

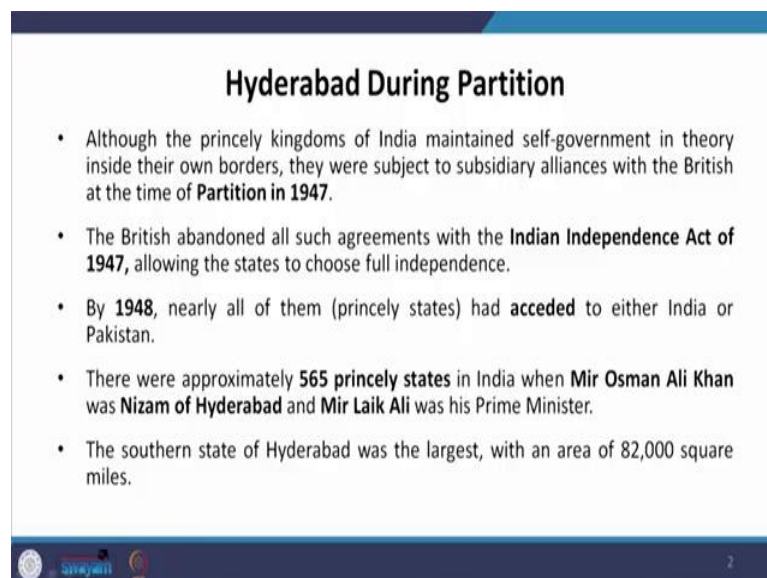
Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema
Prof. Sarbani Banerjee
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture - 51
Displaced People, Abandoned Homes - VI

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India and Print Media and Cinema. Today, we are going to talk about Displaced People, Abandoned Homes through examining the different princely states and their stakes, their position during the partition.


So, we are going to talk about Hyderabad during partition and then, we are going to talk about Assam and we are going to talk about the case of the Sylheti Bengalis. We see that although the princely kingdoms of India maintained self-government inside their own borders, they were also subject to alliances with the British at the time of Partition of 1947.

The British abandoned all agreements with the Indian Independence Act of 1947 which allowed the states to choose full independence; so, their status would also change after the partition. By 1948, nearly all the princely states had acceded; so, they had either become part of India or of Pakistan. There were approximately 565 princely states in India, when Mir Osman Ali Khan was Nizam of Hyderabad and Mir Laik Ali was his Prime Minister. (Refer Slide Time: 01:56)



Hyderabad During Partition


- Although the princely kingdoms of India maintained self-government in theory inside their own borders, they were subject to subsidiary alliances with the British at the time of **Partition in 1947**.
- The British abandoned all such agreements with the **Indian Independence Act of 1947**, allowing the states to choose full independence.
- By **1948**, nearly all of them (princely states) had **acceded** to either India or Pakistan.
- There were approximately **565 princely states** in India when **Mir Osman Ali Khan** was **Nizam of Hyderabad** and **Mir Laik Ali** was his Prime Minister.
- The southern state of Hyderabad was the largest, with an area of 82,000 square miles.

 2

The southern state of Hyderabad was the largest with an area of 82,000 square miles.
(Refer Slide Time: 02:04)

Hyderabad During Partition

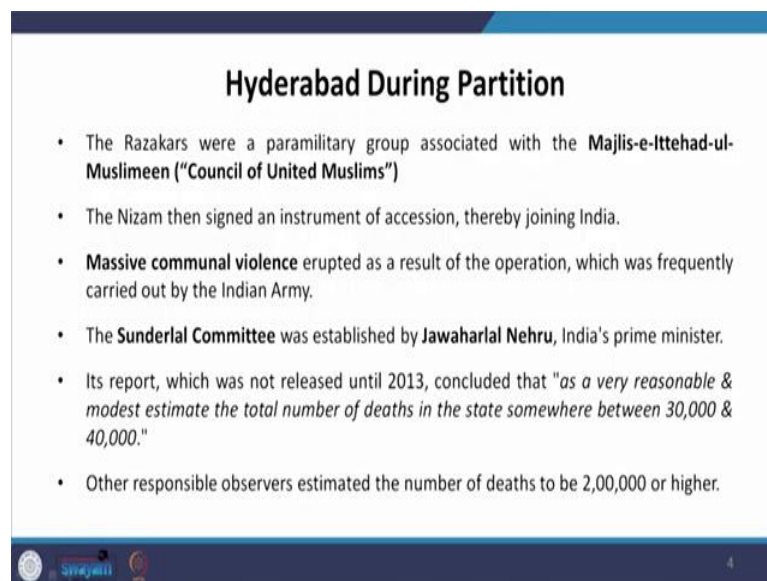
- In 1951, the Muslim Nizam reigned over a feudal empire with a majority Hindu population of 18.6 million people.
- Hyderabad was the only significant exception, as it chose independence and planned to keep its wealth and influence by relying on an irregular army.
- The Nizam was also afflicted by the **Telangana revolt**, which he was unable to quell.
- Hyderabad and the Dominion of India signed a standstill agreement in **November 1947**, which kept all prior agreements in place, except for the stationing of Indian soldiers in the state.
- Fearing the establishment of a Communist state in Hyderabad and the rise of militant **Razakars**, India invaded the state in **September 1948** following a crippling economic blockade.

 3

In Hyderabad during 1941, the Muslim Nizam reigned over a feudal empire with a majority Hindu population of 18.6 million people approximately. So, Hyderabad was an exceptional chapter in Indian history, as it chose independence and planned to keep its wealth and influence by maintaining an irregular army.

The Nizam at that time was also afflicted by the Telangana revolt, which he was not being able to quell. Hyderabad and the dominion of India signed a standstill agreement in November 1947, keeping all prior agreements in place, except for the stationing of Indian soldiers in the state.

We see, however, that India invades the state of Hyderabad in September 1948 following a crippling economic blockade. There is a fear that...there is a fear by the Indian government that Hyderabad might announce itself as a communist state and there might be rise of the Razakars; so, with all these apprehensions, India invaded Hyderabad. (Refer Slide Time: 03:41)



