

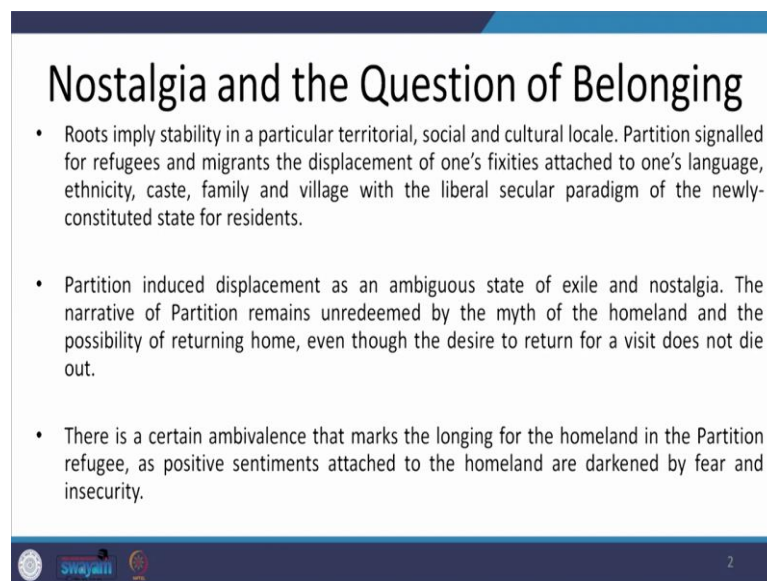
Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema
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Lecture - 36
Home and Nostalgia - IV

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema. We are talking about Home and Nostalgia. In this regard, we are going to talk about the question of belonging, and what constitutes nostalgia. So, in our previous discussion, we were talking about the idyllic village, village that transcends all notions of flaws, all notions of negativity.



The timelessness and the transcendental qualities, positivity that is associated with such a rural life does not always... or in fact, in most times [does not] correspond with the ground reality, how the rural society would function entailed a lot of politics and class as well as caste discriminations, which are basically glossed over and kind of under-mentioned, when we look at the concept of an idyllic village.

The idyllic village has its transcendental quality, its superlative qualities that uphold its unparalleled picture, its association with a kind of a prelapsarian innocence and pristinity, which is celebrated through nostalgia, through one's reminiscing of the past.
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Nostalgia and the Question of Belonging

- Roots imply stability in a particular territorial, social and cultural locale. Partition signalled for refugees and migrants the displacement of one's fixities attached to one's language, ethnicity, caste, family and village with the liberal secular paradigm of the newly-constituted state for residents.
- Partition induced displacement as an ambiguous state of exile and nostalgia. The narrative of Partition remains unredeemed by the myth of the homeland and the possibility of returning home, even though the desire to return for a visit does not die out.
- There is a certain ambivalence that marks the longing for the homeland in the Partition refugee, as positive sentiments attached to the homeland are darkened by fear and insecurity.

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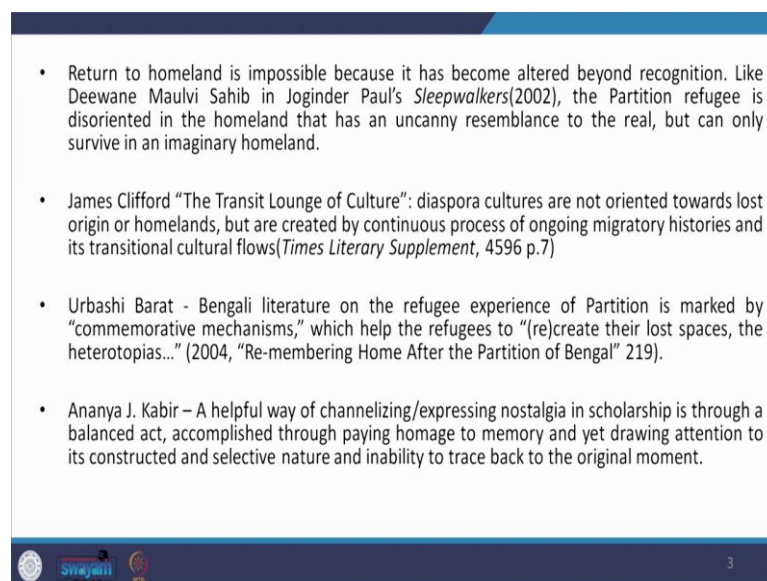
So, when we talk of roots, one's roots, one's base/ provenance, we are talking about stability in terms of territorial, social, cultural belonging.

When partition rendered a given people the status of the displaced or the refugee, these fixities in terms of one's language, ethnicity, one's caste, one's family, one's village -- all these things were being uprooted...these meanings of belonging were being reshuffled and obfuscated or engulfed by the liberal secular paradigm, a larger paradigm that came and replaced, engulfed the earlier meanings of roots and fixity.

That is how the liberal secular paradigm actually shaped the identity of the residents in the new nation-state. So, partition induced displacement as an ambiguous state of exile and nostalgia. We see that there is this ambivalence, which marks one's longing for the homeland, while there are positive sentiments and the desire to return for a visit to the one's homeland never actually dies out.

