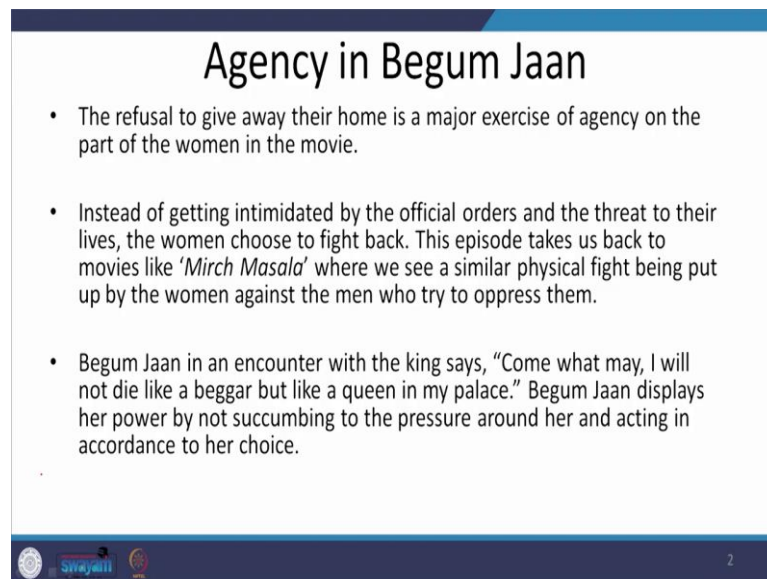


Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema
Prof. Sarbani Banerjee
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture - 57
Refugee Women and Patriarchal Society - VI

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema. We are discussing Refugee Women and Patriarchal Society with regard to our current literary text in hand. So, Srijit Mukherjee's film Begum Jaan - why the brothel is so important for the prostitutes portrayed in the film, what is at stake, we have understood, we have explained this point through the larger discussion of the unattached refugee woman, right, and her conditions in a new nation-state.

So, we understand how... we realize as audience how these women would be disadvantaged, if they did not have a home and if they were reduced to, you know, penury, if they were reduced to beggars. (Refer Slide Time: 01:37)



Agency in Begum Jaan

- The refusal to give away their home is a major exercise of agency on the part of the women in the movie.
- Instead of getting intimidated by the official orders and the threat to their lives, the women choose to fight back. This episode takes us back to movies like *'Mirch Masala'* where we see a similar physical fight being put up by the women against the men who try to oppress them.
- Begum Jaan in an encounter with the king says, "Come what may, I will not die like a beggar but like a queen in my palace." Begum Jaan displays her power by not succumbing to the pressure around her and acting in accordance to her choice.

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So, the refusal to give away their home is a major exercise of agency in the film on the part of the women. Instead of getting intimidated by the official orders and even ignoring the threats to their own lives, these women choose to fight back.

This entire episode reminds us of Ketan Mehta's feature film *Mirch Masala*, where similarly women formed a group to raise a physical fight against the man who was trying to be arbitrary with them and oppress them.

So, Begum Jaan actually has an encounter, an encounter with the king. Begum Jaan says that come what may I will not die like a beggar, but like a queen in my palace. So, these women actually fought till the end and died like a queen; they died like queens. So, Begum Jaan actually displays her power through not succumbing to the pressures coming from without, and through acting in accordance with her own choice, right.

Why I mean we could also understand that our...so in continuation to what I have already said, just to restate the previous arguments, these women have no identity and no agency, no power outside of the brothel. Even if they are living, even if they are living a life of a constant pain and struggle and they are into a profession that no woman can actually like, they still earn in exchange for what they have, they barter their own flesh and that is how they sustain their living.

If they became refugees, they would still... there is no saying that they would not be oppressed by males. Like we see in the case of permanent liability camps, many outsider males would come to these camps because there were no male guardians; because there were no male guardians in permanent liability camps or elderly male guardians in permanent liability camps.

Many a times outsiders would enter such camps with questionable intentions. They would take away refugee girls and many of them could be pimps. They could be pimps and they would force refugee girls into sex trade. So, compared to such situation, women in the brothel are shown as living a better life. They are not at the mercy of anyone, they can earn their.. they earn their own bread through selling their own, through selling their bodies.