Hyderabad During Partition

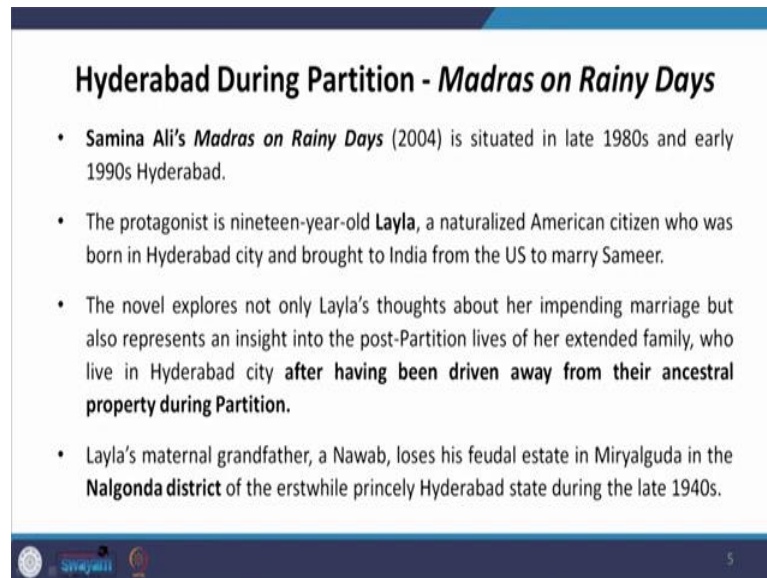
- The Razakars were a paramilitary group associated with the **Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen** ("Council of United Muslims")
- The Nizam then signed an instrument of accession, thereby joining India.
- **Massive communal violence** erupted as a result of the operation, which was frequently carried out by the Indian Army.
- The **Sunderlal Committee** was established by **Jawaharlal Nehru**, India's prime minister.
- Its report, which was not released until 2013, concluded that "*as a very reasonable & modest estimate the total number of deaths in the state somewhere between 30,000 & 40,000.*"
- Other responsible observers estimated the number of deaths to be 2,00,000 or higher.

4

The Razakars were a paramilitary group associated with the Majlis-e-Ittehad-UI-Muslimeen or Council of United Muslims, and thereby and thereafter, the Nizam joined India, he signed accession with India and joined the dominion of India. During this blockade and invasion, massive communal violence had erupted as a result of this operation.

And it was frequently carried out by the Indian army, not much of which has been formally/ officially recorded, or it has remained an under-discussed chapter in Indian

history. The Sunderlal Committee was established by Jawaharlal Nehru and according to the Sunderlal Committee Report which was not released until 2013, the conclusion was that as a very reasonable and modest estimate the total number of deaths in the state lay somewhere between 30000 and 40000. (Refer Slide Time: 04:56)



Hyderabad During Partition - *Madras on Rainy Days*

- **Samina Ali's *Madras on Rainy Days*** (2004) is situated in late 1980s and early 1990s Hyderabad.
- The protagonist is nineteen-year-old **Layla**, a naturalized American citizen who was born in Hyderabad city and brought to India from the US to marry Sameer.
- The novel explores not only Layla's thoughts about her impending marriage but also represents an insight into the post-Partition lives of her extended family, who live in Hyderabad city **after having been driven away from their ancestral property during Partition**.
- Layla's maternal grandfather, a Nawab, loses his feudal estate in Miryalguda in the **Nalgonda district** of the erstwhile princely Hyderabad state during the late 1940s.

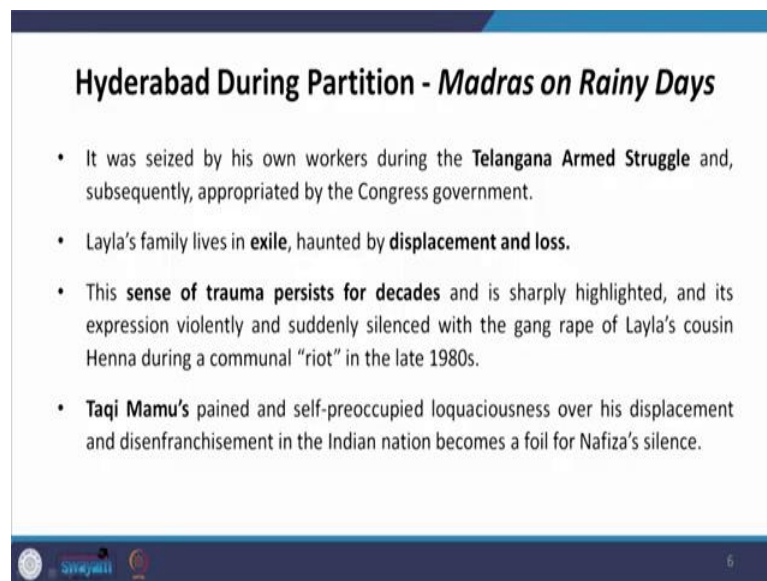
5

Against this background, we could read a number of artworks that refer to the case of Hyderabad, the situation of Hyderabad during the partition. One such work is Samina Ali's *Madras on Rainy Days*. It is situated in the late 1980's and 1990's, early 1990's Hyderabad. The protagonist is nineteen-year-old Layla, who is a naturalized American citizen and who is born in the Hyderabad city and brought to India from the US to marry a suitor called Sameer.

The story represents an insight into the post-partition lives in Hyderabad. She is narrating about her extended family who live in the Hyderabad city, after having been driven away from their ancestral property during partition. So, Layla's maternal grandfather was... he was a Nawab. Layla's maternal grandfather was a Nawab and he loses his feudal estate in Miryalguda in Nalgonda district. He loses his estate in Miryalguda in the Nalgonda district of Hyderabad during the late 1940's.

So, the story depicts that the property was seized by his own workers during the Telangana armed struggle, and later on it was appropriated by the Congress government. So, Layla's family basically is narrated or Layla's family is depicted as living in exile and

it is haunted... the family members are haunted by displacement and a sense of loss.
(Refer Slide Time: 06:46)



Hyderabad During Partition - Madras on Rainy Days

- It was seized by his own workers during the **Telangana Armed Struggle** and, subsequently, appropriated by the Congress government.
- Layla's family lives in **exile**, haunted by **displacement and loss**.
- This **sense of trauma persists for decades** and is sharply highlighted, and its expression violently and suddenly silenced with the gang rape of Layla's cousin Henna during a communal "riot" in the late 1980s.
- **Taqi Mamu's** pained and self-preoccupied loquaciousness over his displacement and disenfranchisement in the Indian nation becomes a foil for Nafiza's silence.

6

The sense of trauma persists decades after the incident, and it is sharply highlighted and the pain or the agony reaches its zenith and it is expressed violently. It is expressed... the pain reaches its zenith and it is expressed with the gang rape of Layla's cousin Henna during a communal riot in the late 1980's.

We see that the articulation of trauma or the expression of trauma is heightened with the rape of Layla's cousin during the communal riot. We have the figure of...so, we have two characters that are dealing with trauma and with pain in two different ways.

One is the figure of Taqi Mamu, who is pained and there is a self-preoccupied loquaciousness/ verbosity and too many words about his displacement and disenfranchisement in the Indian nation; and that is opposed to Nafiza's silence.

So, both of them have witnessed the seizure of the estate, but Taqi Mamu angrily airs his views whenever he can, whereas Nafiza chooses not to. And this is a stark contrast of two characters... between two characters that the reader notes, and this silence could also be ascribed to the class difference.