The myth that the homeland is, the homeland as a mentalscape, as part of one's way, of thinking never goes away, even after a person is displaced and positioned in the new nation-state. Yet, we see such positive sentiments, such superlative meanings of homeland are deterred or in fact are darkened by fear and a sense of insecurity about one's being, one's existence, among the other.

We see that the return to homeland is impossible because it has changed beyond recognition. This is something we see in many of the artworks. (Refer Slide Time: 05:17)



- Return to homeland is impossible because it has become altered beyond recognition. Like Deewane Maulvi Sahib in Joginder Paul's *Sleepwalkers*(2002), the Partition refugee is disoriented in the homeland that has an uncanny resemblance to the real, but can only survive in an imaginary homeland.
- James Clifford "The Transit Lounge of Culture": diaspora cultures are not oriented towards lost origin or homelands, but are created by continuous process of ongoing migratory histories and its transitional cultural flows(*Times Literary Supplement*, 4596 p.7)
- Urbashi Barat - Bengali literature on the refugee experience of Partition is marked by "commemorative mechanisms," which help the refugees to "(re)create their lost spaces, the heterotopias..." (2004, "Re-membering Home After the Partition of Bengal" 219).
- Ananya J. Kabir – A helpful way of channelizing/expressing nostalgia in scholarship is through a balanced act, accomplished through paying homage to memory and yet drawing attention to its constructed and selective nature and inability to trace back to the original moment.

So, for example, in Joginder Paul's *Sleepwalkers*, we see that there is a part where Paul is talking about the Muhajirs (refugees), carrying a part of Lucknow in them when they have migrated to Karachi.

So, this is a section of Muslim refugees that have migrated from Lucknow to Karachi, and some of them are carrying some houses with them, others are carrying a Mohalla or a gali and others are carrying yet a larger portion of Lucknow with them, inside their mind.

And it seems like they are walking in sleep, they are somnambulant, they are ...the entire story is about somnambulance, about people as though ah the migration, the change has happened only in the dream, and we have this character of Deewane Maulvi Sahib.

Deewane Maulvi Sahib is still not convinced that he is displaced, he still feels that he is a part of old Lucknow. We see this disorientation vis-a-vis the concept of homeland. The partition refugee is disoriented in the homeland which has an uncanny resemblance with the real and yet, it can only survive in one's imagination.

This is exactly what we will also see in our subsequent discussion on Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*, where what these lines are, do these lines these borders actually exist for real or they are, but shadows? Across the two sides of this shadow exist mirror resemblances, mirror images. We saw this in the short story by Amar Mitra, *The Wild Goose Country*, where at one point characters are really astonished and they say that the people in the other side of the border look exactly like us, they speak almost the same language with maybe a different tonality or a different accent. But they are so similar that it is very strange to even accept that they belong to a foreign country.

So, James Clifford in "The Transit Lounge of Culture" notes that diaspora cultures are not oriented towards lost origin or homelands, but are created by continuous process of ongoing migratory histories and its transitional cultural flows. Going back to Deewane Maulvi Sahib, who feels that he does not go away or come back to anywhere or from anywhere, but Lucknow.

So, Lucknow is at the heart of his.. or Lucknow has essentially shaped his identity in such a way that if he goes away and comes back from somewhere, it is only with respect to Lucknow. So, he has no cognizance of another land where he is geographically

present, where he is physically present which is Karachi; he has no cognizance of Karachi. Karachi has no place in his mentalscape, in his mental map.

We also see how Maulvi Sahib is an apparition. He is living in some kind of a past and he tends to disappear, like the guard sees him disappear. So, he is actually an apparition, he is dwelling in terms of past meanings and people. When we talk of sleep walking, it is almost like people have not come in terms with...they are yet to face up to the fact of partition, to the ruthless fact or the facts, the consequences of partition.

Urbashi Barat says that Bengali literature on the refugee experience of partition is marked by "commemorative mechanisms", which help the refugees to "recreate their lost spaces and their heterotopias". So, heterotopia - talking of heterotopia we are thinking of a space which has a kind of... continuation and yet a separation from the surroundings. So, it is marked as the other, its presence is marked as the other. There is a kind of inverted prism through which it sees the outside.

So, the refugee people's lives, where [there is] a continuation with the rest of the society and yet there is a kind of abruptness, a kind of difference which could hardly be overcome or dissolved. So, the refugees were living in a kind of heterotopia; they were living with some inverted meanings, with a presence where they cannot really be merged; they insisted not being merged with the rest of the society.

Because that was also there, I mean that is what defined the refugee identity or becoming part of the native population would perhaps take away their identity crisis and yet also take away their distinct identity, their distinctive claim to their loss, their claim to their trauma and their specific roots.