And, I mean when we look at the end of the film, we realize... it reminds us of queen Padmini's jauhar right, or even the scene in *Tamas*, where the Sikh women suicide in

groups. The Sikh women commit mass suicide by throwing themselves into the well to prevent being converted or raped, right. So, it is I mean the agency.. what Mukherjee is trying to say here is that the agency for the brothel woman, the prostitute and the 'good woman' is not very different.

I mean, and the question of purity, the question of sacredness is also...or the question of purity or pristinity is also very relative. So, what Mukherjee is trying to get at here is something very important; chastity through committing jauhar, I mean you know, maintaining and preserving the woman's chastity through committing jauhar, through killing themselves, through suiciding is one way of you know protecting feminine sanctity or feminine purity. But, on the other, what these brothel women are doing is no less courageous.

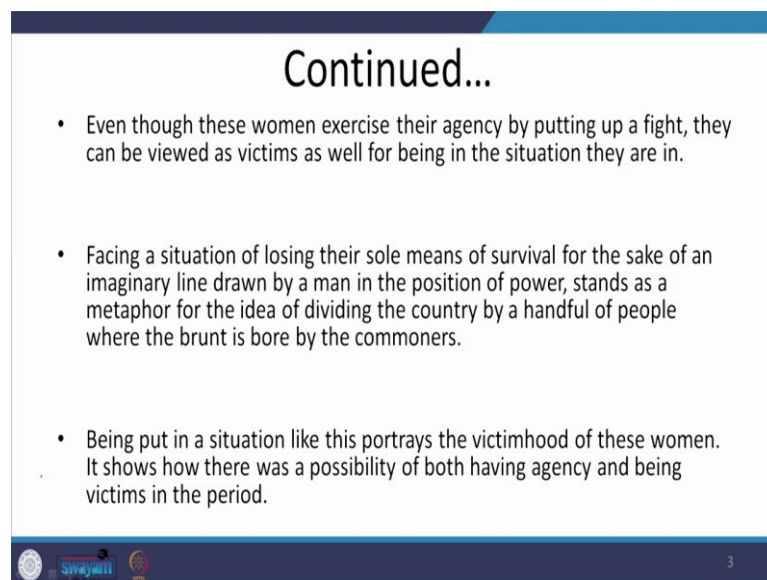
Just because their body, their bodies are public bodies does not mean that they do not have any decisions about their own lives. They cannot be played around with just at the will of any male. And, if we I mean compare the two situations, in Tamas the women that jumped into the well. Later on, one of such you know... one of such martyrs' husband goes around asking, you know, goes around searching for her corpse because he wants to take off the jewelry from the corpse's body, which puts the entire... which actually questions the magnanimity or the grandness of this entire act.

The women presumably killed themselves because they did not want to be [tarnished]. They commit sati, the entire idea of sati, jauhar or you know mass suicide in the face of you know communal riots is based on the conviction that a woman not be touched by anyone other than her husband, her male partner. But this entire idea, this supposedly grand, lofty idea is questioned and subverted in Tamas, where the husband is greedy enough to seek and search for his dead wife's jewellery, right.

So, how grand is such an act as compared to what the prostitutes are doing, is this any less grand? This is something Mukherjee wants to pose through the film. They are trying to save their house, they are trying to save their independence. What is important is that they are, I mean, in an independent country they do not want to live as beggars. They are free women and they do not want to give up this freedom, and I mean in the film we see at one part Begum Jaan herself you know uses the word 'partition' to connote murder.

So, she says that if you try to seize this house, if you try to confiscate or take away this brothel house from us which is our only possession, [we will] partition [you]. And, when she says that [she will partition], she means that she is going to cut the person apart. So, this is also something that, you know,... it deeply reflects on how the feminine sensibility actually understands partition.

Women that are against war, women that are not really literate enough who are earning their living through flesh trade, they do not see partition as something grand. They see it as synonymous with cutting a human apart, cutting a person apart. It is a... partition is a word that Begum Jaan uses to connote murder, right. So, it is used pejoratively. (Refer Slide Time: 10:38)



Continued...

- Even though these women exercise their agency by putting up a fight, they can be viewed as victims as well for being in the situation they are in.
- Facing a situation of losing their sole means of survival for the sake of an imaginary line drawn by a man in the position of power, stands as a metaphor for the idea of dividing the country by a handful of people where the brunt is bore by the commoners.
- Being put in a situation like this portrays the victimhood of these women. It shows how there was a possibility of both having agency and being victims in the period.