It also indicates that there is a zone of voluntary silence in personal narratives of partition with respect to the Hyderabad chapter. Not much is talked about this; not many people

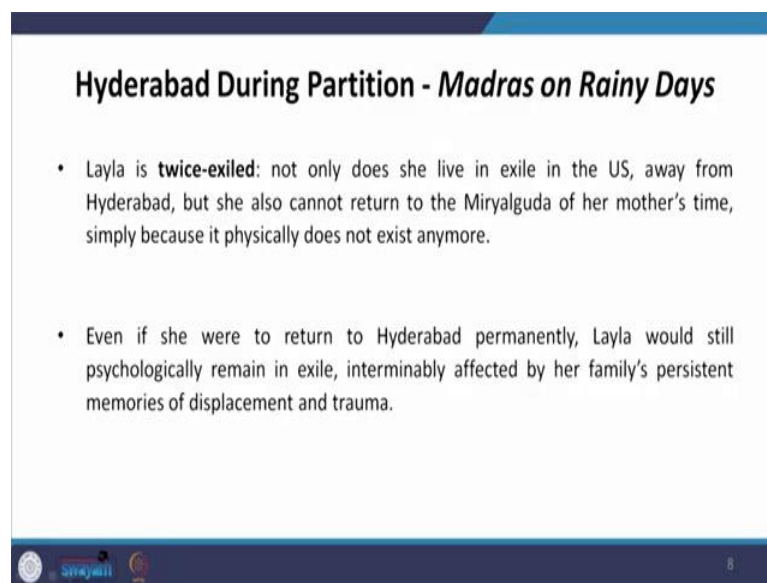
have researched the topic. So, it has remained an under-discussed terrain viz-a-viz partition scholarship. (Refer Slide Time: 09:09)

Hyderabad During Partition - *Madras on Rainy Days*

- Both Nafiza and Taqi Mamu witness the seizure of the estate, but the fact that Taqi Mamu angrily airs his views whenever he can, and Nafiza chooses not to, makes for a stark contrast; her silence marks the class difference.
- It also indicates that there is a zone of voluntary silence in personal narratives of Partition, viz-a-viz the Hyderabad chapter.
- Partition is conditioned by exile from “**the space of identity**”, “**a world that has ceased to exist, that has been violently erased**”, where there now stands a dam. For Layla’s parents’ generation and Uncle Taqi (*mamu*), Partition refers to an absence, an irreconcilable vacuum.




So, partition is conditioned by exile from the space of identity, a world that ceased to exist, that has been violently erased. So, for Layla's parents' generation, and for uncle Taqi or Taqi Mamu partition is understood in terms of absence, a kind of irreconcilable vacuum.

We see that for a woman in the diaspora such as Layla, it is a two-fold experience of exile. She is at one point I mean at one level, she lives as an exile in the US away from Hyderabad. And at the other, she also cannot return to the Miryalguda of her mother's time because it physically does not exist anywhere on the world's map; so, it's only something one can reach through, you know, a psychic travel. (Refer Slide Time: 10:24)

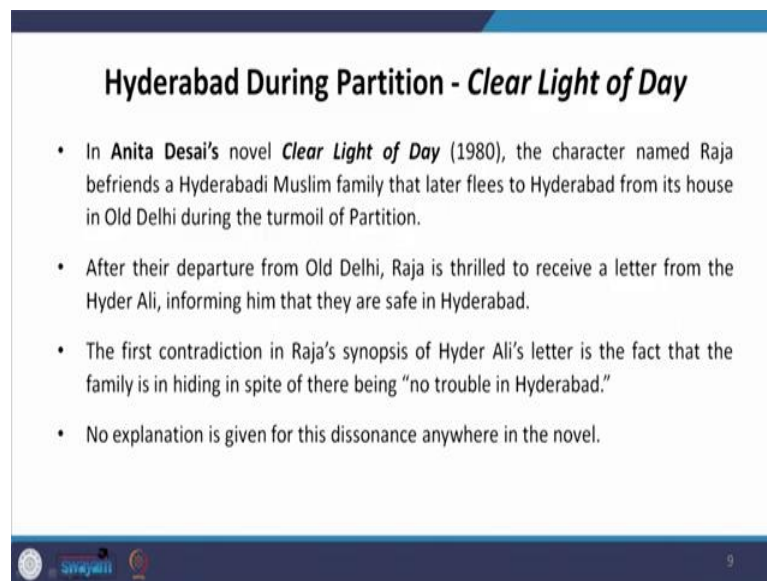


Hyderabad During Partition - Madras on Rainy Days

- Layla is **twice-exiled**: not only does she live in exile in the US, away from Hyderabad, but she also cannot return to the Miryalguda of her mother's time, simply because it physically does not exist anymore.
- Even if she were to return to Hyderabad permanently, Layla would still psychologically remain in exile, interminably affected by her family's persistent memories of displacement and trauma.




   8

So, even if she were to return to Hyderabad permanently, Layla would still psychologically remain in her exile. (Refer Slide Time: 10:37)



Hyderabad During Partition - *Clear Light of Day*

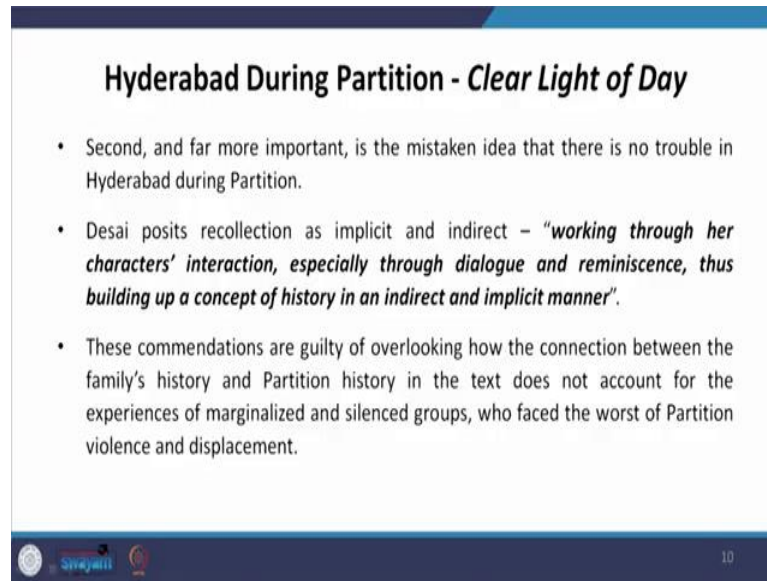
- In Anita Desai's novel *Clear Light of Day* (1980), the character named Raja befriends a Hyderabadi Muslim family that later flees to Hyderabad from its house in Old Delhi during the turmoil of Partition.
- After their departure from Old Delhi, Raja is thrilled to receive a letter from the Hyder Ali, informing him that they are safe in Hyderabad.
- The first contradiction in Raja's synopsis of Hyder Ali's letter is the fact that the family is in hiding in spite of there being "no trouble in Hyderabad."
- No explanation is given for this dissonance anywhere in the novel.

