdom', for she could now be placed alongside other martyrs of the Sikh religion. The first time I had been alerted to family deaths, that is, men of families killing off their women and children, was when I had met an old man, Mangal Singh, in Amritsar during the course of making the film *A Division of Hearts*. Mangal Singh told me

This is an NPTEL course entitled "Trauma and Literature" on Urvashi Butalia's work "The Other Side of Silence". We will just continue from where we left last time and now we move on to a more statistical account of partition in terms of how many people suffered and how people died in terms of the numbers, in terms of the people who are transported, migrated forcibly.

There is a very emotional account of Dayawanti, Butalia's grandmother. There is a lot of speculation in terms of how, what it must have been for her at the twilight of her life to live the rest of her existing days in Pakistan away from our family and the twilight image, the silent twilight image is very important metaphor as we discussed last time.

It sort of marks the transition from one area to another area, one, one component of space and time to another one and the transition that occurred it was a painful transition, a painful shift, and that is something which we see described in great advocated details. So, from that advocate of emotional account of partition, we move on to a more

statistical account where Butalia goes on to save 12 million people were displaced as a result of partition.

“Nearly 1 million died, some 75,000 women were raped, kidnapped, abducted, and forcibly impregnated by men of the other religion. Thousands of families were split apart. Homes burned down and destroyed. Villages abandoned. Refugee camps became part of the landscape of most major cities in the north. But half century later, there is still no memorial, no memory, no recall except what is guarded and are rapidly dying and family history and collective memory.”

This becomes a very interesting point and this is written at a time before the partition museum happened. Now we have a museum in Amritsar. But the time in which this book was written, there was no partition museum. In fact, there are some very interesting works. It is recommended Anindya Raychaudhuri’s paper about the absence of partition museum.

Anindya Raychaudhuri is a senior lecturer in the University of St Andrews. It deals with the absence of a museum. Why is not a partition museum; in more recent times we do have a museum now. But then even so; when Butalia was writing the book, this is almost 50 years after and there was no museum, there was no memorial, there was no monument of partition.

One of the reasons why that may have happened for a long time is because the whole idea, the whole experience of partition, the whole account, the whole violence of partition took place because of the formation of two different nation states, India and Pakistan. As a result of which there was a communal divide, there was communal violence, and there was riot. And all these terrible statistics that Butalia is offering over here in terms of number of people killed, impregnated, violated.

It is just one of the biggest human tragedies in the history of humanity for the matter. I just read one more time 12 million people were displaced, out of which 1 million people died, 75,000 women were raped, kidnapped, abducted and impregnated by people, men of the other religion. The violence over here it is directed towards a woman's body.

That goes to show how there is a very morbid mixture of sexuality in violence over here, which is something that we find in Saadat Hasan Manto’s stories as well, one of its we have read already. But the reason why it is giving such a gory graphic account or the number of people who are affected, killed, tortured, violated sexually and then of course how entire villages were burned, homes were burnt down, places were abandoned, refugee camps became the major landscapes of most cities.

And yet, despite all that 50 years later, there is still no memorial for that. The lack of the memorial, the lack of an institutional body of memory about partition becomes a very conspicuous absence. And as mentioned, what reasons that may have happened was the fact that any construction of a museum, any construction of an archive or a monument, corresponds to the glory of the state.

The glory of the particular nation, of course, the very fact that a nation's emerged out of the partition was a matter of tragedy, was a matter of shame, was a matter of something that we do not want to remember. Because the very formation of these two nations happened simultaneously with the violence and tragedy of, the deep human tragedy of partition. The sort of not acknowledging that was part of the collective guilt, was part of the state guilt was part of the guilt that happened around that time.

It was simultaneous in quality the formation of two nation states and the whole experience of partition. There are very complex factors why there was a lack of museum for the longest time. The fact that the state emerged out of the violence. The violence would be to sort of acknowledge it. That became a discomfort for both states, for both nation states for longest time and only recently as mentioned do we have partition museum in Amritsar.

But this is a question that she asks here why is there no memorial, no state monument, no archive, no museum for partition and only memory which is available through the memories which are family history, memories which people tell each other through informal stories that is the only recourse one has if one is to do serious research and partition.