So, in this respect, Ananya Jahanara Kabir says something very useful. She says that a helpful way of channelizing or expressing nostalgia and scholarship should be through a balanced act, which is accomplished through paying homage to memory and yet also drawing attention to the constructed, fabricated and selective nature of reminiscence, selective nature of the act of reminiscence and one's inability to trace back to the original movement that one is referring to in the past. (Refer Slide Time: 12:38)

- Shelley Feldman - middle-class Bengali Hindu immigrants as the primary articulators of melancholic sentiments of Partition. The narratives they construct take on the shape of a virtual myth, simultaneously celebrating the “unadulterated” East Bengali past and ruing the unsatisfactory West Bengali present.
- Sarah Ansari, *Partition, Migrations and Refugees* – the ethnic tensions between the migrants in Sindh and the local population (1994). Conflict between locals and migrants in the Punjab was muted, despite the fact that the migrants outnumbered the established population in such cities as Lyallpur and Ludhiana.
- The sentimentalization in most of these works frequently refer to a particular utopian vision of the countryside. In the case of Bengal, the focus is on East Bengali “home,” without addressing the common landlord and peasant relationship, from which sprout the seeds of sectarianism and hatred. Thus, the pervasive stories of “injustice” and “fall” do not incorporate the relation of dominance that the *bhadralok* shared with the East Bengali Muslim and Dalit wage-workers and peasants.

So, Shelley Feldman studies the Bengali immigrants and notes that the middle-class Bengali Hindu immigrants were the primary articulator of melancholic sentiments of partition.

The narratives they construct almost took the shape of a virtual myth, and they would commonly juxtapose the unadulterated innocent and idyllic East Bengali past with the unsatisfactory and degraded society in Calcutta or in West Bengal.

This kind of a binary meaning was being formed and the immigrant population would very strongly believe in such binary meanings. They produced and in fact, believed in such meanings. So, we see nostalgia is very much synonymous with the idea of sentimentalization. Sentimentalization very strongly plays a role in nostalgic works.

We see that there is this reference to particular utopian vision of the countryside. The focus in the case of Bengal is on the East Bengali home, the rural home - Desher Baari. So, the Desher Baari is emphasized without... there is this kind of silencing about certain aspects, such as there is ..when we talk of Desher Baari, we are normalizing the landlord and peasant relationship,

whereas, in most cases the landlords would be the Hindus and the Muslims would be the landless tenants toiling in the fields, and this picture of hierarchy is normalized, given an innocent appearance. So, there is a kind of timeless naturalness rendered to such a picture.

The good Muslim, like we see in for example, Tulsi Lahiri's play *Banglar Mati/The Earth of Bengal*, we see the service-class middle-class Bengali man cannot actually bring himself to identify or relate with the Muslims. It is only with the Bhasha Andolan, the movement in Dakha centering Bengali language, that the Muslims the middle-class Muslims or the Muslim intellectuals and the Hindu middle-class intellectuals kind of converge.

So, the movement brings people from diverse backgrounds who would otherwise not like to be conflated in terms of social status; the movement actually brings them under the same umbrella. So, that is something we see in Lahiri's work. We also see something ...the quintessential image of peace, the good Muslim I was talking about.

It's the Muslim servant who is sitting on the floor and serving the master, the master of the house who is sitting in a higher position, may be sitting on a chair or on a bed. So, this marked the kind of [norm]... this was naturalized. So, this was the peaceful picture of village life. When the Muslims started demanding for more, when they started demanding their rights and this picture of peace was thereby disturbed/unsettled, they became the bad Muslims.

So, we see this question in Ghatak's film *Subarnarekha* also. So, colony life was seen as *Nishchinti*, colony life is marked by or defined by some some kind of *Nishchinti*, *nishchinti* means relief. So, relief or a sense of peace, a sense of undisturbed peace. And what defines this undisturbed peace? Basically dominance by upper-caste, middle-class, educated Hindus.

So, when one is able to coexist with the similar kinds that defines *Nishchinti*. The anxiety begins with a life outside of the colony, outside of the refugee colony, where one is not necessarily in a dominant position, one has other struggles to face and deal with.

We see that pervasive stories of injustice and fall, of the middle-class Bengali immigrants do not incorporate the relation of dominance that the *bhadralok* (the refined class Bengali) shared with the Bengali Muslims and the Dalit wage workers and peasants.

This is normalized and seen as something that has no intrinsic sense of violence in it or no intrinsic sense of injustice in it. So Sarah Ansari talks about the ethnic tensions between the migrants in Sindh and the local population. So, this was visible everywhere on both sides of the border.


Conflicts between the locals and the newly migrating populace in Punjab was however muted. It was not allowed to exacerbate, and it was muted successfully, despite the fact that in places in cities such as Lyallpur and Ludhiana, the migrants actually outnumbered the established population. So, Punjab handled the refugee-native conflict more successfully. This kind of rift was bridged in a smoother way.

This problem in the case of Bengal actually persisted for a longer time, where at the level of state there would be some facilities for the refugees. But at the ground level, at the

level of social acceptance, there would be some stigma, some taboos that barred them from being embraced into the mainstream.