   9

And so, we see once again in Anita Desai's novel *Clear Light of Day*, the character named Raja. In Anita Desai's novel *Clear Light of the Day*, the character named Raja befriends a Hyderabadi Muslim family, which later flees to Hyderabad from their house in Old Delhi, and Raja later receives a letter from his friend called Hyder-Ali, who informs they are safe in Hyderabad.

We see that there is a contradiction - although Hyder-Ali later says that they are safe and that there is no trouble in Hyderabad, the family is in hiding, this contradiction does not resolve, no explanation is given for this dissonance throughout the novel. throughout Desai's novel. So, it is a mistaken idea that many mainstream writings conceived - that there is or there has been no trouble in Hyderabad during the partition, during the entire event of partition.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:01)

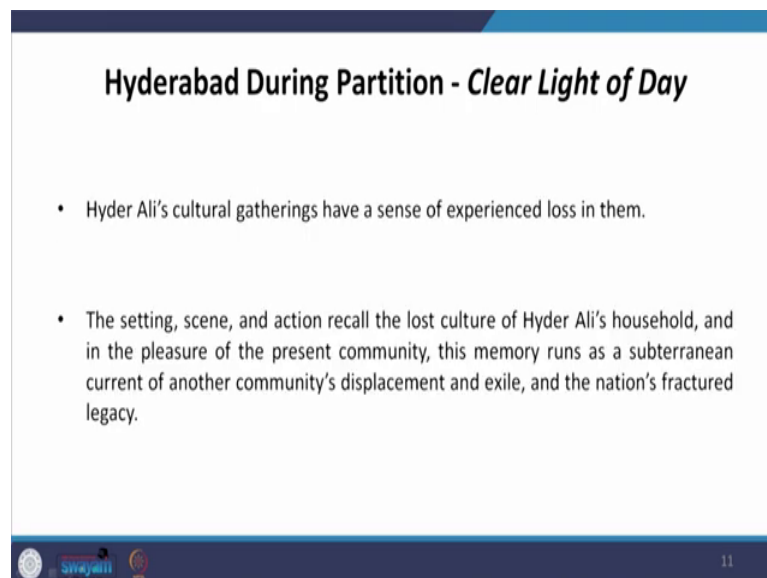


Hyderabad During Partition - Clear Light of Day

- Second, and far more important, is the mistaken idea that there is no trouble in Hyderabad during Partition.
- Desai posits recollection as implicit and indirect – *“working through her characters’ interaction, especially through dialogue and reminiscence, thus building up a concept of history in an indirect and implicit manner”*.
- These commendations are guilty of overlooking how the connection between the family’s history and Partition history in the text does not account for the experiences of marginalized and silenced groups, who faced the worst of Partition violence and displacement.

10

So, Desai posits recollection as implicit and indirect, – “working through her characters’ interaction, especially through dialogue and reminiscence, thus building up a concept of history in an indirect and implicit manner”. These commendations are guilty of overlooking how the connection between the family’s history and Partition history in the text does not account for the experiences of marginalized and silenced groups, who faced the worst of Partition violence and displacement. (Refer Slide Time: 12:46)



Hyderabad During Partition - Clear Light of Day

- Hyder Ali’s cultural gatherings have a sense of experienced loss in them.
- The setting, scene, and action recall the lost culture of Hyder Ali’s household, and in the pleasure of the present community, this memory runs as a subterranean current of another community’s displacement and exile, and the nation’s fractured legacy.

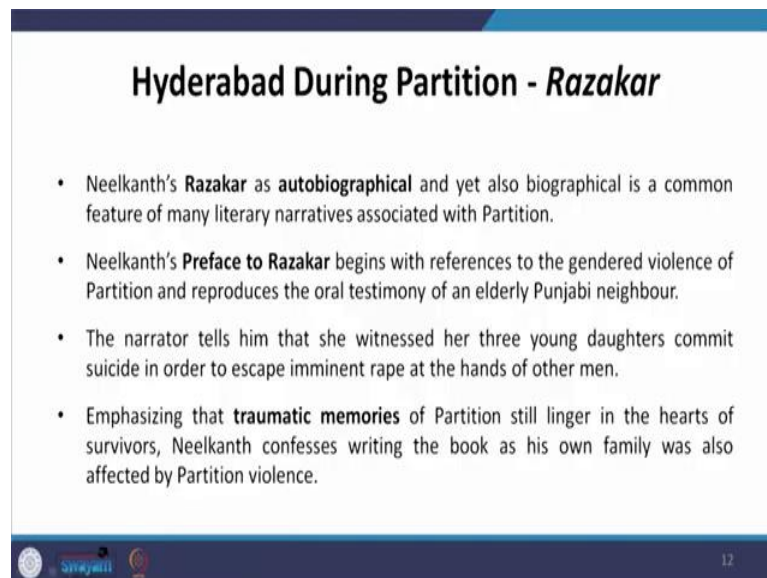
11

Hyder-Ali's cultural gatherings have a sense of experienced loss in them. And so, all the settings, the scenes and actions recall the lost culture of Hyder Ali's household. This

memory runs as a subterranean current, as an underlying, you know...it runs as a subterranean current of another community's displacement and exile.

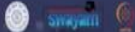
So, through the evacuee's travel to Hyderabad through their lost culture, lost era, what the authors are trying to look at or an author like Desai is trying to say or refer to is the nation's.... an author like Anita Desai is referring to the nation's fractured legacy.

So, we see that Hyderabad is not directly mentioned, but the lost culture, the lost customs you know, are part of this underlying memory.. the subterranean memory. It shapes the nation's fragmented, fractured legacy. So, we see in Neelkanth's *Razakar* - Neelkanth's *Razakar* is an autobiographical work; it could also be seen as biographical, which is a common feature of many literary narratives associated with partition. (Refer Slide Time: 14:45)