“You need to do dig up those stories of people tell each other intergenerationally, so that becomes the only available resource. Some of the tales I heard when I began my research seemed so fantastic that they were difficult to believe. We had heard time and again that many villagers on both sides of the border hundreds of women had jumped or were forced to jump into wells because they feared that they will be taken away, raped, abducted, forced to convert to the other religion.”

We can see there is a constant point to the fact that during moments of violence, the moments of communal violence, collective violence, the first site where the violence takes place is a female body that becomes very just a tragic, morbid, gory thing. But at the same time, it is also the side which symbolizes the violence because the violence in the female body is physical as well as sexual and mental and psychological.

There is a quality of invasion that takes place within female body is so invaded by the other men, impregnated by the other men, so that is sexual violence as well. In order to protect the women from that kind of violence, they were forced to commit suicide, forced to jump into wells. So either way, the females, the women became the biggest causality, most helpless for the violence when this incident took place.

Butalia is suggesting over here when the story is told and retold, they becomes slightly hyperbolic in quality, hyperbole as an adding elements to it, adding numbers to it, adding intensity to it. The hyperbolic quality of the stories of the partition is very much part of the collective memory. The accounts of how hundreds the woman jumped into well or made to jump in the well.

“Forced to jump in the well in order to be protected from sexual violence or to be protected from converting to the other religion. Even you can take a look, you can read the process of conversion to another religion as also an act of violence. We saw how the narrator’s grandmother Dayawanti who had become Ayesha Bibi and was buried in the end because she had to become Muslim, so that change in identity is also a form of violence or some kind of an existential violence.”

In order to protect the woman from that, they were pushed into suicide, pushed to kill themselves. And that makes the tragedy morbid as well as it just shows spectacular

helplessness of the subjects, especially the female subjects against this whimsical, irrational violence of partition. This seemed bizarre; could the pull of religion be so strong that people, more specifically women, would actually kill themselves.

“Then I met Bir Bahadur Singh's mother, Basant Kaur. Basant Kaur, a tall, strapping woman in her mid-60s had been present in her village, Thoa Khalsa, in March 1947 when the decision was taken the woman should jump into a well. She watched more than 90 women throw themselves into a well for fear of the Muslims. She too jumped in, but survived because there was not enough water in the well to drown them all.

She said it is like when you put rotis into a tandoor and if it is too full, the one near the top they do not cook, they have to be taken out. The well filled up and we could not drown. Those who died, died; and those who were alive they pulled out. This is a deeply disturbing account as you can see and the way it is described using very domestic metaphors.”

A very familial metaphors, culinary kitchen metaphors make it even more problematic because in “Catch-22” which where we saw that the intensity of trauma, the intensity of violence, mental violence, psychological violence was communicated towards us is banal metaphors, almost funny metaphors.

Over here too, we have an account of a woman who survived this mass or collective suicide simply because there were so many women already dead in the well, when she jumped along with some of the women they could not jump in the water because well had almost been filled up with dead people, with corpses, so no one could die anymore because if one jumps, one would be caught by the corpses.

This is a very morbid image but what makes it more unsettling is the metaphors chosen to describe that image, metaphors which are culinary in quality, kitchen in quality and familial in quality. This almost intimate metaphors making a roti on a tandoor. “The analogy she gives us is if you put too many rotis on tandoor, the one on top does not get cooks, you have to take it out.”

"Similarly I was the roti on top of the tandoor, had to be taken out that is how I survived." It just becomes a very morbid metaphor and at the same time is telling and compelling in a way how they experienced the partition, experienced the violence around the partition must have felt like.

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Twelve million people were displaced as a result of Partition. Nearly one million died. Some 75,000 women were raped, kidnapped, abducted,

family history and collective memory.

Some of the tales I heard when I began my research seemed so fantastic that they were difficult to believe. We had heard time and again that in many villages on both sides of the border hundreds of women had jumped—or were forced to jump—into wells because they feared that they would be taken away, raped, abducted, forced to convert to the other religion. This seemed bizarre: could the pull of religion be so strong that people—more specifically women—would actually kill themselves? And then I met Bir Bahadur Singh's mother, Basant Kaur. Basant Kaur, a tall, strapping woman in her mid-sixties had been present in her village, Thoa Khalsa, in March 1947 when the decision was taken that women would jump into a well. She watched more than ninety women throw themselves into a well for fear of the Muslims. She too jumped in, but survived because there was not enough water in the well to drown them all. She said: 'It's like when you put rotis into a tandoor and if it is too full, the ones near the top, they don't cook, they have to be taken out. So the well filled up, and we could not drown . . . Those who died, died, and those who were alive, they pulled out . . .'