Even though these women exercise their agency by putting up their fight, they are...so, we see that these women are victims as well as agents. They are a mishmash of both. Facing a situation of losing their sole means of survival which the brothel is, and that too for an imaginary line drawn by a man who does not belong to India, who does not know about India, who just belongs to a position of power.

And, a man that is far away from their reality, from the epicenter of their reality... the irrationality, the arbitrariness around this entire situation is a metaphor of what happened in the large scale. How the idea of dividing the country arrived, how the idea of dividing the country was passed by a handful people, the brunt was you know faced or borne by

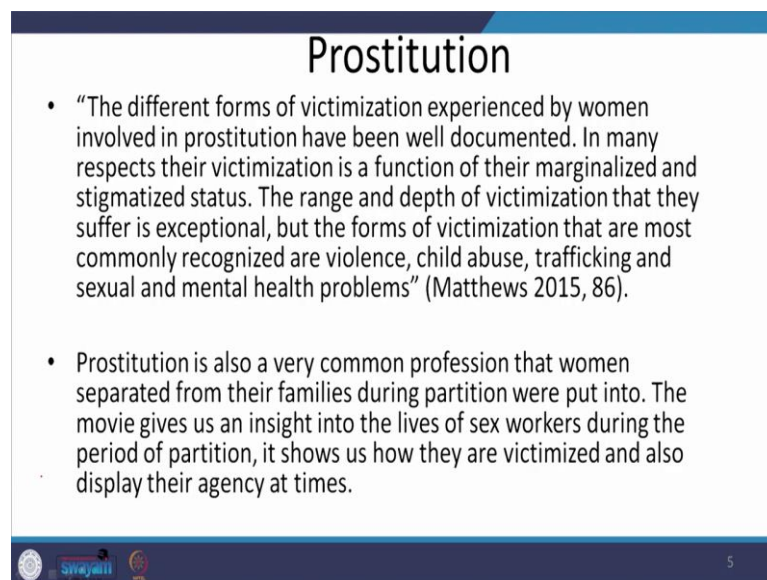
the commoners. So, these women are, like I said, a mishmash of victimage and agency.
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Continued...

- Roger Matthews- “Carol Pateman (1988) and Sheila Jeffreys (1997) argue that engaging in prostitution involves a form of intimacy which is qualitatively different to simply providing one’s labour and is bound up with one’s sense of self and identity... the degree of choice that women and girls exercise when engaging in prostitution is often severely limited. Indeed, most women enter into prostitution when they run out of choices, or are pressured, manipulated or coerced in some way” (Shdaimah and Wiechelt, 2013) (Matthews 2015, 85).

Now, talking about the trade of prostitution, talking about prostitution as a trade, Roger Matthews states... he is referring to Carol Pateman and Sheila Jeffreys, who argue that engaging in prostitution involves a form of intimacy which is qualitatively different to simply providing one's labor and is bound up with one's sense of self, and the identity of the prostitute is constantly unmade. It is the unmaking of the person's identity and self that is involved in the profession.

The degree of choice that women and girls exercise when engaging in prostitution is severely limited. Indeed, most women enter into prostitution when they run out of all other choices or they are pressurized, manipulated or coerced in some way. (Refer Slide Time: 13:10)



Prostitution

- “The different forms of victimization experienced by women involved in prostitution have been well documented. In many respects their victimization is a function of their marginalized and stigmatized status. The range and depth of victimization that they suffer is exceptional, but the forms of victimization that are most commonly recognized are violence, child abuse, trafficking and sexual and mental health problems” (Matthews 2015, 86).
- Prostitution is also a very common profession that women separated from their families during partition were put into. The movie gives us an insight into the lives of sex workers during the period of partition, it shows us how they are victimized and also display their agency at times.