Anasua Basu Roy Chaudhury talks about how the nostalgic narratives are written or are produced as a way of taking control of the frightening diversity and formlessness of the world. (Refer Slide Time: 20:13)

- Anasua Basu Roychaudhury in "Nostalgia of 'Desh'" - Nostalgic narratives help "to take control of the frightening diversity and formlessness of the world," by puffing up a desirable "Grand Narrative" that sutures together dissimilar experiences. (5653)
- Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, Jamie Arndt and Clay Routledge's interpretation - nostalgia as a "predominantly positive, self-relevant, and social emotion," which is conducive in resurrecting a traumatized past (Sedikides et al. 304). Because nostalgia puts together the descriptions of disappointments, losses, death and separation with euphoria and triumph, progress and redemption mark the trajectory of these narratives.
- Historically being associated with keywords such as "warm," "childhood" and "old times," nostalgia's meaning is fully explored in the realm of sentimentality (*Nostalgia : Content, Triggers, Functions* , p.304).
- Sukrita Paul Kumar on importance of literary representations - narrativity of Partition, especially through a spatial-temporal distance from the author's contemporaneity, entails a strong use of imagination, which allows transformation of historical truth into a fictionalized one, with all rights of the latter's autonomous existence. Arguably, such a narrator is removed from the position of objective perception and judgment. In this respect, nostalgia is instrumental in giving vent to a host of newly encountered emotional as well as socio-cultural orientations ("On Narrativizing Partition" p. 231).



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[They give] a structure to the past and a dominant structure, through which one could look back at the past. And so there is a puffing up of the desirable grand narrative, which sutures or stitches together dissimilar experiences.

In this regard we see how Sedikides and other critics interpret nostalgia, read nostalgia as predominantly positive, self-relevant and social emotion, and nostalgia being conducive in resurrecting the traumatized past. So, it puts together descriptions of loss, disappointment, death, separation along with the euphoria of triumph and progress, such that the trajectory of the narrative is always marked by some kind of relapse followed by redemption, rebounding and further progress. Historically, the word nostalgia is associated with key words such as warm, childhood, old times. Its meaning is fully explored only in the realms of sentimentality.

Sukrita Paul Kumar understands the importance of literary representations. She talks about the narrativity of partition through its special temporal distance from the author's immediate present, entailing/requiring use of strong imagination and transformation of historical truth into a fictionalized one.

She is also talking about nostalgia being instrumental in giving vent to a host of newly encountered emotional and socio-cultural orientations. She is talking about the importance of literature, of imagination in intervening what she calls as the pornography of violence. So, talking too much of violence is once again relapsing and coinciding with the statistics, the historical statistics.

So, basically Kumar asserts that literature has a greater space; it has its creative dimensions. So, it can deal with the past in other ways than just depicting the pornography of violence, only showing carnage, loot, rape and devastation. There are other ways of showing complexity of human character, difficulty of human characters.

So, we see, like I said that the image of the perfect rural life is problematized in subsequent partition scholarship that are being written by first generation literates from Dalit Bengali refugee groups. (Refer Slide Time: 23:49)

- For the Dalit Bengali scholars, “Golden Bengal” does not herald similar romanticized nostalgia as in the upper-class/caste immigrants’ memory, as the former describe generations of naturalized exploitation and discriminatory village politics in pre-Partition East Bengal.
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Remembered Villages’ – Bengali Hindu memories tend to easily slip into nostalgic evocations of prelapsarian rural innocence and a bucolic idyll called “Golden Bengal”, which refer to pre-Partition rapture and bliss.
- Canadian-Armenian filmmaker Atom Egoyan – points to the impossibility of narrativising trauma, with the desired whole always being contaminated by the actual holes, i.e. referring to the constant grappling with omissions and selections – the gaps point to the fundamental difficulty in integrating trauma into narrative memory.
- Ananya J. Kabir – In order to reach a more searing level of honesty within ourselves, we have to study the complicated nature of memory and understand the compromised subjectivity of the narrator of such a memory.
- For instance, artworks and analyses valorizing only certain sites of memory, such as the village life, should also discuss how such modes of remembrance happen at the cost of under-focusing/marginalizing other modes/possibilities of remembering.

So, scholarship by the Dalits actually do not herald similar romanticized nostalgia about the golden Bengal, because they describe generations of naturalized exploitation and a discriminatory village politics in pre-partition East Bengal.

And Dipesh Chakrabarty in Remembered Villages talks about the Bengali Hindu memories, tending to easily slip into nostalgic evocation of prelapsarian rural innocence and a bucolic idyll called golden Bengal, which is a picture of rapture and bliss. In this regard, it might serve us to remember what filmmaker Atom Egoyan is saying. He says that it is impossible to narrate trauma.

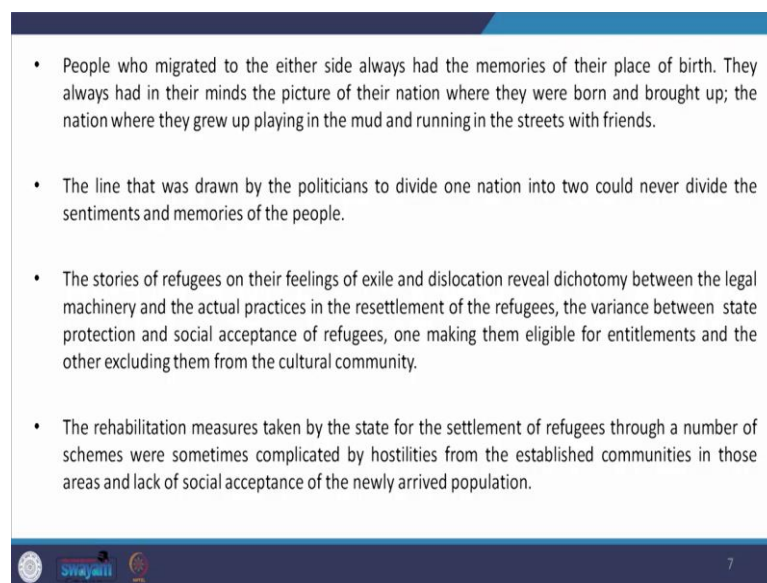
When we try to bring back trauma through ...[bring back] the silence of trauma through a kind of narrativity, try to give words to the silence that appropriates trauma, in a way the desire for a whole narrative, a holistic narrative is always riddled with/ contaminated with actual holes.

