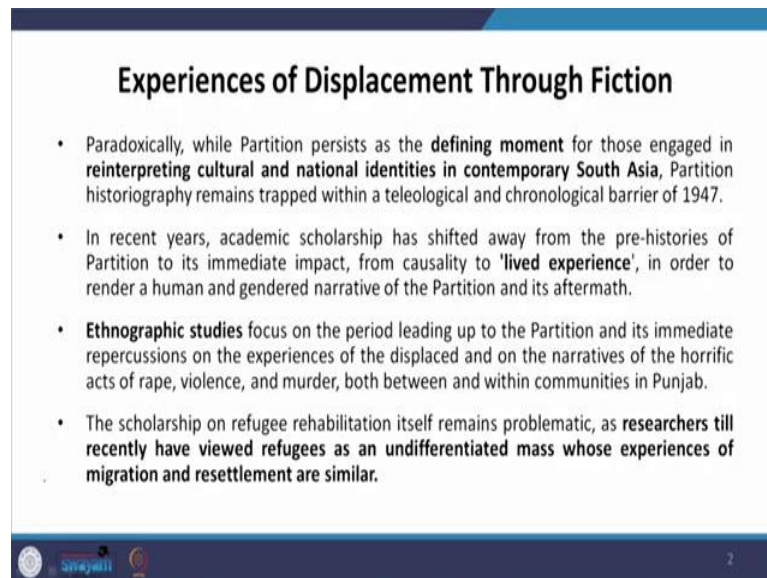


Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema
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Lecture - 47
Displaced People, Abandoned Homes – II

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema. We are talking about the Displaced People and Abandoned Homes. Today, we are going to look at the different fictions, different artworks through which the question of the displaced people, their angst, their trauma and their sense of loss are reflected. So, when we talk of partition, it is not really limited to the teleological, the teleological and chronological barrier of 1947. (Refer Slide Time: 01:13)



Experiences of Displacement Through Fiction

- Paradoxically, while Partition persists as the **defining moment** for those engaged in **reinterpreting cultural and national identities in contemporary South Asia**, Partition historiography remains trapped within a teleological and chronological barrier of 1947.
- In recent years, academic scholarship has shifted away from the pre-histories of Partition to its immediate impact, from causality to **'lived experience'**, in order to render a human and gendered narrative of the Partition and its aftermath.
- **Ethnographic studies** focus on the period leading up to the Partition and its immediate repercussions on the experiences of the displaced and on the narratives of the horrific acts of rape, violence, and murder, both between and within communities in Punjab.
- The scholarship on refugee rehabilitation itself remains problematic, as **researchers till recently have viewed refugees as an undifferentiated mass whose experiences of migration and resettlement are similar.**

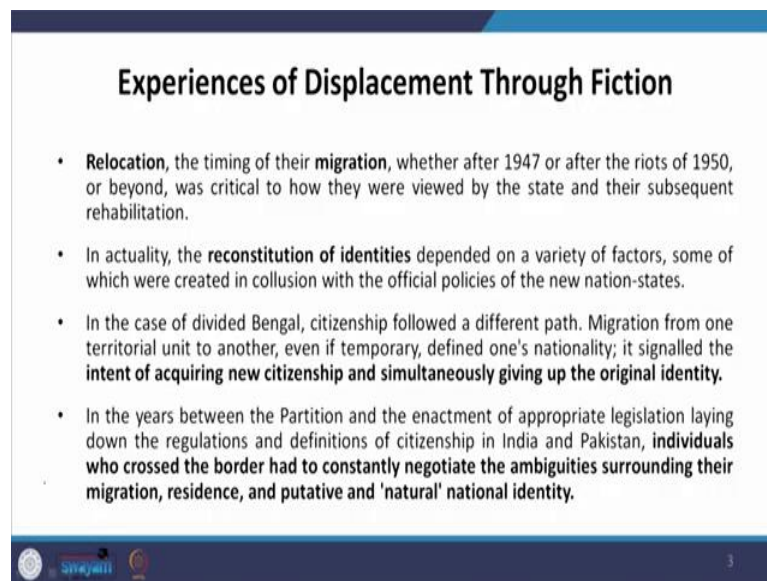
Like we can see, all the partition is understood as the defining moment which happened on 15th of August 1947 - the repercussions before and after keep lingering. While partition persists as a historic moment for those engaged in re-interpreting cultural and national identities in contemporary South Asia, one must remember that the partition historiography is not trapped only to that particular year or the abutting years -- the years before and after.

It had the causality that we see goes back long in the history of the subcontinent, and the repercussions, the after-effects remain after the cracking of the subcontinent happens. So, academic scholarship has shifted away from the pre-histories of partition to its

immediate impact, and it is more interested now.. as new scholarships emerge, they study the lived experience, the live experience or experiences rather, that render a human dimension to this entire narrative of partition and its aftermath.

So, ethnographic studies focus on the period leading up to the partition and its immediate repercussions on the experiences of the displaced people. And so, they study the narratives of horror violence, both within and between different communities. So, it is remarkable that the researchers, until a recent time, have been treating or have been under the perception that refugees are an undifferentiated mass, whose experiences of migration and resettlement are similar. Recent scholarship has developed and added from this assumption.