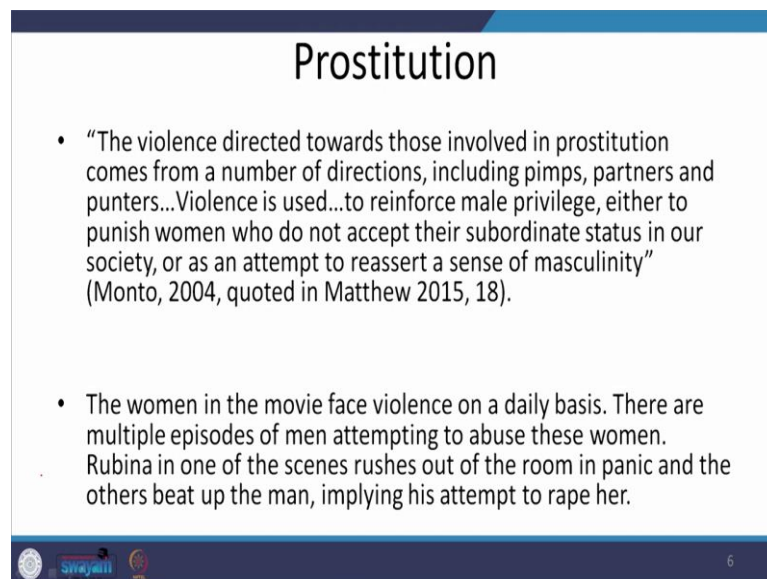
Swajati 5

So, the different forms of victimization experienced by women involved in prostitution have been well documented. In many respects, their victimization actually emerges from their stigmatized and marginalized status.

And, this victimization could be understood through a range of meanings. It could involve, it could include child abuse, trafficking, sexual and mental health problems, even some of the diseases that many of the prostitutes contract through this business.

So, prostitution is also very common profession that women that were separated from their families during partition were put into. And so, the movie actually throws an insight into the lives of sex workers during the period of partition, against the backdrop of

partition. And, it shows us how they are constantly, you know, they are constantly shuttling between victimage and agency. (Refer Slide Time: 14:40)

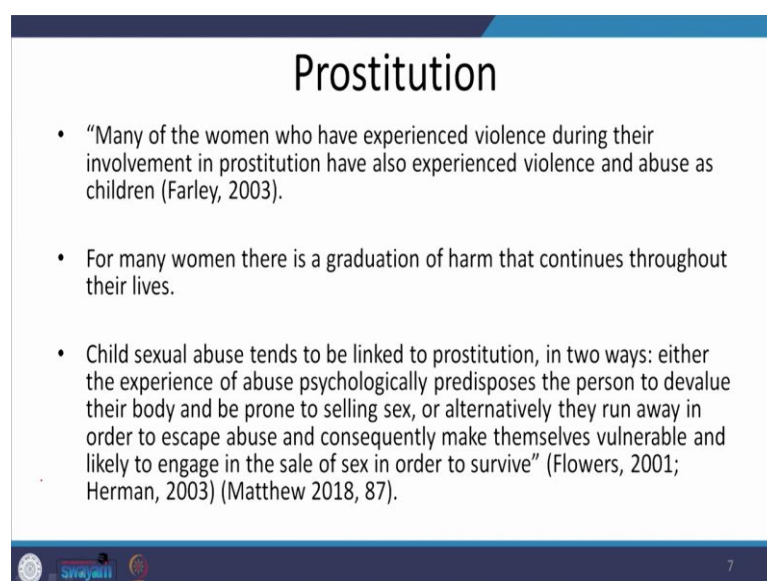


The slide is titled "Prostitution" in a large, bold, black font at the top center. Below the title, there are two bullet points. The first bullet point is a quote: "The violence directed towards those involved in prostitution comes from a number of directions, including pimps, partners and punters...Violence is used...to reinforce male privilege, either to punish women who do not accept their subordinate status in our society, or as an attempt to reassert a sense of masculinity" (Monto, 2004, quoted in Matthew 2015, 18). The second bullet point states: "The women in the movie face violence on a daily basis. There are multiple episodes of men attempting to abuse these women. Rubina in one of the scenes rushes out of the room in panic and the others beat up the man, implying his attempt to rape her." At the bottom of the slide, there is a dark blue footer bar containing three logos on the left and the number "6" on the right.

Prostitution

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- The women in the movie face violence on a daily basis. There are multiple episodes of men attempting to abuse these women. Rubina in one of the scenes rushes out of the room in panic and the others beat up the man, implying his attempt to rape her.