And Bir Bahadur Singh, her son, had watched his father kill his sister. He described the incident with pride in his voice, pride at his sister's courage and her 'martyrdom', for she could now be placed alongside other martyrs of the Sikh religion. The first time I had been alerted to family deaths, that is, men of families killing off their women and children, was when I had met an old man, Mangal Singh, in Amritsar during the course of making the film *A Division of Hearts*. Mangal Singh told me how he and his two brothers had taken the decision to kill—he used the word martyr—seventeen members of their family. 'We had to do this,' he told me, 'because otherwise they would have been converted.' Having done this 'duty', Mangal Singh crossed over into Amritsar where he began a new life. When I met him, he was the only one left of the three. He had a new family, a wife, children, grandchildren, all of whom

"Bir Bahadur Singh, her son, had watched his father kill his sister, again so to protect some kind of honor killings, to protect the woman from being converted to the other religions, so their own kins, on male relatives killed them and that was dressed up as some kind of an honor code." In order not to be converted, we killed the women and that seems to be some kind of a preservation strategy, some preservation of identity.

He described the incident with pride in his voice, pride at his sister's courage and her martyrdom. This is described as a heroic emotion, heroic account, heroic experience a woman protecting the identity, protecting the religion, protecting the cultural location by willingly getting killed by their own brothers and fathers and husbands because the other religion people would come and take them away and convert them into the other religion or sexually violate them.

They would much rather choose to die in the hands of the male kins. We can see how this is a very complex psychological quality in this whole thing and which is sickening, which is tragic, which is morbid, which is something that we probably find absurd and shocking at the same time. But these are people who acted that way at that point of time.

"And for some reason that seemed to be the rational response at that point of time, that seemed to have been the right response at that point of time to protect your identity, you give away your biological body, you give away yourself, you get killed happily by and the honour lives over here being killed by your own male relative. You die as preserving your identity as a Hindu woman or a Muslim woman or whatever religion is.

But the point being that it becomes the honour of the woman to protect the cultural identity, to protect the religious identity and of course the men who are telling the stories tell describe the woman who chose to get killed as martyrs, as heroes. He told the incident describing with pride in his voice, pride at the sister's courage and her martyrdom, for she could now be placed alongside other martyrs of the Sikh religion.

The Sikh religion; I mean she is now one of these martyrs, one of these heroic martyrs who were not dignified. The first time I had been alerted to family deaths that is men of families killing off their women and children, was when I had met an old man, Mangal Singh in Amritsar during the course of making the film A Division of Heart. This is a film that she was making, she was helping in the project."

She met this person called Mangal Singh, who gave her a very disturbing and graphic and gory account of killing woman and children to protect them from being converted to the other religion. Mangal Singh told me that he and his two brothers had taken the decision to kill; he used the word 'martyr'. The word 'martyr' becomes interesting because that seems to have a lot of affective investment to it.

"You become a martyr because you die for a cause, you die to preserve a certain kind of cause, to preserve certain kind of identity. Seventeen members of the family. The decision was taken 17 members of family were to be killed. We had to do this he told me because otherwise they would have been converted. Having done this duty Mangal Singh crossed over into Amritsar where he began a new life.

When I met him, he was the only one left of the three. He had a new family, a wife, children, grandchildren; all of them had heard and dismissed his stories."

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had heard, and dismissed, his stories. Why do you want to know all this, he kept asking me, what is the use? I told him that I wanted to know how he had coped with the grief, the sense of loss, the guilt. He said: 'Hunger drives all sorrow and grief away. You understand? When you don't have anything, then what's the point of having sorrow and grief?'