So, the whole is contaminated with holes. There is a constant grappling with omissions and selections, what is being omitted in the process of retelling, recounting; the gaps point to the fundamental difficulty in integrating trauma into a narrative memory, right.

In this regard, Ananya Kabir says something very important. She asks or she suggests that the person doing the act of remembering should actually refer to a searing level of honesty within himself or herself in order to also understand the complicated nature of memory and one's own compromised subjectivity. Who is and should understand the

compromised subjectivity of the person? Who is looking back at the past, who is trying to recount the past?

So, when we talk of certain aspects of village life, (and certain aspects are over-discussed), such modes of remembrance can only happen at the cost of under-focusing or marginalizing the possibilities of looking back at the past. So, people that migrated always had their memories about their place of birth, where they grew up, right. So, the official level or the line drawn by the politicians for administrative purpose, the lines might have bureaucratic meanings, official bordering of states, but they could never divide the sentiments and memories of the people. (Refer Slide Time: 27:27)



- People who migrated to the either side always had the memories of their place of birth. They always had in their minds the picture of their nation where they were born and brought up; the nation where they grew up playing in the mud and running in the streets with friends.
- The line that was drawn by the politicians to divide one nation into two could never divide the sentiments and memories of the people.
- The stories of refugees on their feelings of exile and dislocation reveal dichotomy between the legal machinery and the actual practices in the resettlement of the refugees, the variance between state protection and social acceptance of refugees, one making them eligible for entitlements and the other excluding them from the cultural community.
- The rehabilitation measures taken by the state for the settlement of refugees through a number of schemes were sometimes complicated by hostilities from the established communities in those areas and lack of social acceptance of the newly arrived population.

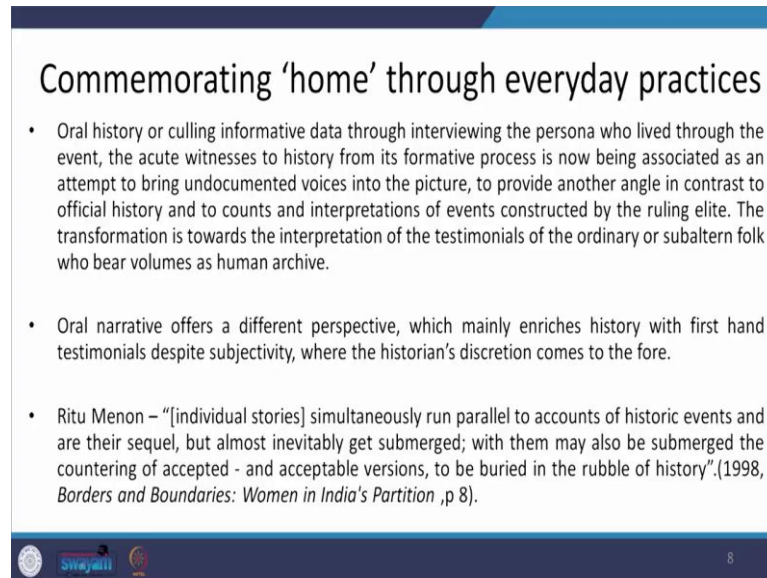
So, rehabilitation measures... I was talking about the paradox involved in such measures where the state would ensure the refugees... the state has to resettle the refugees through a number of schemes, whereas the refugees would often face hostilities from the native or established communities who showed a lack of social acceptance towards the newly arrived population.

We always had this variance in terms of the social and state protection and acceptance of the refugees on the one hand making them eligible for entitlement; and then excluding them from the cultural community was something that could be discovered as ground reality.

So, we see that oral history or culling of informative data is associated with attempting to bring undocumented voices into the picture. It is a way of putting another angle which is

contrastive with the official history and interpretations of events construed by the ruling elite.

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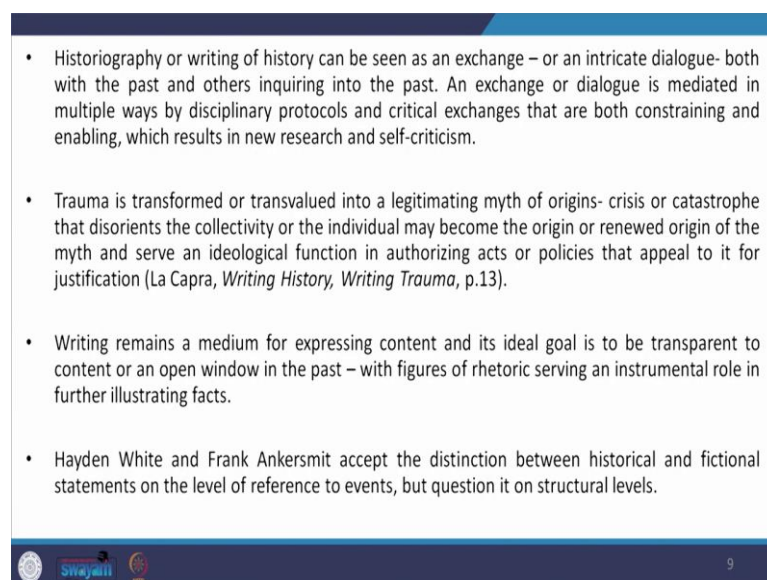