So, recent scholarship has actually revisited and added to this assumption, and actually dissented the fact that partition experience varies according to one's socio-economic background, something that I have been saying in the past few lectures, and the reconstitution of one's identity, [for the ones who] migrated from the pre-partition homeland to the new nation-state, the host land (Refer Slide Time: 04:08)



Experiences of Displacement Through Fiction

- **Relocation**, the timing of their **migration**, whether after 1947 or after the riots of 1950, or beyond, was critical to how they were viewed by the state and their subsequent rehabilitation.
- In actuality, the **reconstitution of identities** depended on a variety of factors, some of which were created in collusion with the official policies of the new nation-states.
- In the case of divided Bengal, citizenship followed a different path. Migration from one territorial unit to another, even if temporary, defined one's nationality; it signalled the **intent of acquiring new citizenship and simultaneously giving up the original identity**.
- In the years between the Partition and the enactment of appropriate legislation laying down the regulations and definitions of citizenship in India and Pakistan, **individuals who crossed the border had to constantly negotiate the ambiguities surrounding their migration, residence, and putative and 'natural' national identity**.

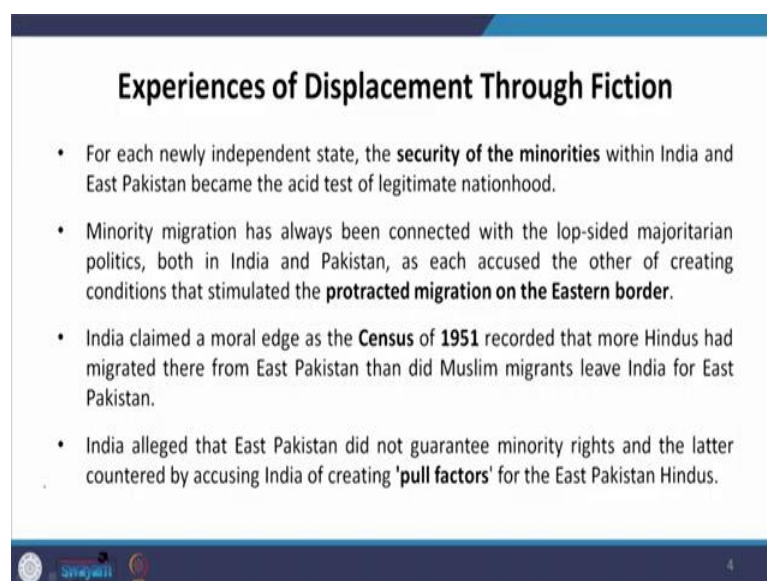
Sri Jayanti 3

depends on a number of factors -- one of which is the official policy or in fact, one of which are the official policies formulated by the new nation-states. So, in the case of divided Bengal we see that citizenship followed a different trajectory, migration from one territorial unit to another at many times was not permanent, and so the question of one's nationality and national belonging remained an obscured and ambivalent position.

It signaled the intent of acquiring new citizenship and simultaneously giving up the original identity. So, we see that acquiring new citizenship would signify giving up on one's original identity. There was a time till which the migrants wanted to maintain their sense of belonging on both sides of the border.

So, in the years between the partition and the enactment of appropriate legislation that laid down the regulations and definitions of citizenship in India and Pakistan, the immigrants that had crossed the border were constantly negotiating with these ambiguities, the ambiguities surrounding their process of migration, their residence, and they were struggling with the question of their national identity, where they naturally should belong.

So, for each newly formed nation-state, the security of the minorities became what one could call as the acid test of legitimate nationhood. So, minority migration would be traditionally connected and is still connected with the lop-sided majoritarian politics in a given nation-state; it could be in India or in Pakistan. (Refer Slide Time: 06:30)



Experiences of Displacement Through Fiction

- For each newly independent state, the **security of the minorities** within India and East Pakistan became the acid test of legitimate nationhood.
- Minority migration has always been connected with the lop-sided majoritarian politics, both in India and Pakistan, as each accused the other of creating conditions that stimulated the **protracted migration on the Eastern border**.
- India claimed a moral edge as the **Census of 1951** recorded that more Hindus had migrated there from East Pakistan than did Muslim migrants leave India for East Pakistan.
- India alleged that East Pakistan did not guarantee minority rights and the latter countered by accusing India of creating '**pull factors**' for the East Pakistan Hindus.

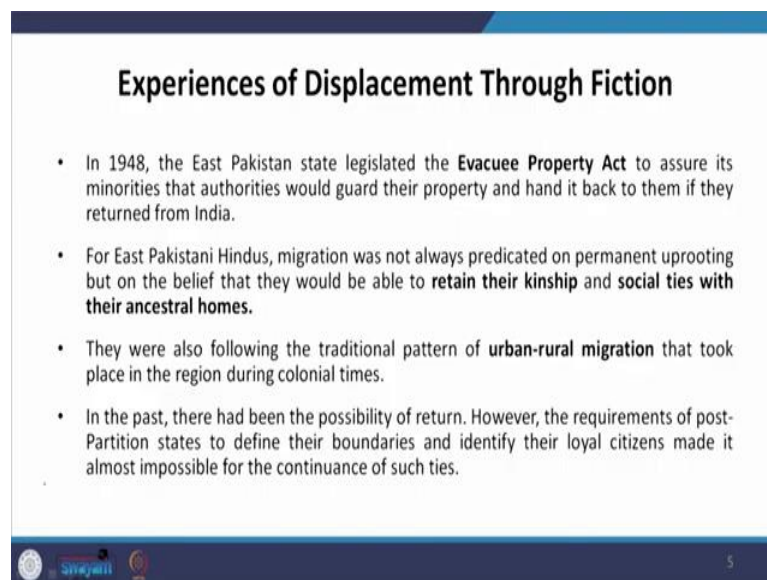
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And each of these countries in South Asia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh accused the other of creating conditions that stimulated further migration across the border. So, India claimed a moral edge as the census of 1951 recorded that more Hindus had migrated there, more Hindus had migrated to India from East Pakistan and from West Pakistan than did Muslim migrants leave India.