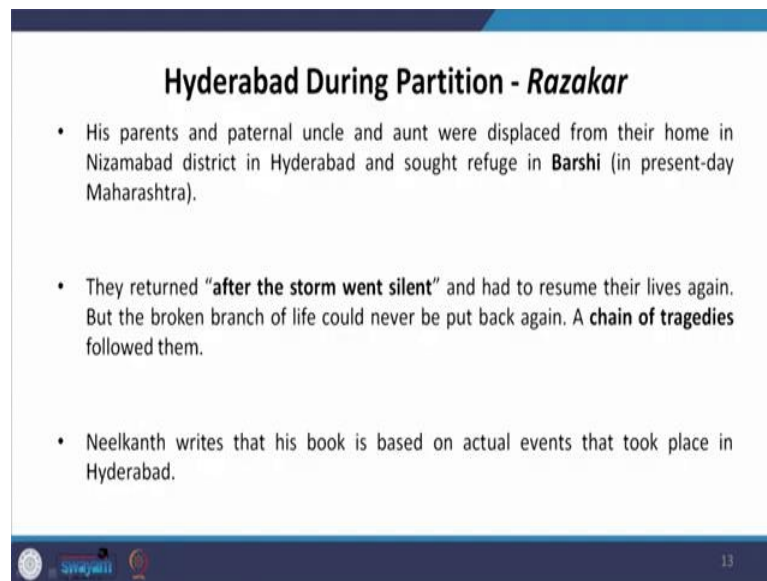
Hyderabad During Partition - *Razakar*

- Neelkanth's *Razakar* as **autobiographical** and yet also biographical is a common feature of many literary narratives associated with Partition.
- Neelkanth's **Preface to *Razakar*** begins with references to the gendered violence of Partition and reproduces the oral testimony of an elderly Punjabi neighbour.
- The narrator tells him that she witnessed her three young daughters commit suicide in order to escape imminent rape at the hands of other men.
- Emphasizing that **traumatic memories** of Partition still linger in the hearts of survivors, Neelkanth confesses writing the book as his own family was also affected by Partition violence.

 12

So, Neelkanth's preface to *Razakar* begins with references to the gendered violence of partition, and it reproduces the oral testimony of an elderly Punjabi neighbour. The narrator tells him that she witnessed...her three young daughters committed suicide in order to escape imminent rape at the hands of other men.

So, traumatic memories of partitions still linger in the hearts of survivors, and Neelkanth confesses writing the book as a way of you know expressing what his own family has gone through; how his own family was also affected by the partition violence. (Refer Slide Time: 15:34)

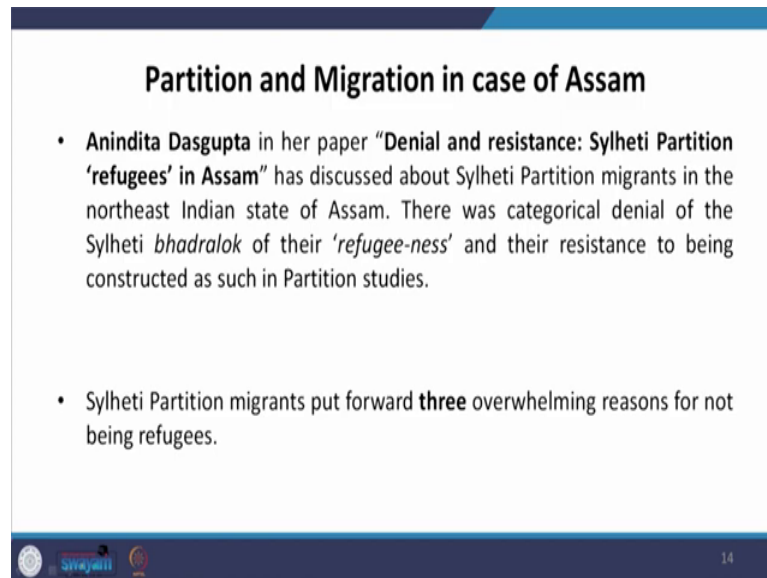


Hyderabad During Partition - *Razakar*

- His parents and paternal uncle and aunt were displaced from their home in Nizamabad district in Hyderabad and sought refuge in **Barshi** (in present-day Maharashtra).
- They returned "**after the storm went silent**" and had to resume their lives again. But the broken branch of life could never be put back again. A **chain of tragedies** followed them.
- Neelkanth writes that his book is based on actual events that took place in Hyderabad.


Sri Jayanti 13

So, his parents, his paternal uncle and aunt were displaced from their home in Nizamabad district and they sought refuge in Barshi, which is in present day Maharashtra. And so, they returned after the storm, after the storm went silent and they had to resume their lives again. And so, Neelkanth writes that his book is based on actual events that took place in Hyderabad. (Refer Slide Time: 16:03)



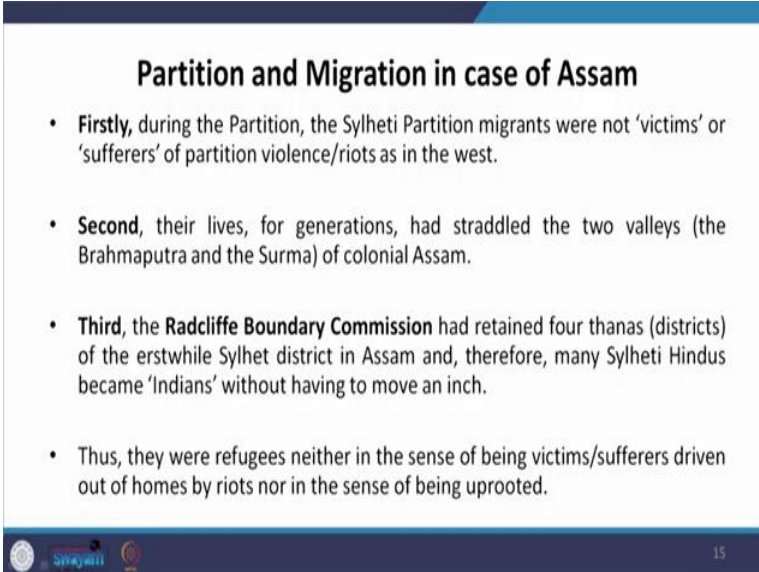
Partition and Migration in case of Assam

- Anindita Dasgupta in her paper “Denial and resistance: Sylheti Partition ‘refugees’ in Assam” has discussed about Sylheti Partition migrants in the northeast Indian state of Assam. There was categorical denial of the Sylheti *bhadralok* of their ‘refugee-ness’ and their resistance to being constructed as such in Partition studies.
- Sylheti Partition migrants put forward **three** overwhelming reasons for not being refugees.

 14

From here on, we are going to move on to our discussion.. from here on we are going to move on to our discussion on the case of Assam. Anindita Dasgupta has an important essay in this regard. She discusses about the Sylheti partition migrants in the northeastern Indian state of Assam.

There has been a categorical denial of the Sylheti Bhadrakalok's state of refugeeness by themselves and there is a resistance to being constructed as such, in the partition studies. So, there are three overwhelming reasons why the Sylheti populace may not be considered as refugees. Firstly, the Sylheti partition migrants were not victims or sufferers in terms of violent riots if we compare with the west. (Refer Slide Time: 17:06)



Partition and Migration in case of Assam

- **Firstly**, during the Partition, the Sylheti Partition migrants were not 'victims' or 'sufferers' of partition violence/riots as in the west.
- **Second**, their lives, for generations, had straddled the two valleys (the Brahmaputra and the Surma) of colonial Assam.
- **Third**, the **Radcliffe Boundary Commission** had retained four thanas (districts) of the erstwhile Sylhet district in Assam and, therefore, many Sylheti Hindus became 'Indians' without having to move an inch.
- Thus, they were refugees neither in the sense of being victims/sufferers driven out of homes by riots nor in the sense of being uprooted.