Commemorating 'home' through everyday practices

- Oral history or culling informative data through interviewing the persona who lived through the event, the acute witnesses to history from its formative process is now being associated as an attempt to bring undocumented voices into the picture, to provide another angle in contrast to official history and to counts and interpretations of events constructed by the ruling elite. The transformation is towards the interpretation of the testimonials of the ordinary or subaltern folk who bear volumes as human archive.
- Oral narrative offers a different perspective, which mainly enriches history with first hand testimonials despite subjectivity, where the historian's discretion comes to the fore.
- Ritu Menon – “[individual stories] simultaneously run parallel to accounts of historic events and are their sequel, but almost inevitably get submerged; with them may also be submerged the countering of accepted - and acceptable versions, to be buried in the rubble of history”.(1998, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* ,p 8).

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So, interpretation of the testimonials of the ordinary or the subaltern individuals create...it is an initiative towards creating the human archive. Oral narrative offers a different perspective which does not always oppose, but also complement and enrich... they enrich history with first-hand testimonials. Refer Slide Time: 29:04)



- Historiography or writing of history can be seen as an exchange – or an intricate dialogue- both with the past and others inquiring into the past. An exchange or dialogue is mediated in multiple ways by disciplinary protocols and critical exchanges that are both constraining and enabling, which results in new research and self-criticism.
- Trauma is transformed or transvalued into a legitimating myth of origins- crisis or catastrophe that disorients the collectivity or the individual may become the origin or renewed origin of the myth and serve an ideological function in authorizing acts or policies that appeal to it for justification (La Capra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p.13).
- Writing remains a medium for expressing content and its ideal goal is to be transparent to content or an open window in the past – with figures of rhetoric serving an instrumental role in further illustrating facts.
- Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit accept the distinction between historical and fictional statements on the level of reference to events, but question it on structural levels.

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And so, we see that the writing of history can be seen as an exchange with personal narratives; there is an intricate dialogue both with the past and others inquiring into the

past. When we study this dialogue, that can be retrieved through the process of interviewing, through looking at the oral recounting of partition and so forth. We see that the dialogue or exchange is mediated in multiple ways, through disciplinary protocols and critical exchanges.

This dialogue is both constraining and enabling, and it forms rich fields for new research and self-criticism. Within historiography or history when we bring in the question of an intricate dialogue, we are actually digging further into the past, we are making rooms for self-criticism and further research.. further scopes of research.

Dominic LaCapra talks of trauma as transformed or transvalued into a legitimating myth of origins, from a position of crisis or catastrophe, which disorients the connectivity and can lead to the formation of a renewed origin of the myth. And it can serve an ideological function in authorizing acts or policies which appeal for justice or justification.

A story told from the position of trauma can take place of a renewed origin of the same myth. So, writing becomes a medium of expressing content, and its ideal goal is to be an open window to the past or an open window in the past, with figures of rhetoric serving as an instrumental role in further illustrating the facts.

The distinction between historical and fictional statements are there, but there are also some overlaps between the two. And so, we see Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit talking about the identity or essential similarity between historiography and fiction/literature and aesthetic productions on structural level.

White talks about the discursive analogue of the middle voice being suitable for representing the traumatic limit events, such as the holocaust. (Refer Slide Time: 32:27)

- White and Ankersmit – There is an identity or essential similarity between historiography and fiction, literature, or the aesthetic on structural levels, and their emphasis is on the fictionality of the structures.
- Hayden White - a discursive analogue of the middle voice is most suitable for representing the extreme and traumatic limit events, in history such as Holocaust (La Capra 47).
- Ankersmit and White – discuss narrative substance as in their prior discussions on prefigurative tropes and meaning-endowing, projective narrative structures.
- The narrative substance or structure as fictive and politically or ideologically motivated. Ankersmit infers that “we can never test our conclusions by comparing the elected text with the past itself... narrative substances do not refer to the past” (*History and Theory*, p.212).
- Ankersmit – “we can only speak of causes and effect at the level of statement and that the narrative language is metaphorical; indeed that the historical text is a substitute for the absent past”(p.220).

So, the narrative substance or structure as fictive and political or ideological. So, the narrative substance or the narrative structure both in history and in literary writings in creative works are politically and ideologically motivated as much in one as in the other.

So, like Frank Ankersmit says, we can never test our conclusions by comparing the elected text with the past itself. Narrative substances do not refer to the past. The narrative language is always metaphorical and we can only speak at the level of a statement.