So, India alleged that East Pakistan did not guarantee minority rights. And so, whereas East Pakistan countered by accusing India of creating pull factors for the East Pakistani Hindus. So, while India would blame Pakistan for propelling the minorities to emigrate, to evacuate and cross the border, enter India,

So, while India would accuse Pakistan for propelling the migration of the minorities and create conditions that made them cross the border and enter India, Pakistan on the other hand would say that India was creating pull factors for the Hindus. And so, it was India that was responsible for these migrations undertaken by the Hindus and not Pakistan.

So, in 1948 the East Pakistan state legislated the Evacuee Property Act in order to assure its minorities that authorities would guard their property and their properties would be handed back to them if they came back to East Pakistan. (Refer Slide Time: 08:32)



Experiences of Displacement Through Fiction

- In 1948, the East Pakistan state legislated the **Evacuee Property Act** to assure its minorities that authorities would guard their property and hand it back to them if they returned from India.
- For East Pakistani Hindus, migration was not always predicated on permanent uprooting but on the belief that they would be able to **retain their kinship and social ties with their ancestral homes**.
- They were also following the traditional pattern of **urban-rural migration** that took place in the region during colonial times.
- In the past, there had been the possibility of return. However, the requirements of post-Partition states to define their boundaries and identify their loyal citizens made it almost impossible for the continuance of such ties.

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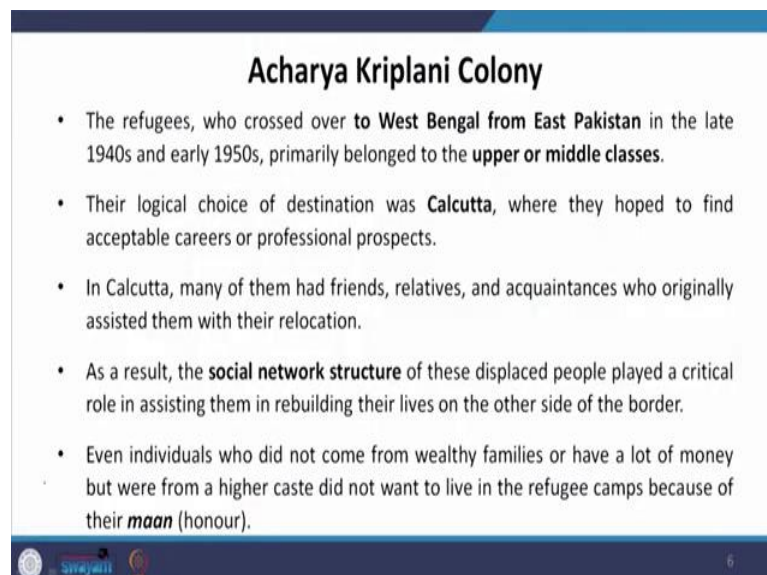
We see that for the East Pakistani Hindus, migration was not always predicated on permanent uprooting like in the West. So, in the West, people would normally not even think of going back. But here the Bengali Hindus had this belief that they should be able to retain their kinship and social ties with their ancestral homes. So, there was this

following the traditional pattern of urban-rural migration, which took place during the colonial times.

During the colonial times, we see that a lot of East Bengali Babus or Bhadrakol would work in India, in Western Bengal mainly in Calcutta. So, they would travel back and forth while they had a lot of... these migrants had a common history of having, of possessing lands and homesteads back in East Bengal, which became East Pakistan later on; whereas, they had their professional ties with Calcutta.

So, they had some relatives, some professional connections and networking in Calcutta. They would move back and forth and it was very difficult to believe that this situation should change forever. So, in the past they had this possibility of return; however, the requirements of post partition states to define and freeze the boundaries and to urgently identify as the loyal citizens caused discontinuous ties or such mobility.

So, the mobility in a way was cramped and that is when people had to finally adhere themselves with one nation and nationality. So, the refugees who crossed over to West Bengal from East Pakistan in the late 1940s and early 1950s were primarily from the Dalit sections, the upper- or upper middle-classes, and sometimes the middle-classes. (Refer Slide Time: 10:45)



Acharya Kriplani Colony

- The refugees, who crossed over to West Bengal from East Pakistan in the late 1940s and early 1950s, primarily belonged to the **upper or middle classes**.
- Their logical choice of destination was **Calcutta**, where they hoped to find acceptable careers or professional prospects.
- In Calcutta, many of them had friends, relatives, and acquaintances who originally assisted them with their relocation.
- As a result, the **social network structure** of these displaced people played a critical role in assisting them in rebuilding their lives on the other side of the border.
- Even individuals who did not come from wealthy families or have a lot of money but were from a higher caste did not want to live in the refugee camps because of their **maan** (honour).

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So, their logical choice of destination was Calcutta, where they found themselves career and they hoped to find places to resettle. So, spaces to resettle as well as professional

prospects. So, like I said before, they had relatives, network, I mean relatives, friends and acquaintances in the city, which further facilitated this process of relocation.