So, for a prostitute, victimization or violence comes from different quarters. It comes from the pimps, from the punters. And, violence is actually used on them as a way of, you know, reinforcing their subordinate status, and also reproducing their body as commoditized, as something that has been bought.. that has been bought as a commodity by the client for a given period of time. And, violence is also used often by the customers or the clients to flagellate [the female], to celebrate their male privilege and male power basically. (Refer Slide Time: 15:28)



The slide is titled "Prostitution" in a large, bold, black font at the top center. Below the title, there are three bullet points. The first bullet point is a quote: "Many of the women who have experienced violence during their involvement in prostitution have also experienced violence and abuse as children (Farley, 2003)." The second bullet point states: "For many women there is a graduation of harm that continues throughout their lives." The third bullet point states: "Child sexual abuse tends to be linked to prostitution, in two ways: either the experience of abuse psychologically predisposes the person to devalue their body and be prone to selling sex, or alternatively they run away in order to escape abuse and consequently make themselves vulnerable and likely to engage in the sale of sex in order to survive" (Flowers, 2001; Herman, 2003) (Matthew 2018, 87)." At the bottom of the slide, there is a dark blue footer bar containing three logos on the left and the number "7" on the right.

Prostitution

- “Many of the women who have experienced violence during their involvement in prostitution have also experienced violence and abuse as children (Farley, 2003).
- For many women there is a graduation of harm that continues throughout their lives.
- Child sexual abuse tends to be linked to prostitution, in two ways: either the experience of abuse psychologically predisposes the person to devalue their body and be prone to selling sex, or alternatively they run away in order to escape abuse and consequently make themselves vulnerable and likely to engage in the sale of sex in order to survive” (Flowers, 2001; Herman, 2003) (Matthew 2018, 87).

The women in the brothel as we see in Begum Jaan, they face violence on a daily basis. There are multiple episodes of men attempting to abuse them and one particular scene is that of Rubina running out of a room in panic, where we understand that...so, Rubina is running out of the room in one of the scenes and she is running, she is panic-stricken and the other women actually beat up the client because it implies that the man was trying to rape her brutally.

And, then further, there have been studies on partition, such as Farley observing that many of these prostitutes that experience violence during their involvement in prostitution have also experienced violence and abuse as children. For many women, there is this graduation of harm that continues throughout their lives. As child, if a woman is abused, such a female usually tends to be linked to prostitution in two different ways, either the experience of you know abuse makes the individual debase their body, devalue their own body and they become prone to selling sex;

or alternatively, they run away in order to escape abuse and yet they become vulnerable and ultimately they engage in this vicious circle of selling the body and becoming part of sex trade in order to survive, right. So, some actually throw themselves into the sex trade thinking that their bodies are debased and already devalued and nothing else; there is no use of such a body anymore after being abused as a child.

And some try to run away, but actually as vulnerable individuals they come back to this trade in order to survive, right. So, there are different, you know,... experience of abuse as a child has been intricately linked with prostitution, many of them later on get involved in prostitution. (Refer Slide Time: 18:14)

Begum Jaan

- During the partition carnage many young girls became a victim of rape and were thus either given away to brothels by their families or ended up there.
- Shabbo stands as an evidence of such a child abuse. She is portrayed as a young girl raped in the past riots, and when sent to the camp her father refuses to accept her back and leaves her in Begum Jaan's house.
- Shabbo's trauma is very deep, she reminds us of Manto's Sakina from his story *Khol Do*.

So, during the partition carnage many young girls became victim of rape and their families actually gave them away to the brothels; they would not take them back. Shabbo for one stands as an ...she is an evidence of such a child abuse. She is a young girl that is raped in the past riots, and when she is sent to the camp, her father refuses to accept her back and so, she is left in Begum Jaan's house.

So, Shabbo's trauma actually reminds us of the character Sakina in Manto's short story *Khol Do* or *Open it*; who has been multiply violated, who has been violated at different levels and in different ways. She is in deep trauma throughout the movie. The rapes faced by the prostitutes or the riot victims leave them traumatized for life. Shabbo's abuse by the king, you know, shows a very dark side of this profession, where women are completely rendered a powerless status once they have their body has an exchange value.

Once they are earning some money for a few moments' pleasure that they sell, bodily pleasure that they sell to the customers, right. There is a scene, where a little girl, a child, a kid called Ladli has come to the brothel and the king while visiting the brothel actually touches the cheek of the child very lovingly and other women consider it as a gesture, you know, gesture of fatherly love.