15

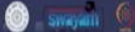
Second, their lives had straddled two valleys - the Brahmaputra and the Surma region of colonial Assam - and they had lived in these two valleys for generations. Thirdly, the Radcliffe Boundary Commission had retained four thanas or districts of the erstwhile Sylhet district in Assam and therefore, many Sylheti Hindus had become part of India, part of you know the Indian population or the nation-state of India without having to move anywhere.

So, they were not refugees in the sense of being victims or sufferers that were driven out of homes, and they do not subscribe to the sense of being or feeling uprooted. For most Sylheti Bhadrakalok, partition refers to or partition would mean a loss of landed property in Sylhet or the loss of the Desher Bari, the house back in one's Desh, leaving intact their

landed property and job in other areas of Assam which remained within India; so, they lost something, but they also retained other assets. (Refer Slide Time: 18:34)

Partition and Migration in case of Assam

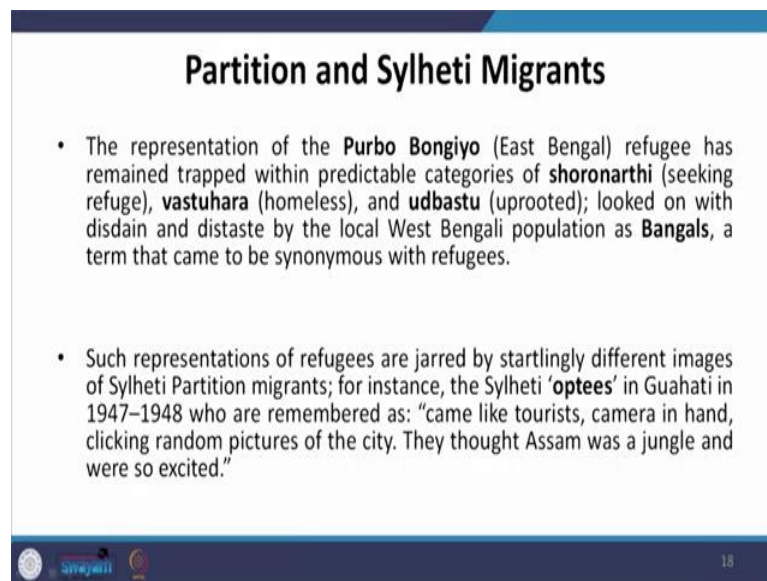
- For most **Sylheti *bhadralok***, Partition meant a loss of landed property in Sylhet or the *desh* ***baari***, leaving intact their landed property and job in the other areas of Assam that remained within India. What stood out clearly in Sylheti *bhadralok* narratives was the proposition that there was a class of people who 'did not have to flee for fear of life'.
- They did not see themselves as passive objects of history swept away by forces beyond their control, but as active agents and participants in the process of decision-making that, they insisted, was their own.
- For the **Sylheti *bhadralok***, there was shame in being identified as refugee; it meant a slur on the **social status** of his family and reflected badly on their own economic position.

 16

What stood out clearly in these people's narratives was the proposition that they did not have to flee for fear of life. So, they do not see themselves really as the refugees, who were rendered the status of passive objects of history, swept away by external determinants beyond their control. Rather, they claim themselves as active agents and participants in the process of decision-making, which were their own.

So, for the Sylheti Bhadrakok, there was this shame of being identified as a refugee. Refugee as a term (as I have already discussed) is largely seen as a slur on one's social status and it reflects badly on one's socio-economic position. So, English educated professionally qualified groups would refrain from calling themselves as refugees; they had requisite educational qualification.

And they would never want to be conflated with the refugees, Bengali refugees, whose popular imagination was you know infesting/ crowding the Sealdah railway station, sometimes living in the station. And they would proudly claim that they had never lived in camps even for a day; their fathers had their own houses in places, such as Shillong and Dibrugarh. (Refer Slide Time: 20:16)



Partition and Sylheti Migrants

- The representation of the **Purbo Bongiyo** (East Bengal) refugee has remained trapped within predictable categories of **shoronartha** (seeking refuge), **vastuhara** (homeless), and **udbastu** (uprooted); looked on with disdain and distaste by the local West Bengali population as **Bangals**, a term that came to be synonymous with refugees.
- Such representations of refugees are jarred by startlingly different images of Sylheti Partition migrants; for instance, the Sylheti '**optees**' in Guahati in 1947–1948 who are remembered as: "came like tourists, camera in hand, clicking random pictures of the city. They thought Assam was a jungle and were so excited."

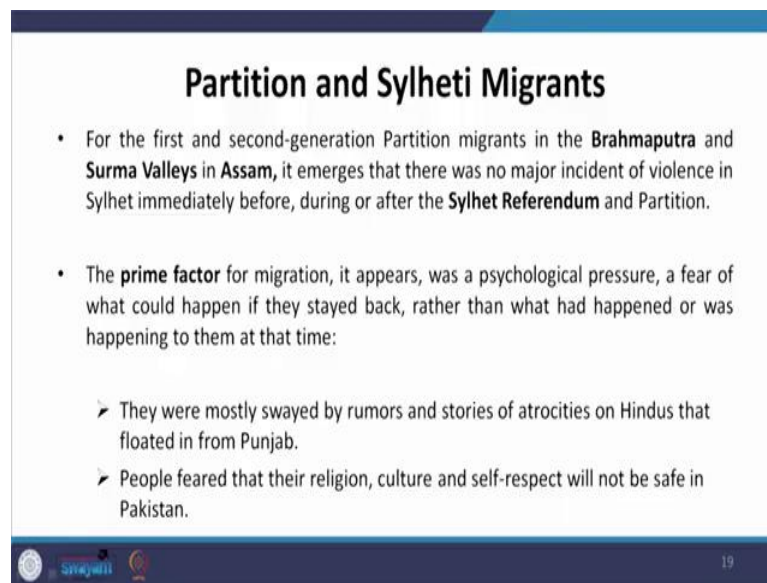
18

So, the representation of the East Bengali refugees has remained trapped within predictable categories of the 'shoronartha', the one seeking refuge, the vastuhara or the homeless and the udbastu who are uprooted. None of these images are invested with some kind of agency; they lack agency. And so, they have also been looked down upon

typically by the West Bengali population and they are called as Bangals - a term which became synonymous with the refugees.

So, these representations of refugee.. these representations of refugees are, you know, they do not match with the Sylheti partition migrants. So, the Sylheti optees.. they are rather optees than refugees; they opted to stay in India. And these optees, Sylheti optees in Guwahati during 1947-1948 are remembered as coming or wandering around like..in the tourist capacity, coming with cameras in their hands, clicking random pictures of the city.