So, social networking structure of these displaced people play a critical role in smoothening or in enhancing the process of rebuilding the razed life or rebuilding the uprooted life. So, the fact that the people in Calcutta enabled them to rebuild their lives with less difficulty after coming to India.

So, even individuals that did not come from wealthy families or did not have a lot of money, but were from the upper-caste would exhibit this caste-pride, and they would claim that their maan or honour was being tarnished as a result of cohabiting or coexisting with the Dalits, the Dalit evacuees.

So, the general sentiment or the popular sentiment among the middle-class, upper-caste refugees was that the refugee camps that were run by the government and that were claimant and expectant of government doles were meant for the 'chhoto jat', the lower-caste people, and the Bhadrlok the refined-class people were actually entitled for something better. They were very conscious of their caste identity and so, decided not to take shelter in the camps alongside the Dalit refugees.

There would be cases where lands were acquired through legal means and procedures and the government termed the areas of refugee settlements as private colonies, whereas there would also be cases of forceful occupation of vacant land. These lands would sometimes be apparently vacant or owned by the government or some zamindar, and the squatters, the middle-class refugees would forcefully settle on these lands. This process of collective takeover was known as jabardakhal; and this is how squatter colonies would be formed in Calcutta, both through legal and illegal processes. (Refer Slide Time: 13:54)

Acharya Kriplani Colony

- In Bihutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's "Acharya Kriplani Colony", the narrative plays around the **quintessential obsession of refugees** with the setting up of a **home**.
- With emotionally charged images of verdant shrubbery, extensive fields, delicious food, sunshine, and the general warmth of the lost home rife in their minds, the refugees searched for the idyllic peace in the present displaced state of exile.
- **Manas Ray** - speaking about **Netaji Colony**, says, "*In the beginning the people tried to recreate their desher bari in Netaji Nagar; the landscape of Netaji Nagar was the landscape of nostalgia*" ("**Refugees: One Memory and Locality**")
- The protagonist in Bandyopadhyay's story chances upon a newspaper advertisement for a plot of land that spells his **utopian vision of nostalgic idealization**.

After discussing this background, let us look at this story by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay; it is called Acharya Kriplani Colony and it tells us about the gap between the idle, nostalgic remembrance of homeland back in East Pakistan and the realities that the refugees had to face.

The narrative plays around the obsession of the refugees for setting up a home for the homeless of and for people that have in the past lived in posh conditions, in [large] housings, losing of a homestead, razing of one's house and property led to this obsession of rebuilding what one has lost.

So, finding a suitable home that would be reminiscent of the land they had come from. This image of the home is emotionally charged, and it comprises verdant shrubbery. So, a lot of greenery, extensive fields and naturally available food and a general warmth, which the original home could provide, and this imagery is rife in the minds of the refugees.

And so the refugees searched for this idyllic peace, this haven that they could remember about their lost home, and they wanted to reproduce that lost home while living in the state of exile. Manas Ray talks about Netaji Colony and says in the beginning, the people try to recreate their desher bari in Netaji Nagar; the landscape of Netaji Nagar was the landscape of nostalgia.

It is remarkable how most of the refugee colonies in Calcutta have a very verdant milieu; the houses are surrounded by gardens and tree plantations. So, trees and a lot of

vegetation. So, the houses are surrounded by plenty of vegetation basically and a lot of greenery.

It reminds them of the general suburban setting of East Pakistan. So, the fact that it reminded them of the fertile and suburban lands of East Pakistan... vegetation, greenery, like we can see, is much more on the Eastern side of Bengal than in West Bengal which experienced urbanization under British colonial rule.

So, this is something that the immigrants want to rebuild after they come to Calcutta; the protagonist in Bandopadhyay's story chances upon a newspaper advertisement. So, the protagonist in Bandopadhyay's story chances upon a newspaper advertisement for a plot of land, and the description in this advertisement evokes his utopian vision or, in a way, it speaks to his utopian vision of an idealized home -- the kind of a nostalgia that he had for the home left behind.

So, this is something that propels the protagonist or motivates the protagonist to buy the land. The Acharya Kriplani Colony is advertised as being built on the vast and adjoining land of a certain station, only a few miles away from Calcutta amidst beautiful natural surroundings. The clear and holy waters of the Jahnvi River flow past its southernmost point. So, like I was saying, the suburban ambience is a much coveted environment for the refugees.

It is a symbol that harkens back one's lost home in East Bengal, which has always been more fertile and it had more greenery as compared to the western part of Bengal, especially Calcutta, which most of the refugees were not very happy living in. So, on the one hand there was the desire to get, to enjoy the networking and the economic prospects, the job prospects that Calcutta offered.

And on the other hand, the refugees would compare Calcutta with their homeland, their ancestral homeland in East Pakistan and call it as a concrete jungle or a place that was the site of depraved people, city people that were generally inclined to dupe the newcomers. So, we have these stereotypical understandings running through so many partition fictions or partition artworks. (Refer Slide Time: 20:26)

Acharya Kriplani Colony

- The "Acharya Kriplani Colony" is advertised as "being built on the vast and adjoining land of a certain station, only a few miles away from Kolkata, amidst beautiful natural surroundings. The clear and holy waters of the Jahnvi River flow past its southernmost point..."
- Rachel Weber in her paper "Re (creating) the Home: Women's Role in the Development of Refugee Colonies in South Calcutta" has focused on how the buildings in the colonies "emphasize the village-like ambience".
- The romantic portrayal of the 'Promised Land' of Acharya Kriplani Colony emanates a similar earthy romanticism of a utopian existence and acts as an objective correlative to the protagonist's yearning for building a home.