So, history is a substitute for a past that can never be recovered, and history, in fact, institutionalises itself or legitimizes itself through claiming to be a substitute, a holistic substitute for the absent past. (Refer Slide Time: 33:38)

- The historical text becomes a substitute for the absent past only when it is construed and fetishized as a totalized object (La Capra *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p.50).
- Ankersmit - politics of history claims to say the “true” things and construct ‘pictures of the past’ narrative substances, which is also observable among canonical narratives.
- Memorial documentation, especially by virtue of collective assertion and repetition, can command a totalitarian substitution for the absent past and be prone to fetishism and closure, as a historical text.
- LaCapra - fictional narratives outdo the historical recording in terms of truth claim “by giving a plausibility for experience and emotion, which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods” (13). “Mutually interrogative relation” between historiography and art complicates binary oppositions between them (15).

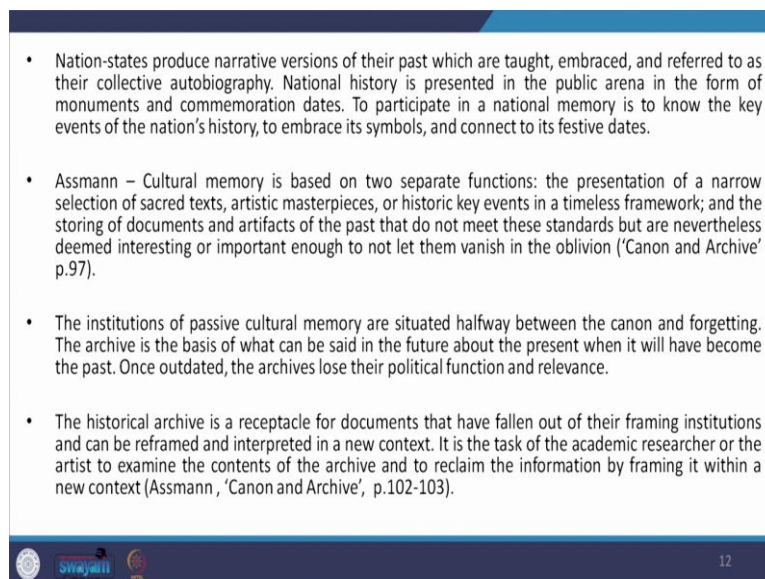
And that is when it is construed (or it claims)... [that is] when history is construed and fetishized as a totalized object, right.

LaCapra talks about the fictional narratives outdoing the historical recording in terms of truth claim, by giving a plausibility for experience and emotion which is not present in formal historiography through restricted documentary methods.

So, in non-historical writings, in personal narratives, we find what LaCapra calls as mutually interrogative relation between historiography and art.

LaCapra talks about this mutually interrogative relation between historiography and art, which complicates a binary relationship between the two. In fact, we see that memorial documentation by virtue of their collective assertion and repetition can command a totalitarian substitution for the absent past. And the memorial writings can take the shape or form an archive, and be prone to similar fetishism and closure as a historical text

through claiming 'true' things and the 'right' picture from the past. This is something we, therefore, see in the canonical narratives, canonical narratives that in a way appropriate the subject, the topic of partition. (Refer Slide Time: 35:27)



- Nation-states produce narrative versions of their past which are taught, embraced, and referred to as their collective autobiography. National history is presented in the public arena in the form of monuments and commemoration dates. To participate in a national memory is to know the key events of the nation's history, to embrace its symbols, and connect to its festive dates.
- Assmann – Cultural memory is based on two separate functions: the presentation of a narrow selection of sacred texts, artistic masterpieces, or historic key events in a timeless framework; and the storing of documents and artifacts of the past that do not meet these standards but are nevertheless deemed interesting or important enough to not let them vanish in the oblivion ('Canon and Archive' p.97).
- The institutions of passive cultural memory are situated halfway between the canon and forgetting. The archive is the basis of what can be said in the future about the present when it will have become the past. Once outdated, the archives lose their political function and relevance.
- The historical archive is a receptacle for documents that have fallen out of their framing institutions and can be reframed and interpreted in a new context. It is the task of the academic researcher or the artist to examine the contents of the archive and to reclaim the information by framing it within a new context (Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', p.102-103).

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So, we see that a nation-state produces narrative versions about a past which are taught, embraced, trained to learn, and they are referred to as part of the collective autobiography.

National history is presented in the public arena in the form of monuments, in the form of commemoration, dates and to participate in a national memory is to know the key events about the nation's history, and also to know and embrace the symbols that shape the nation and to connect with the festive dates.

Jan Assmann talks about cultural memory being based on two functions. On the one hand, we are presenting a narrow selection of texts that acquire sacrosanct value, artistic masterpieces and key historic events that are rendered timeless frameworks.

Then we also store some secondary documents and artifacts that do not meet such superlative standards of representing the nation, yet nevertheless they are deemed interesting or important enough. And so we do not let them vanish in the oblivion; they somewhere stay stored in our archive. But they do not constitute the meaning of the nation. So, the institutions of passive cultural memory are situated somewhere between the canon and between forgetting.

There are some dates and symbols that shape the nation, others that are left situated half way between remembering and forgetting. These archives can be said to be the future about the present; it can be said...so archive is the basis of what can be said in the future about the present, when it will have become the past, right.

So, once updated, the archives lose their political function and their relevance; the historical archive is a receptacle for documents that have fallen out of their framing institutions. And so they entail reframing and re-interpreting in a new context. It is the onus of the researcher, the academic to re-examine these contents of the archive and reclaim the information, re-examine them, scrutinize them within a new context.