And they thought that Assam was a jungle and they were so excited; so, they exoticized Assam basically, I mean had idea. So, for the first and second generation partition migrants in the Brahmaputra and Surma valleys in Assam, no major incident of violence are recorded during or after... no major incidents of violence recorded immediately before, during or after the Sylhet Referendum and the partition. (Refer Slide Time: 21:55)



Partition and Sylheti Migrants

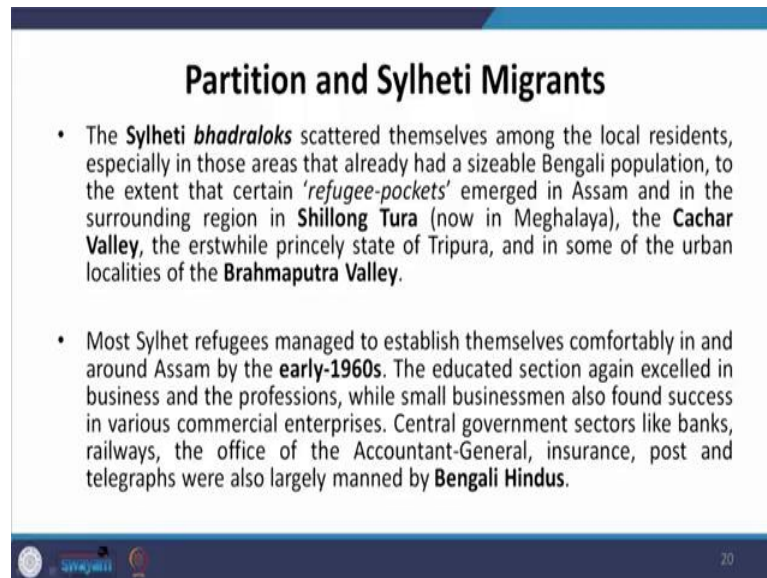
- For the first and second-generation Partition migrants in the **Brahmaputra** and **Surma Valleys** in **Assam**, it emerges that there was no major incident of violence in Sylhet immediately before, during or after the **Sylhet Referendum** and Partition.
- The **prime factor** for migration, it appears, was a psychological pressure, a fear of what could happen if they stayed back, rather than what had happened or was happening to them at that time:
 - They were mostly swayed by rumors and stories of atrocities on Hindus that floated in from Punjab.
 - People feared that their religion, culture and self-respect will not be safe in Pakistan.

19

So, the prime factor for migration was a psychological pressure that something could happen if they stayed back, rather than something that actually happened. So, they were mostly swayed by rumors and stories of atrocities on Hindus that floated or that came from, that floated in from Punjab.




People, the Sylheti Bengalis also feared that their religion, their culture and self-respect cannot be maintained if they were to live in Pakistan. So, the Sylheti Bhadrak scattered

themselves among the local residents. And so, they form certain refugee pockets in Assam and in the surrounding region in Shillong, Tura, the Cachar valley and in Tripura as well as in some of the urban localities of the Brahmaputra valley. (Refer Slide Time: 23:12)



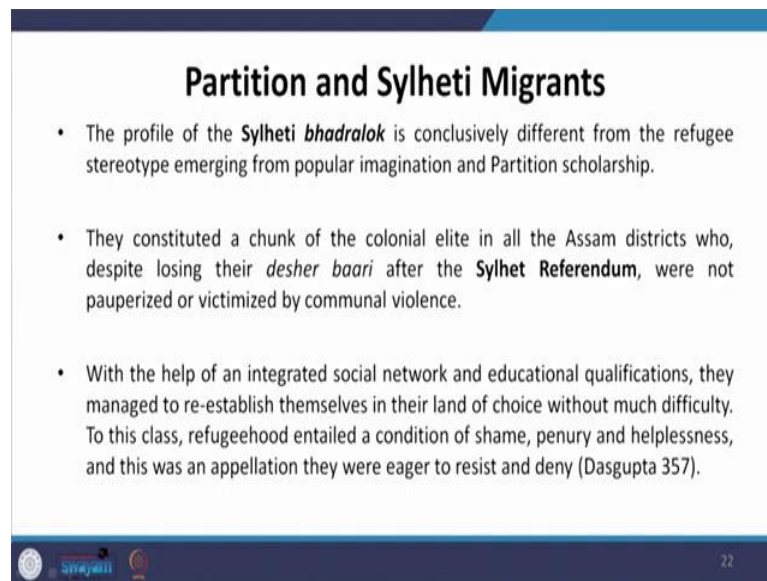
Partition and Sylheti Migrants

- The **Sylheti *bhadraloks*** scattered themselves among the local residents, especially in those areas that already had a sizeable Bengali population, to the extent that certain '*refugee-pockets*' emerged in Assam and in the surrounding region in **Shillong Tura** (now in Meghalaya), the **Cachar Valley**, the erstwhile princely state of Tripura, and in some of the urban localities of the **Brahmaputra Valley**.
- Most Sylhet refugees managed to establish themselves comfortably in and around Assam by the **early-1960s**. The educated section again excelled in business and the professions, while small businessmen also found success in various commercial enterprises. Central government sectors like banks, railways, the office of the Accountant-General, insurance, post and telegraphs were also largely manned by **Bengali Hindus**.

   20



So, they were able to establish themselves comfortably, they had social networking, they had academic or educational qualifications; so they settled well in and around Assam by the early 1960's.

Educated section excelled in business and professions, whereas the small businessmen were successfully you know, they had successfully gained foothold in various commercial enterprises. Central government sectors, such as banks, railways, the office of the accountant general, insurance, post, and telegraphs were also manned by these Bengali Hindus in the Assam region. (Refer Slide Time: 24:06)



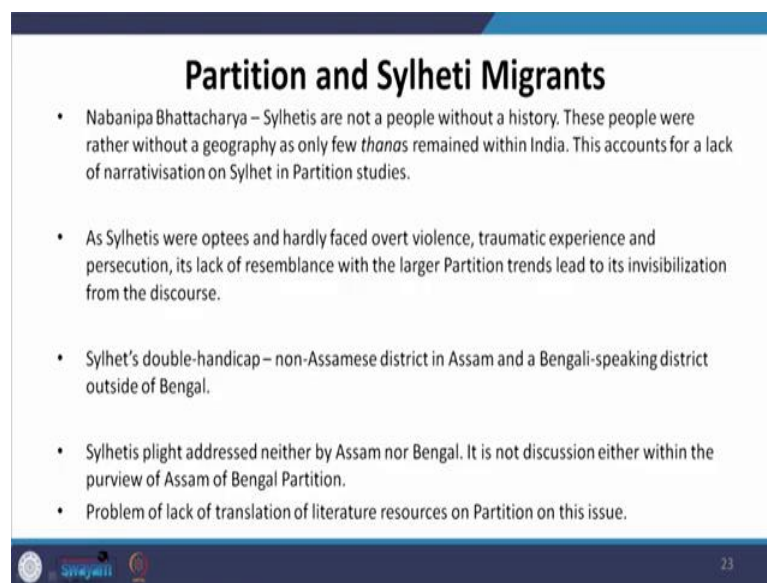
Partition and Sylheti Migrants

- The profile of the *Sylheti bhadralok* is conclusively different from the refugee stereotype emerging from popular imagination and Partition scholarship.
- They constituted a chunk of the colonial elite in all the Assam districts who, despite losing their *desh baari* after the **Sylhet Referendum**, were not pauperized or victimized by communal violence.
- With the help of an integrated social network and educational qualifications, they managed to re-establish themselves in their land of choice without much difficulty. To this class, refugeehood entailed a condition of shame, penury and helplessness, and this was an appellation they were eager to resist and deny (Dasgupta 357).