These stereotypes keep coming back in so many partition artworks. The romantic portrayal of the promised land of Acharya Kriplani Colony emanates an earthy romanticism of a utopian existence and it acts as an objective correlative to the protagonist's yearning for the idyllic home. (Refer Slide Time: 20:43)

Acharya Kriplani Colony

- The emphasis on **water** and extensive **land** in the advertisement is remarkable.
- The fixation with **flowing water or building habitat close to a water body** is a leitmotif in refugee testimonials.
- **Jayanti Basu** asks a refugee respondent what he remembered most when thinking about the past. "I remember water. Everywhere there was water" (*Reconstructing Bengal Partition*).
- Another respondent - "It was a land of rivulets and lakes. The jute plants were tall as full-grown men, but water flowed above them."
- The nostalgic *idée fixe* with water would after Jungian psychoanalysis be related to "birth ideations, as water is the archetype of birth." It signifies abundance and prosperity.

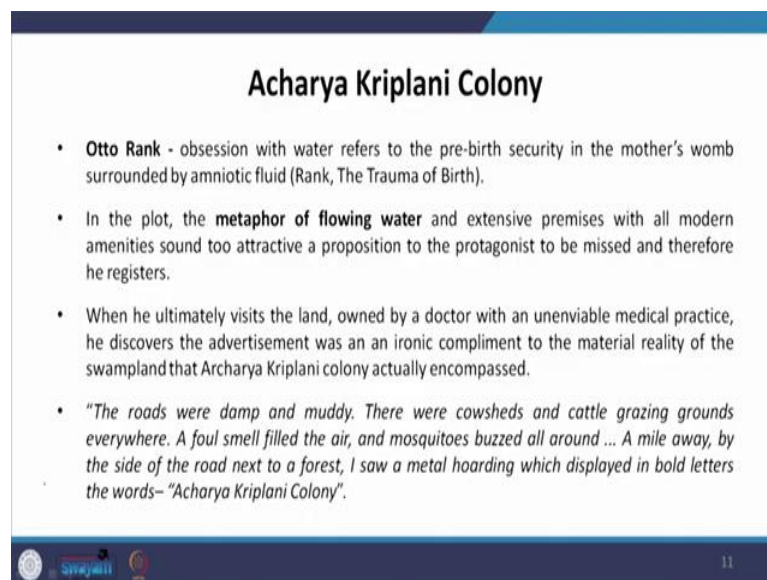
The emphasis on water and extensive land in this advertisement is remarkable.

So, the obsession with flowing water or building habitat close to a water body is a leitmotif in refugee testimonials. In this regard, Jayanti Basu asks a refugee respondent what he remembered most when thinking about the past, and the response was that "I remember water everywhere, there was water"; another respondent says that it was a land

of rivulets and lakes. The jute plants were tall as full grown men, but water flowed above them.

So, there are many water bodies in East Pakistan and so the balmy and mild climate is also something that people would recall when thinking of their lives back in East Bengal. The nostalgic *idée fixe* with water could be understood through the lens of Jungian psychoanalysis and so, according to Carl Jung, water can be related with birth ideations as water is the archetype of birth. It signifies abundance and prosperity.

Like I have already said, East Pakistan or East Bengal's lands were extremely fertile at one time. At one point in history, East Bengal would be called the bread basket of India. So, we know how much it could contribute in terms of food crops and even cash crops. (Refer Slide Time: 22:32)



Acharya Kriplani Colony

- **Otto Rank** - obsession with water refers to the pre-birth security in the mother's womb surrounded by amniotic fluid (Rank, The Trauma of Birth).
- In the plot, the **metaphor of flowing water** and extensive premises with all modern amenities sound too attractive a proposition to the protagonist to be missed and therefore he registers.
- When he ultimately visits the land, owned by a doctor with an unenviable medical practice, he discovers the advertisement was an an ironic compliment to the material reality of the swampland that Archarya Kriplani colony actually encompassed.
- *"The roads were damp and muddy. There were cowsheds and cattle grazing grounds everywhere. A foul smell filled the air, and mosquitoes buzzed all around ... A mile away, by the side of the road next to a forest, I saw a metal hoarding which displayed in bold letters the words- "Acharya Kriplani Colony".*

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According to Otto Rank, obsession with water refers to the pre-birth security, the state of *jouissance*, of being united with the mother's body, of being protected and sheltered inside the mother's womb and surrounded by amniotic fluid. So, the metaphor of flowing water and extensive premises coupled with modern amenities that a city could offer sound as extremely attractive; extremely attractive a prospect for the protagonist to overlook.

And so, such an advertisement is targeting the refugees, who seek the sense of the traditional or conventional sense of protection that the ancestral home would offer, coupled with the job security or the sense of staying close to the city. So, this

advertisement actually exploits the utopian desire that is there in the hearts of many refugees....that is in the hearts of most of the refugees.

However, contrary to expectations when the protagonist ultimately visits the land, he discovers that the advertisement was an ironic complement to the material reality; what the land actually stands for. It is basically a swamp land that Acharya Kriplani Colony actually encompassed, and this is how the author describes the colony.