But, later on in the movie, it is the same king who says that any new girl who comes to the brothel must experience her first night with him. Or he has the desire, the king has

the desire of asserting his right first over the women that come to the brothel. So, it exposes the duplicitous male characters in the film. (Refer Slide Time: 20:49)

Begum Jaan

- In all probability, as soon as Ladli would have grown a little older the King would have expressed his desire to have sex with her regardless of her age.
- Shabnam throughout the movie remains in a deep state of shock. In the scene of her introduction, Begum Jaan slaps her hard to bring her out of the trauma.
- Later on in the movie Begum Jaan reluctantly becomes a contributor in intensifying her trauma by allowing the king to rape her, thus bringing up the question if she played an instrumental role in Shabnam's victimization.

We also see the question of sisterhood that has been celebrated. When a woman is in the face of attackers, there are two such scenes where women strip for I mean.. there are two such very powerful scenes where one woman is trying to save the other through stripping. In one case, a woman is you know confronted by a few men, who desire to rape her. And a little girl who is but a kid comes and starts stripping in front of these males, just so this woman is not attacked, the attention is diverted.

In another part of the story, a girl faces some kind of males that hem her in and try to abuse her. And, that is when an old woman, a woman who is the age of these young men's grandmother just appears and she starts to strip. It actually celebrates sisterly alliance or a female alliance across, you know, all age groups, where women can only understand each other's pain and what they are going through.

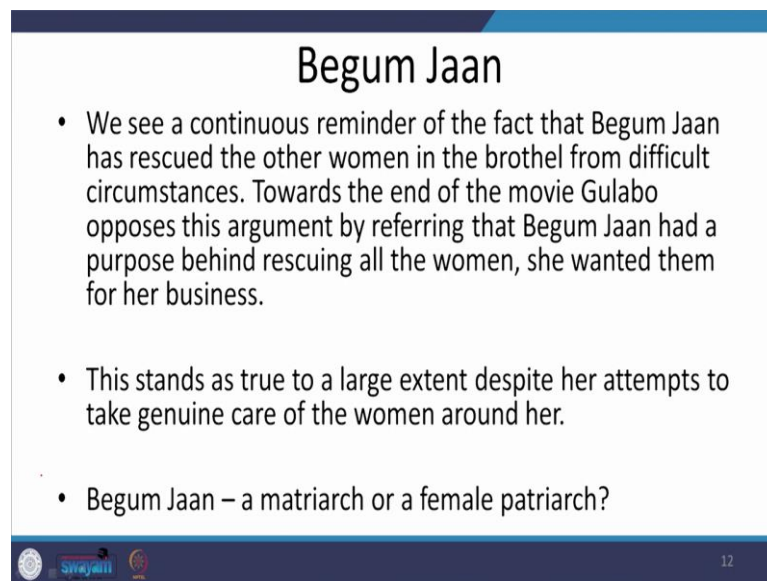
In Begum Jaan, we also see the character of Shabnam who remains in a deep state of shock, and Begum Jaan actually slaps her hard to bring her out of the trauma. And, later on Begum Jaan reluctantly also becomes a contributor in intensifying her trauma. She allows the king to rape Shabnam, thus, bringing up the question if she played an instrumental role,... that is bringing in the question whether Begum Jaan herself plays an instrumental role in Shabnam's further victimization.

However, one could also argue that Begum Jaan was trying to bring Shabnam within the [fold] of normalcy, and for a prostitute normalcy is just taking the trade as their square meal. So, she was trying to introduce Shabnam into the trade through slapping her and thereby taking her out of that traumatic condition, just launching her into the business if we could say. So, there are different ways of reading these scenes and Begum Jaan is very professional.

She refers to the work of prostitution as a business, her setting up of the brothel as a business endeavor and can be looked at as her agency. And, yet she is forcing other women.. not forcing them into the profession, but she is forcing a certain way of life within the brothel. She is in a way disciplining and making the women who come from different backgrounds into professional prostitutes.