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Why do you want to know this? This is a question I have been asked again and again—by the people I have wanted to interview, or those to whom I have tried to present my work. Two or three times, having begun work on Partition, I gathered my courage and read a couple of papers in academic gatherings. I wanted to share some questions that had been bothering me: why, for example, had straight historical accounts not been able to really address this underside of the history of Partition, to gather together the experiences of people, to see what role they had played in shaping the India we know today? Was it that they knew they would have to deal with a story so riven with pain and grief, a story that was so close to many people—for in many ways, several of our families were Partition refugees—that some time had to elapse before this work actually began? I wanted to understand how to read the many stories I was now hearing: I knew, without being a historian, that I could not look at these unproblematically. Could I, for example, rely on the 'truth' of the stories I was hearing? How much could one trust memory after all these years? For many of those who chose to tell me their stories, I must have been just another listener, the experience perhaps just another telling. I knew that my being middle class, a woman, a Punjabi, perhaps half a Sikh, would have dictated the way people actually responded. What value then ought I to place on their memory, their recall? Often, what emerged from the interviews was so bitter, so full

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side or another? To this day, I have not solved this dilemma: I am torn between the desire to be honest and to be careful. And all the time I was asked: why, why are you doing this? The question became important for another reason: the way borders were drawn between our two countries, it was virtually impossible for me to travel to Pakistan to do research, or even to carry out interviews. The result was that my work remained—and still does—very one-sided. I knew that this was not right. I didn't know—I still don't—what I should be doing. Ought I to have given up the work? There are no easy answers. But in the end, I decided that if this search meant so much to me, I simply had to go on with it. I could not abandon it.

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For some years the border between Pakistan and India seemed to have become more permeable. As a result I was able to make several visits and to cement my relationship with Ranamama. Once, when his second-youngest daughter was getting married, I took my mother and her elder sister with me to visit him. There was a great deal of excitement as we planned the visit, for it was really like a visit to the unknown. They didn't know what their brother would look like, how he would react to them, what their home would look like, what their beloved city would have to offer them . . . At Lahore airport Rana came to fetch his sisters. The last time my mother and aunt had seen their brother was forty-one years ago, when he had been a young twenty-year-old: slim, tall and smart. The man who met them now was in his sixties, balding and greying. He wore an awami suit, the loose salvar and shirt made popular by Bhutto. I tried to imagine what he must have seen: two white-haired women: my aunt, in her seventies, and my mother, in her mid-sixties. The reunion was a tentative, difficult one, with everyone struggling to hold back tears

"Why do you want to know all this, he kept asking me, what is the use? I told him I wanted to know how he had coped with the grief, the sense of loss, the guilt. He said, hunger drives all sorrow and grief away. You understand? When you do not have anything, then what is the point of having sorrow and grief?" We see how this whole experience of partition, the whole trauma of partition depicts to us the nadir of humanity to a certain extent that he reached the lowest point in humanity.

"Where he cannot even feel grief, he cannot even mourn because he is so hungry and that animalistic quality of the tragedy is something which we find depicted over and over again and this animalization of the tragedy, its corporealization of the tragedy, he just become the hungry body, you do not have the mind, you do not have the mind or the mental health to grieve over your loss because your body is too hungry and it needs to be fed."

The lowest point in humanity is where even mourning for a tragedy is a luxury that not many people have, that depicts the nadir of humanity and the lowest ebb. "When this person is asked that having killed 17 members of the family when he crossed over and when you started a new life, so at the moment where the tragedy happened did you not feel any grief? How did you cope with that grief?

As he answers now, I was too hungry. So when you do have anything, then you do not have the luxury to experience pain, sorrow, grief, bereavement, etc." We were talking about grief as some kind of; I mean, even grief becomes, grieving or mourning becomes

some kind of a luxury activity, it is a marker of privilege. Not everyone can mourn at any given point of time.

The stories read during this course, which was “The Fly” by Katherine Mansfield, where there is a lot of agency and privilege, masculinity which is associated with mourning. To be able to mourn in a pure way is a marker of masculinity, is a marker of privilege, not everyone can do that. And here we have just the opposite.

“There are people who just do not have any food in stomach, they are hungry, and they are like hungry animals. So, where is the time and mental condition or the physical condition to mourn? It is just the body is dying of hunger and that becomes more important rather than the psychology of the mental condition for mourning. And that recursive question why do you want to know this? Why do you want to know this again is something that she is subjected to over and over again, Urvashi Butalia?