The roads were damp and muddy; there were cow-sheds and cattle-grazing grounds everywhere. The foul smell filled the air and mosquitoes buzzed all around. A mile away by the side of the road next to a forest, I saw a metal hoarding which displayed in bold letters the words 'Acharya Kriplani Colony.'

It is also a kind of dark humor emanating through this description. We can see what is the result of wanting to reconstruct something that is lost, something that cannot be revived; what is the outcome of wanting to transpose the fertile land, the open panoramic landscape and then transpose and overlap it with the cityscape.

The result is actually the expectations standing on their head. So, the protagonist realizes how the metaphorical panorama of the advertisement, so many attractive words used are ironically standing in juxtaposition with the material reality of the actual swamp land, which is extremely unattractive. (Refer Slide Time: 25:56)

Acharya Kriplani Colony

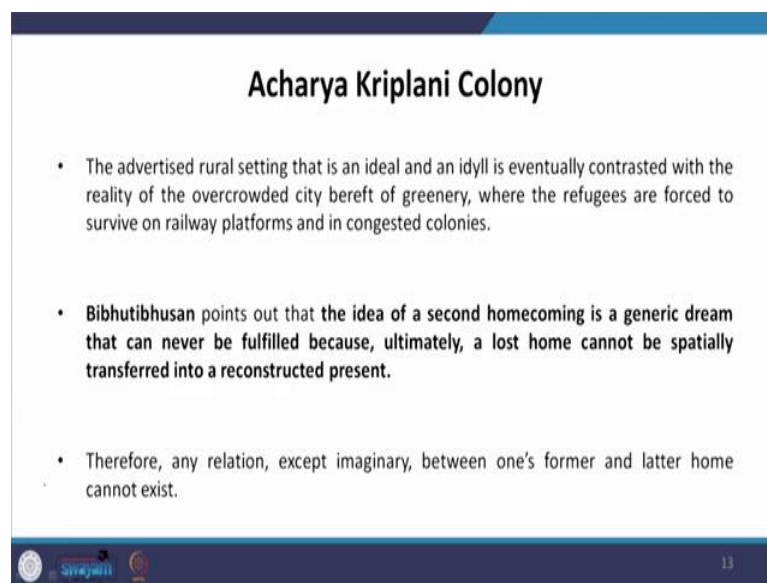
- Struck with amazement, the protagonist realizes how the metaphorical panorama of the advertisement stands in juxtaposition with the material reality of the actual swampland.
- **Bibhutibhusan** captures the **anxiety of refugee** relocation that made them easy prey to exploiters at the time of partition.
- The profiteers exploit the migrant's idealized nostalgic perception of the lost homeland by offering the prospect of a second homecoming to attract their customers.
- The doctor waves a wad of receipts in the narrator's face to show him how profitable the prospect of establishing the colony has been for him.
- It is only the narrator who realizes that the promise of the primordial stability of the past is unachievable in the swampy marshland setting of the colony.

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So, through this story Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay captures the anxiety of refugee relocation and how they would easily fall prey to exploiters at that time. So, the profiteers exploited the migrants' idealized nostalgic perception of the lost homeland, and they would offer the prospect of second home-coming in order to attract the newcomers.

So, here in this case the landowner, the doctor waves some receipts on the narrator's face to show him how profitable the prospect of resettling in this land is and how profitable the prospect of establishing the colony has been for him. Through this story, the protagonist's journey and the expectation followed by the material reality which never meet at any point - the expectation and the material reality never meet at any point.

...actually drives home the idea that the promise of primordial stability and security of the past can never be or can hardly be achieved. So, the idea of second homecoming is next to impossible. It was a generic dream for the refugees. (Refer Slide Time: 27:47)



Acharya Kriplani Colony

- The advertised rural setting that is an ideal and an idyll is eventually contrasted with the reality of the overcrowded city bereft of greenery, where the refugees are forced to survive on railway platforms and in congested colonies.
- **Bibhutibhusan** points out that **the idea of a second homecoming is a generic dream that can never be fulfilled because, ultimately, a lost home cannot be spatially transferred into a reconstructed present.**
- Therefore, any relation, except imaginary, between one's former and latter home cannot exist.

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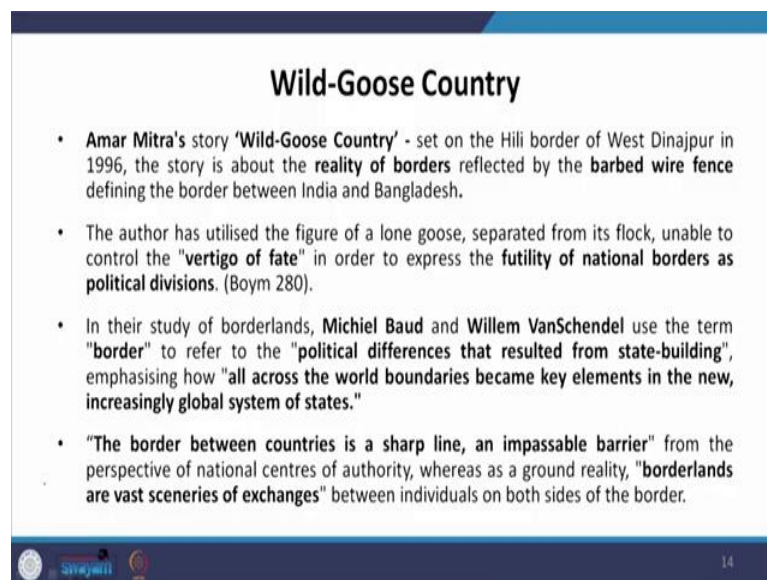
But it can never be fulfilled because ultimately a lost home cannot be transposed and transferred, cannot be transferred and reconstructed, and grafted basically in the present scenario. So, any relation except an imaginary or conjured one between the former situation and the current position cannot exist.