She is actually the architect of shaping these women, you know, polishing these women into professional prostitutes. So, in this regard, we can see some sort of masculinist aggression in Begum Jaan too. So, as the female head of the brothel, she is reinforcing

certain masculinist assumptions. She is actually bringing back some, you know, power relations, some dominations within the brothel house. (Refer Slide Time: 25:06)



Begum Jaan

- We see a continuous reminder of the fact that Begum Jaan has rescued the other women in the brothel from difficult circumstances. Towards the end of the movie Gulabo opposes this argument by referring that Begum Jaan had a purpose behind rescuing all the women, she wanted them for her business.
- This stands as true to a large extent despite her attempts to take genuine care of the women around her.
- Begum Jaan – a matriarch or a female patriarch?

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We see a continuous reminder of the fact that Begum Jaan...so, Begum Jaan also asserts many a times in the film that she has rescued the other women in the brothel from very difficult, different difficult circumstances. And, to this one of the characters called Gulabo actually opposes by saying that Begum Jaan has not really done them a great favor. After rescuing them, she has brought them into a business which is not really a great source of pleasure.

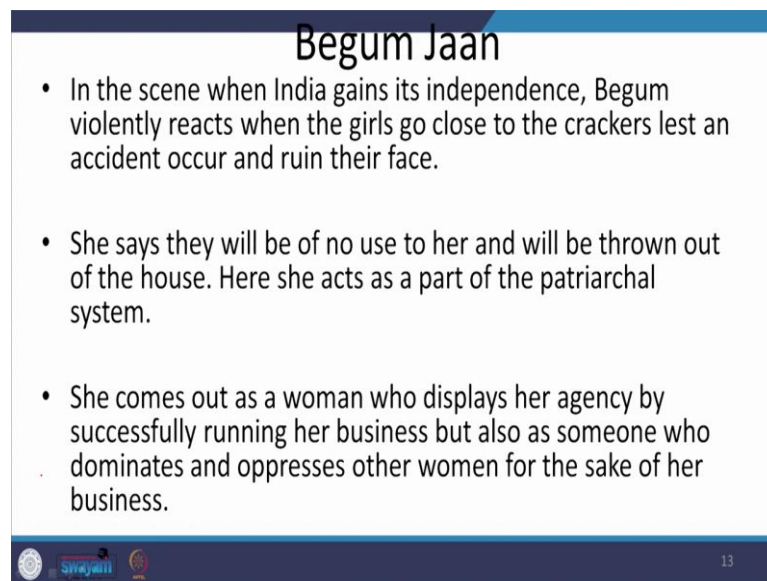
Although it sustains them, it is a source of a different kind of pain. It is also... it is a differently painful life that they have indulged in. So, Begum Jaan is this paradoxical figure, where she is taking genuine care of the women around her and yet, she is asserting her importance, asserting dominant position and her role as a benefactor to these women, right.

So, one needs to also question whether Begum Jaan can be seen in the light of a matriarch or if she is bringing back the same values, the same patriarchal values from which these women have been... through which these women have been victimized. Is she leader of the females or is she merely a female patriarch who is, you know, who reinforces and celebrates the same male-centric values.

So, we see that even the independence, in the larger schema of things... these women do not engage with the larger schema of the nation. So, for example, in the scene of


independence, in the scene when India you know gains independence, the women in the brothel are, you know, they are celebrating the day with some crackers, there are some firecrackers.

Begum Jaan is, however, very careful that these crackers should not burn their faces or deform/ defile them in any way, because it is bad for their business. It will ruin their appearance and for a prostitute, for prostitutes' trade to go well, the physical appearance is very important. (Refer Slide Time: 28:03)