In a way corresponds to the refusal to remember, the rejection of remembrance to a certain extent. There are certain people who do not want to remember, who do not want to retell the story, who do not want to recount what happened to them many years ago and that is a question that she experiences and she gets asked quite often during this project.”

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and still does—very one-sided. I knew that this was not right. I didn't know—I still don't—what I should be doing. Ought I to have given up the work? There are no easy answers. But in the end, I decided that if this search meant so much to me, I simply had to go on with it. I could not abandon it.

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my work. Two or three times having begun working partition, I gathered my courage and read a couple of papers in academic gatherings. I wanted to share some questions that had been bothering me.

Why, for example, had straight historical accounts not been able to really address the underside of the history of partition, to gather together experiences of people, to see what role they had played in shaping the India we know today? Was it that they knew they would have to deal with story so riven with pain and grief, a story that was so close to so many people, for in many ways? Several of our families were partition refugees that sometime had to elapse between the works actually began?"

We are talking about two kinds of memory over here, which is interesting, and that is traumatic memory and interactive memory. Traumatic memory is a memory which is very close to the moment of trauma when the brain and the mind still processes of trauma and is unable to process it completely.

So, only when the entire process is complete, which takes some period of time, sometimes many years, sometimes a long period of time only after that will traumatic memory can be normally converted into interactive memory, in the sense that it can become a story, it can become something of an account, some representative account of the trauma.

But for that to happen, there has to be a passage of time, which is indefinite in quality, you cannot define, you cannot quantify or predict that quantity of time. Traumatic memory become interactive memory always goes through a process of transition. And one of the reasons why Butalia struggles to get these accounts from people is because she sort of theorizes that maybe it is too traumatic in their minds.

"It has not had the time to become interactive memory to a large extent. I wanted to understand how to read the many stories I was now hearing. I knew that without being a historian that I could not look at this unproblematically. Could I, for example, rely on the truth of the stories I was hearing? How much could one just trust memory after all these years? For many of those who chose to tell me the stories, I must have been just another listener, the experience perhaps just another telling.

I knew that my being a middle class; a woman, a Punjabi, perhaps half a Sikh would have dictated the way people actually responded. What value then ought I to place on their memory, their recall? Often what emerged from the interview was so bitter, so full of rage, resentment, communal feeling that it frightened me. What was I to do with such material?

Was it incumbent on me, as a might have been historian to try to be true to this material or should I as a secular Indian, actually exercise some care about what I made visible and what I did not?" We can have a series of self-questioning that she is subjecting herself to. "So how much of this is trustworthy? How much of this is reliable? How much of this should I draw on or should I exercise caution?

Should I use a more guarded interpretative frame before I can choose to filter out the stories from what really happened or what did not happen? And how do I make the difference? And notice that she also knows that her position as a middle class Punjabi woman, half Sikh, it also shapes the stories to a large extent. She; her ethnicity, her gender location, her class location always become important factors in terms of shaping the stories of the people."

Reliability becomes a very important factor. Trustworthiness becomes a very important factor. The ontology of truth becomes a very important factor. And she knows there is no truth per se, there are just narrative truths. It is the only thing that she can rely on. Narrative truth being the truth the lies in the story. It is a functional storytelling, not so much a function of what really happened.

But it is a function of storytelling in the sense that it has a lot of emotional occasions to it, has a lot of emotional investment to it which creates this order of narrative truth as a story. It is an incident which may or may not have happened in the first place as a matter of fact, but as a matter of story with emotion investment with personal investment that just gets embellished into a narrative truth.

"So, how do we make the difference between the two orders of truth is something that she cannot quite quantify. A question that has dogged me constantly has been; is it far to

make these interviews public if they relate as mind do to only one side of the story? Does not that sort of material lend itself to misuse by one side or another?”