There is a kind of gap which defines a fractured identity from being a well established individual who have, who boasted a proper foothold in an existing land to someone that has suddenly become a refugee and who wants to refurbish that status. This gap is

actually examined by authors through tragic tone, through dark comedy and satire as well as through voicing out the displaced person's sense of indignation and anger.

Next, we are going to talk about Amar Mitra's story 'Wild-Goose Country,' which is set on the Hili border of West Dinajpur in 1996 and its talking about the reality of borders as reflected by the barbed wire fence, which defines the demarcated area of India and Bangladesh.

So, the author has utilised this symbol of the lone goose, which is separated from its flock, and this goose the lone goose flying apart from its flock cannot control the vertigo of fate. And so, the story in a way is a commentary on the futility of national borders and what political divisions have done to the quality of human lives, the quality of human existence. (Refer Slide Time: 30:14)



Wild-Goose Country

- **Amar Mitra's story 'Wild-Goose Country'** - set on the Hili border of West Dinajpur in 1996, the story is about the **reality of borders** reflected by the **barbed wire fence** defining the border between India and Bangladesh.
- The author has utilised the figure of a lone goose, separated from its flock, unable to control the **"vertigo of fate"** in order to express the **futility of national borders as political divisions**. (Boym 280).
- In their study of borderlands, **Michiel Baud** and **Willem VanSchendel** use the term **"border"** to refer to the **"political differences that resulted from state-building"**, emphasising how **"all across the world boundaries became key elements in the new, increasingly global system of states."**
- **"The border between countries is a sharp line, an impassable barrier"** from the perspective of national centres of authority, whereas as a ground reality, **"borderlands are vast sceneries of exchanges"** between individuals on both sides of the border.

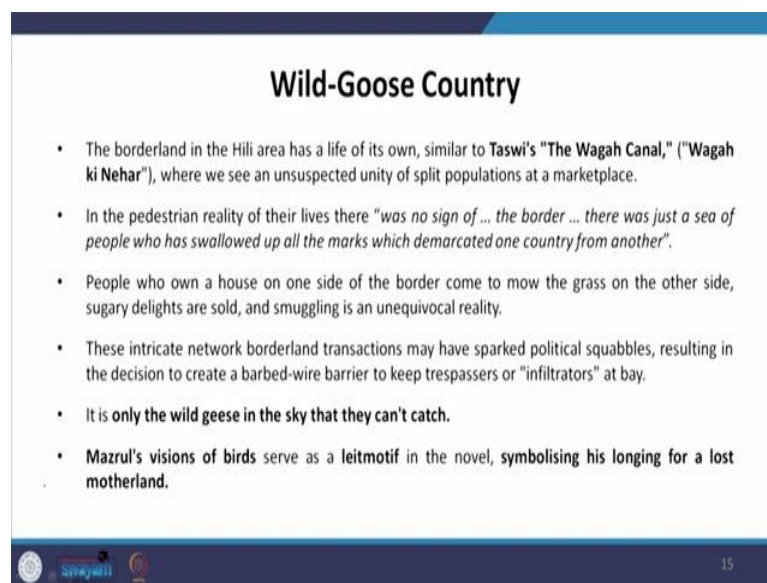
So, in the study of border lands, Michael Baud and Willem Van Schendel use the term border to define the political differences which precipitated the partition, and which enabled separate state-building and emphasized how all across the world, boundaries became key elements in the new increasingly global system of states. So, when we talk of barbed wire, we are referring to an impossible barrier, a sharp line from the perspective of the national centers of authority.

So, this border area, this barbed fence is also coupled with surveillance; there are security forces that constantly patrol the area and make sure that the sanctity of the border is indeed maintained in practice. Yet, on the other hand, the ground reality as it

stands tells the reader that borderlines are vast sceneries of exchanges between individuals.

So, the borderlands here are similar to Fikr Tauswi's "The Wagah Canal" ("Wagah ki Nehar"), where we see an unsuspected unity of split populations at a marketplace.

I mean it reflects the unsuspected unity of split populations at a marketplace. So, in the pedestrian reality of their lives there was no sign of the border, there was just a sea of people who has swallowed up all the marks, which demarcated one country from another. (Refer Slide Time: 32:06)



Wild-Goose Country

- The borderland in the Hili area has a life of its own, similar to Taswi's "The Wagah Canal," ("Wagah ki Nehar"), where we see an unsuspected unity of split populations at a marketplace.
- In the pedestrian reality of their lives there *"was no sign of ... the border ... there was just a sea of people who has swallowed up all the marks which demarcated one country from another"*.
- People who own a house on one side of the border come to mow the grass on the other side, sugary delights are sold, and smuggling is an unequivocal reality.
- These intricate network borderland transactions may have sparked political squabbles, resulting in the decision to create a barbed-wire barrier to keep trespassers or "infiltrators" at bay.
- It is **only the wild geese in the sky that they can't catch.**
- **Mazrul's visions of birds** serve as a **leitmotif** in the novel, **symbolising his longing for a lost motherland.**

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So, people are shown as coming over to the other side, trading across the barbed wire, and they are buying common goods. Something as common as Zandu balm, which is not available on one side of the border is being traded to the other side, something that is of mundane use, that I mean supports smooth sustenance.