 Sriyaji  22

So, this is a map that we can see, the profile of the Sylheti Bhadrakalok is therefore very different from the stock image of the Bengali refugee or the stereotype emerging from popular imagination and partition scholarship. They were part of the colonial elite in all the Assam districts, who had lost their ancestral homes after the Sylhet referendum.

However, they were not victimized by communal violence. With the help of social networking and their qualifications, they were able to re-establish themselves in their land of choice without much difficulty. So, they do not carry the same burden of shame and helplessness and they try to, you know, separate their case from that of the larger situations... situation of refugees as we understand today. (Refer Slide Time: 25:12)



Partition and Sylheti Migrants

- Nabanipa Bhattacharya – Sylhetis are not a people without a history. These people were rather without a geography as only few *thanas* remained within India. This accounts for a lack of narrativisation on Sylhet in Partition studies.
- As Sylhetis were optees and hardly faced overt violence, traumatic experience and persecution, its lack of resemblance with the larger Partition trends lead to its invisibilization from the discourse.
- Sylhet's double-handicap – non-Assamese district in Assam and a Bengali-speaking district outside of Bengal.
- Sylhetis plight addressed neither by Assam nor Bengal. It is not discussion either within the purview of Assam or Bengal Partition.
- Problem of lack of translation of literature resources on Partition on this issue.

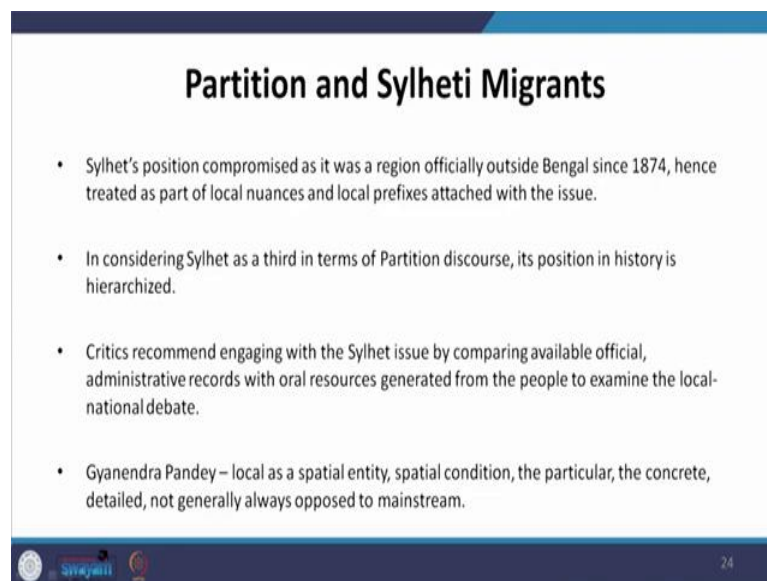
Nabanipa Bhattacharya notes that Sylhetis are, therefore, not a people without a history. These people were rather without a geography, because some of the districts (like I have already mentioned) remained within India. So, this accounts for a lack of narrativization and lack of research or discussion on Sylhet viz-a-viz Partition studies.

As Sylhetis were optees and they hardly faced overt violence as compared to the western border of India where Punjabis faced brutal violence, and you know some extreme forms of violence that the Bengalis followed.... that kind of experience, you know, was largely shared by the Bengalis...the traumatic experience of persecution. This [kind of] loss of life and property are not so much observable among the Sylheti Bengalis. And so, the case of Sylheti Bengalis lack resemblance with the larger partition trends, and this has led to their invisibilization from this entire discourse of partition. They do not share a

similar backdrop or they do not come from similar sensibilities like the Punjabis and the Bengalis or the eastern Bengalis.

So, Sylhet had this double handicap. They were non-Assamese district in Assam and the Bengali-speaking district outside of Bengal; that is what Sylhet was. So, Sylhet had a double handicap. On the one hand, it was a non-Assamese district in Assam and on the other, it was a Bengali-speaking district outside of Bengal.

So, Sylhet's plight was addressed neither entirely by Assam nor by Bengal. It was not discussed either within the purview of Bengal or Assam's partition. And so, there is a lack of...there is also a lack of translation of literary resources, lack of translation of scholarly resources on partition on this particular issue. We see that officially Sylhet is outside Bengal since 1874 and therefore, Sylhet's position remain ...Sylhet's position remains compromised in history and it is treated as part of a local nuance; it is treated as part of local nuances. (Refer Slide Time: 27:54)



Partition and Sylheti Migrants

- Sylhet's position compromised as it was a region officially outside Bengal since 1874, hence treated as part of local nuances and local prefixes attached with the issue.
- In considering Sylhet as a third in terms of Partition discourse, its position in history is hierarchized.
- Critics recommend engaging with the Sylhet issue by comparing available official, administrative records with oral resources generated from the people to examine the local-national debate.
- Gyanendra Pandey – local as a spatial entity, spatial condition, the particular, the concrete, detailed, not generally always opposed to mainstream.

24

And it is, you know, attached with certain local prefixes. The Sylhet issue is attached with certain local prefixes; it is attached with certain local prefixes. And so, Sylhet becomes a third in terms of the partition discourse; its position is quite you know marginal, or it is on the lower side in terms of hierarchy.

We mainly talk about Punjab we also talk about Bengal, but people are hardly aware of such cases as the princely state of Hyderabad and then the case of the Sylheti migrants. And so, the critics and scholars that study in this field recommend engaging with the

Sylhet issue by comparing the available official administrative records with the oral sources that can be generated from the people, as a way of examining or cross-studying the local national debate.

And in this regard, we have to also understand that when we talk of something or a place or a topic in terms of ...in terms of local issue or as a local issue, local is seen... can also be seen... As Gyanendra Pandey asserts or as Gyanendra Pandey states, local can be seen as a special entity. And so, local can also refer to as the particular or the concrete, and it may not always be pitted against the mainstream. So, local does not always mean it is opposed to or you know, torn off from/ a breakaway from the mainstream. With this, I am going to stop today's lecture.

Thank you so much.