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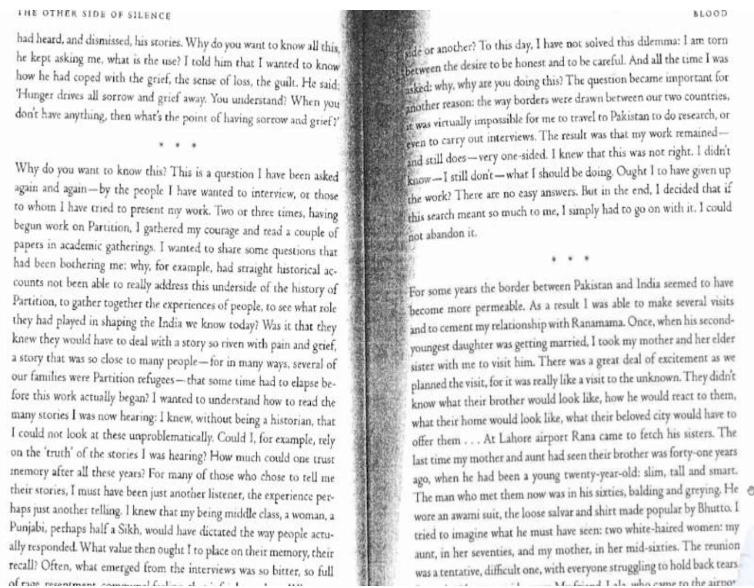

THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE

had heard, and dismissed, his stories. Why do you want to know all this, he kept asking me, what is the use? I told him that I wanted to know how he had coped with the grief, the sense of loss, the guilt. He said: 'Hunger drives all sorrow and grief away. You understand? When you don't have anything, then what's the point of having sorrow and grief?'

* * *

Why do you want to know this? This is a question I have been asked again and again—by the people I have wanted to interview, or those to whom I have tried to present my work. Two or three times, having begun work on Partition, I gathered my courage and read a couple of papers in academic gatherings. I wanted to share some questions that had been bothering me: why, for example, had straight historical accounts not been able to really address this underside of the history of Partition, to gather together the experiences of people, to see what role they had played in shaping the India we know today? Was it that they knew they would have to deal with a story so riven with pain and grief, a story that was so close to many people—for in many ways, several of our families were Partition refugees—that some time had to elapse before this work actually began? I wanted to understand how to read the many stories I was now hearing: I knew, without being a historian, that I could not look at these unproblematically. Could I, for example, rely on the 'truth' of the stories I was hearing? How much could one trust memory after all these years? For many of those who chose to tell me their stories, I must have been just another listener, the experience perhaps just another telling. I knew that my being middle class, a woman, a Punjabi, perhaps half a Sikh, would have dictated the way people actually responded. What value then ought I to place on their memory, their recall? Often, what emerged from the interviews was so bitter, so full

BLOOD

side or another? To this day, I have not solved this dilemma: I am torn between the desire to be honest and to be careful. And all the time I was asked: why, why are you doing this? The question became important for another reason: the way borders were drawn between our two countries, it was virtually impossible for me to travel to Pakistan to do research, or even to carry out interviews. The result was that my work remained—and still does—very one-sided. I knew that this was not right. I didn't know—I still don't—what I should be doing. Ought I to have given up the work? There are no easy answers. But in the end, I decided that if this search meant so much to me, I simply had to go on with it. I could not abandon it.

* * *

For some years the border between Pakistan and India seemed to have become more permeable. As a result I was able to make several visits and to cement my relationship with Ranamama. Once, when his second-youngest daughter was getting married, I took my mother and her elder sister with me to visit him. There was a great deal of excitement as we planned the visit, for it was really like a visit to the unknown. They didn't know what their brother would look like, how he would react to them, what their home would look like, what their beloved city would have to offer them . . . At Lahore airport Rana came to fetch his sisters. The last time my mother and aunt had seen their brother was forty-one years ago, when he had been a young twenty-year-old: slim, tall and smart. The man who met them now was in his sixties, balding and greying. He wore an awami suit, the loose salvar and shirt made popular by Bhutto. I tried to imagine what he must have seen: two white-haired women: my aunt, in her seventies, and my mother, in her mid-sixties. The reunion was a tentative, difficult one, with everyone struggling to hold back tears.

“To this day, I have not solved this dilemma. So, she says that you can only hear one side of the story, you cannot hear the other side. So, for example if you go to a family on partition and you ask them about the experience, they might tell him that they were tortured, they were asked to go away, and they were abandoned by everyone because of the religious location, etc.”