So, we see that what the mind can remember or what objects can help us document about the past does not define the memory. A memory is much more than just remembering certain objects or documents from the past; it is a more complex phenomenon. And memory poses ethical challenges, like Chakraborty would note - it poses ethical challenges to the investigator, to the historian who approaches the past with the only

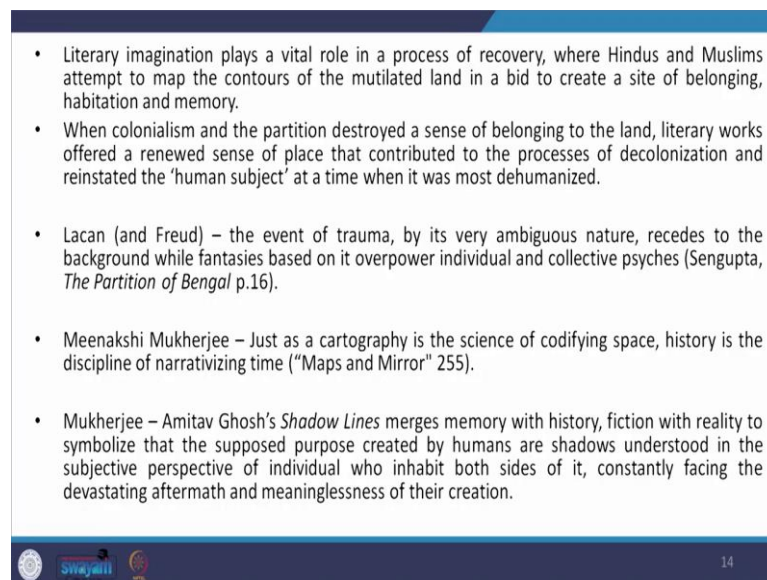
approach, with the only objective of 'tell me all'. So, he is talking about a historian who wants to grasp the entire meaning or the entire significance of the past. (Refer Slide Time: 39:06)

- “Memory is a complex phenomenon that reaches out to far beyond what normally constitutes a historian’s archives, for memory is much more than what the mind can remember or what objects can help us document about the past” (Chakraborty, *Remembered Villages* p.2143).
- “Memory ... poses ethical challenges to the investigator-historian who approaches the past with one injunction : tell me all” (p.2143).
- “The question of creating in print something of the sentimental and the nostalgic about the lost home in the villages of East Bengal was the task that the refugee essays had set themselves” (p.2143).
- Two contradictory relationships to the question of the past – sentiment of nostalgia and sense of trauma.
- In order for the memory of trauma to be legitimate one has to give force to the claim of victimization due to Partition.

So, the question of creating something sentimental and nostalgic in print or through artwork aims at retrieving the lost home, the lost village, the village left behind. And this was the task that the refugees, at least from the Bengal side, had set themselves.

Through writings, they were trying to bring back the past that was ...that could not be retrieved otherwise. So, on the one hand, when we talk about the question of past, past actually has two components to it, two sides; one is the sentiment of nostalgia, and the other is the sense of trauma.

So, without a claim to victimization rendered by partition, the memory of trauma cannot be legitimized. (Refer Slide Time: 40:11)



- Literary imagination plays a vital role in a process of recovery, where Hindus and Muslims attempt to map the contours of the mutilated land in a bid to create a site of belonging, habitation and memory.
- When colonialism and the partition destroyed a sense of belonging to the land, literary works offered a renewed sense of place that contributed to the processes of decolonization and reinstated the 'human subject' at a time when it was most dehumanized.
- Lacan (and Freud) – the event of trauma, by its very ambiguous nature, recedes to the background while fantasies based on it overpower individual and collective psyches (Sengupta, *The Partition of Bengal* p.16).
- Meenakshi Mukherjee – Just as a cartography is the science of codifying space, history is the discipline of narrativizing time ("Maps and Mirror" 255).
- Mukherjee – Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines* merges memory with history, fiction with reality to symbolize that the supposed purpose created by humans are shadows understood in the subjective perspective of individual who inhabit both sides of it, constantly facing the devastating aftermath and meaninglessness of their creation.

Literary imagination here plays an important role in the process of recovering, where Hindus and Muslims attempt to map the contours of the mutilated land, of the divided land as a way of creating a site of belonging, habitation and memory.

This can be seen through the lens of Lacan and Freud, who say that the event of trauma by its very ambiguous nature recedes to the background, whereas fantasies surrounding this topic overpower both individual and collective psyche. So, Meenakshi Mukherjee notes that just as a cartography or a map is the science of codifying space, history is the discipline of narrativizing time.

In our next lecture, we are going to talk about *Shadow Lines*, where memory merges with history, fiction merges with reality, in order to symbolize that the borders can only

be conceived as shadows. The borders are seen as shadows, and they are understood when approached through the subjective perspective of an individual; they are not concrete, they are more fluid, they are overlapping.

There is a kind of continuity between the two sides of the border and the border stands in between as a shadow, constantly facing the devastating consequences and subscribing to its own meaninglessness. With this, I am going to stop today's lecture and we will meet again for our next round of discussions.

Thank you.