So, the story actually lets us (the reader) to decide whether one could call this as smuggling - even trading some fish for some Zandu balm, if that could be called as illegal or something that enables, that supports smooth human living. So, the intricate network borderland transactions may have sparked political squabbles resulting in the decision to create barbed wire barrier, and in this way identify the infiltrators and keep the infiltrators at bay.

We see that the state functions at one level and yet the ordinary people have their own ways of making life easier, of you know making transactions across border. And what is significant and interesting is that when the trade goes on across the border, in this story the border security force is standing inert and not really resisting the entire process, and it is not...

it is an open secret that everyone knows and because it supports human lives, it is a means of earning for so many poor people, the border security person does not really resist or threaten these people; he is an onlooker to the entire process and here we see him ...here his human dimension is revealed more than his role as a state agent, as a coercive state agent.

So, as a human who understands a fellow human's needs, he passively supports the process. (Refer Slide Time: 35:10)

Wild-Goose Country

- *"On tremulous wings, these flew across from the east towards the north-west".* Subir believes they are warplanes, while Mazarul believes they are geese. The gap in their perspectives point to how they perceive a geopolitical space – as a continuity or an irreconcilable gap.
- **Mazrul resembles the lone goose that had apparently wandered away from its group and was now wobbling across the sky.**
- Mazrul's, Aloka's, and Subir's families have been divided by the Partition.
- Despite the fact that two of Mazrul's uncles fled with their families in 1953, when Mazrul meets **Amal Bhattacharya**, who has stayed in Bangladesh, memories of his family and cousin, his beautiful aunt whose whereabouts are constantly marked by an absence.
- He is desperate for news about them and makes frantic inquiries to Amal, a mutual acquaintance, regarding their location. In order to fulfil his desire to travel across time, he set off on a journey.
- Mazrul grasps the barbed wire that wounds his skin, leaving red spots as proof of his **failed attempt to infiltrate the past and transcend Partition's reality.**

So, in the story, Mazrul's visions of birds serve as a leitmotif in the novel, symbolising his longing for the lost homeland. At one point, Mazrul and Subir the two characters are lying on the terrace and they see.. [the goose] goes on tremulous wings; these birds flew across from the east towards the north-west.

The two characters have their own ways of looking at the [lone] goose. So, Subir believes looking at the geese... So, as the flock flies, Subir believes that they are war planes, whereas Mazrul believes that they are geese. So, there is a kind of optical illusion, a kind of a... like there is a point where vision is not unified or one's perspectives are not unified. Depending on what one believes, one sees; or one sees something based on what one believes.

So, there is a gap in the perspectives... between the perspectives of Subir and Mazrul. So, one might believe, one might look at a geopolitical space in terms of continuity, whereas the other sees it in terms of an irreconcilable gap. So, Mazrul himself could be seen as the lone goose that had apparently wandered away from the group and so that lone goose is wobbling across the sky.

And then there is a mention of Amal Bhattacharya, who is a minority in Bangladesh who stayed back and so, Mazrul used to know his family and cousin and there is the mention of a very beautiful aunt, whose whereabouts throughout the story are constantly marked by an absence. And everyone talks about the aunt and the discussion keeps coming back, but no one knows her whereabouts; she is constantly absent. Who is this aunt?

The absent aunt could be seen as a symbol of the unified Bengal or the unified motherland; it could be the unified India which is imagined as very beautiful mother-like figure for everyone, but no one knows where that mother has gone or the mother-like figure has disappeared. So, everyone is in search of this old woman.

Mazrul grasps the barbed wire that wounds his skin, and it leaves red spots as a proof of his failed attempt to infiltrate the past and transcend partition's reality. (Refer Slide Time: 38:28)

Wild-Goose Country

- As Aloka, Subir, and Amal struggle to free him from the wire, they realise that despite the flair of nostalgia, **reconstructing a long-forgotten house is impossible.**
- These folks have been trapped and their identities have been altered by the boundary.
- Mazrul, with his hypertrophied sense of the past, is left trailing in disenchantment, like the flock of wild geese who have flown away to oblivion, leaving behind the lone straggling goose.
- He refuses to cross the border, which has already eliminated the option of a return home. He could migrate to the other side as an Indian citizen and return to be identified as a fugitive or outsider. In the end, he sees that Partition is a break in one's destiny, depicted by barbed wires ripping through one's flesh.

It is also the fact that a partition has decided one's destiny, it is a break in one's destiny and rebuilding of one's destiny, which cannot be transgressed, which cannot be overcome.

And so the wounds of partition are depicted through the barbed wires ripping through Mazrul's flesh. He is hypertrophic and left trailing in disenchantment like the flock of wild geese that flies away in an oblivion, and it leaves one straggling goose behind, right. Reconstructing from both the stories what we get is that... reconstructing the long forgotten house or home, the home that one has left behind and journeyed to a point of no return -- getting back that home is impossible.

So, the folks, the people, the sufferers of partition which are the common people, are trapped; they are trapped and ruled kind of... they are trapped and their destiny is shaped by some higher authority, and their identities are etched on them from above. An arbitrary boundary actually determines where they belong. With this, I am going to stop today's lecture and let us meet again for another round of discussions in the next class.

Thank you.