It could work in either way from both sides. But the problem that immediately crops up is the fact that we do not quite get to understand what must have happened on the perpetrators mind. Why it is that people suddenly come in, in a village and ask everyone else leave because of religious location despite having lived together for generations, for centuries.

We do not quite get to know the rationale for this kind of behavior. We do not quite get to know the other side and that is the reason why the sole title becomes so advocated The Other Side of Silence. Silence becomes the stories of partition. “So how do you get to the other side? How do you cross over? And how do you determine what is true, what is not true? How to determine the rationality behind these acts?”

These are the burning questions. The moral dilemma about whether these stories should be made public, whether these stories should be shared in a collective public medium

accessible to everyone or should we respect the privacy of the storyteller, the anonymity of the storyteller should be maintained. This is an unsolved dilemma that we are torn between the desire to be honest and to be careful.

"All the time I was asked why, why are you doing this? The question became important for another reason, the way borders were drawn between our two countries, it was virtually impossible for me to travel to Pakistan to do research or even to carry out interviews. The result was that my work remained and still does very one sided. I knew that this was not right. I did not know, I still do not, that what I should be doing.

Ought I to have given up at the work? There are no easy answers. But in the end, I decided that if the search meant so much to me, I simply had to go on with it. I could not abandon it." This becomes part of the abandoned project scenario and she sort of understands that there is a degree of futility in research because she will only access one side of the story and she will never be able to go to the other side.

The best she can do is go to Pakistan and perhaps find out her Sikh relatives who have now become Muslims because they have to convert, but that will hardly give the holistic picture. This acknowledgement of incompletion, this awareness of incompletion is frustrating at different levels, at a historical level, at a research level, etc. There are these post shift phases, experiences (()) **(25:37)** to give up the project and she comes quite close.

But then there are no easy answers, but she goes on in every dogged way despite the ethical moral dilemma, despite the lack of the whole story, despite the absence of completions. All these are the factors which are the impediments in her research. But then she continues to go on. And this seems to be her project, this determination, this seems to be a dogged determination in terms of finding out about the partition.

To reiterate is that a very ontology of partition it works at so many levels. It is a cartographic partition, it is an identity partition, people get divided, and the identities get fractured and divided. But this also happens to the level of the narrative. So, even the narrative is a partition, we never get to know what the other side of the story is because every story has multiple sides.

We just get to see one narrative, we just get to see one perspective of the narrator, so what about the other perspectives which might give us a fuller more complex picture which remains elusive, which remains incomplete, which remains in comprehensible in so many degrees. The acknowledgement of incompletion is important over here and that envision of absence, envision that is not complete, is never going to be complete.

That envision becomes in a very curious way the foundational force of this entire research, knowing very well the research will never be complete. And that becomes in a way rather than discouraging motto that becomes the driving force of this motto because it is a different kind of research where all we can get is stories, all we can get is emotion. There is no way that they can check the validity or verify the validity of the stories.

There is a narrative truth which sometimes becomes more important than the factual historical truth and that becomes the sentiment, that becomes the affective architecture that historian will have to navigate with despite all the training, despite all the scholarship, despite all the research argument the person may have. The affective apparatus is something which is unmappable.

This unmappability of the affective apparatus makes it a very difficult category, very complex category to locate. At the same time, it invests a very strong affective element in this research. It is not just about data and data and figures, it is about the emotions that dates and figures and data contain. We can see if we go back to the beginning of this session, this particular session, when you hear this millions of people who are killed.

And brutally, sexually attacked, violated, impregnated; so all the numbers that come they do not remain numbers, they become affective categories, they become emotional categories all that does something to our mind when read that. The gory graphic details almost become illustrations, visual images of torture, visual images of exploitation, and visual images of sexual violation.

Numbers shifts to affect, numbers shift to transition, make a transition or metamorphose into memories of violence that metamorphoses, that transition becomes important. And that transition comes at a cost that metamorphoses of numbers and data into affects,

comes at the cost of completion. This is the kind of research which will never be complete.

This is the kind of research which will never have a closure per se because we will never get to hear the full story. But what we will get is this incomplete affect, these incomplete emotions, and we must honor the incompletion of it, we must acknowledge the incompletion of it and that will in a strange way will become the foundational force of research of this quality research of this category.