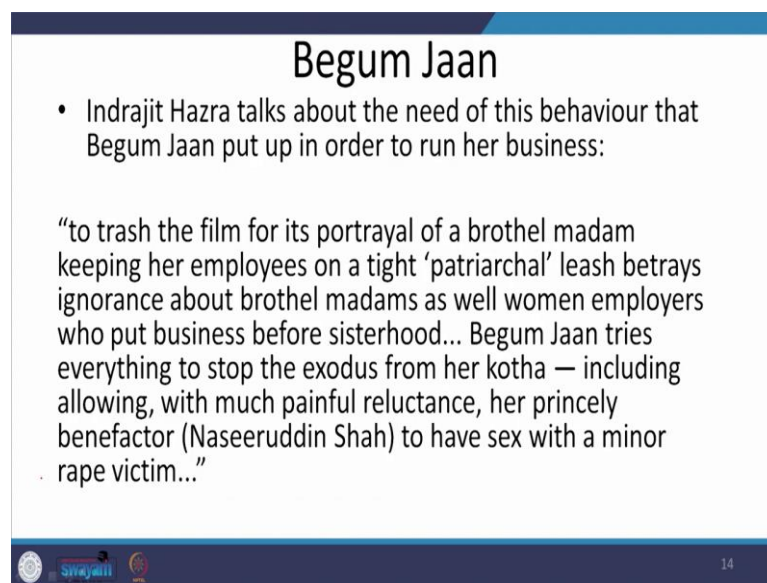
Begum Jaan

- In the scene when India gains its independence, Begum violently reacts when the girls go close to the crackers lest an accident occur and ruin their face.
- She says they will be of no use to her and will be thrown out of the house. Here she acts as a part of the patriarchal system.
- She comes out as a woman who displays her agency by successfully running her business but also as someone who dominates and oppresses other women for the sake of her business.

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So, she is very skeptic that there be no accident through these firecrackers. And, she basically is also treating these women and seeing these women through the lens of the male clients. She says that these women will be of no use and they they will have to be thrown out of the house, if their appearance is deformed because of the firecrackers.

So, she is actually acting as a cog, as an architect and a cog, a puppet of the patriarchal system. She comes out as a woman who displays her agency successfully as far as running her business and protecting the house is concerned. But, she is also someone that dominates and even oppresses other female partners in the same business for the sake of running the trade smoothly. (Refer Slide Time: 29:08)



Begum Jaan

- Indrajit Hazra talks about the need of this behaviour that Begum Jaan put up in order to run her business:

“to trash the film for its portrayal of a brothel madam keeping her employees on a tight ‘patriarchal’ leash betrays ignorance about brothel madams as well women employers who put business before sisterhood... Begum Jaan tries everything to stop the exodus from her kotha — including allowing, with much painful reluctance, her princely benefactor (Naseeruddin Shah) to have sex with a minor rape victim...”

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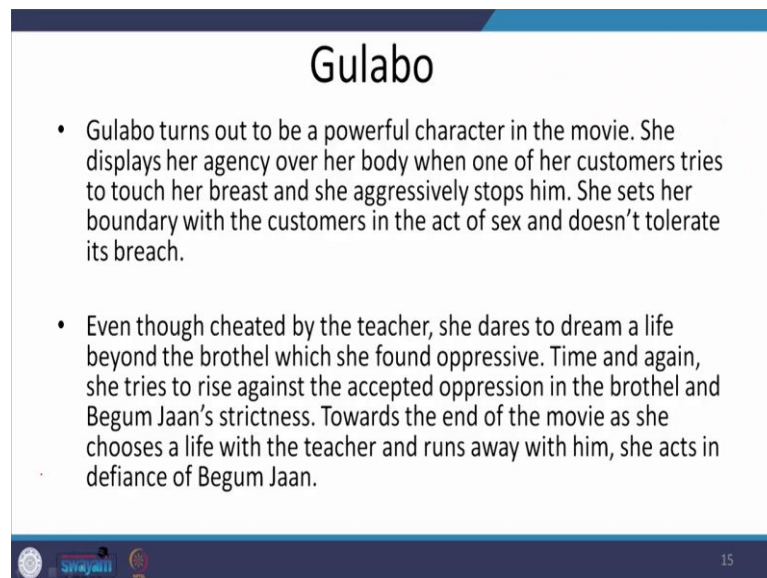
So, in order to, you know, explain this paradox, Indrajit Hazra states that actually the dual trait in Begum Jaan's character is in fact, very natural. He explains the need of this dual, this contradictory traits in Begum Jaan's character. According to Hazra, I mean, we should not trash the film for the portrayal of this brothel madam Begum Jaan, who is keeping her employees on a tight patriarchal leash. Begum Jaan is trying everything to stop the exodus from her kotha.

So, till the end through and through, she is a business person. She is very professional and she has to be paradoxical. Although she loves these women, she is also very strict, stern and sometimes oppressive with them. So, she has to stop the exodus from her kotha. She gives into all kinds of demands to you know keep the business running

smoothly. She even allows her princely benefactor played by Naseeruddin Shah to have sex with a minor rape victim.

So, she allows, she makes all kinds of allowances so that at the end of the day, her business does not fall apart. And, this portrayal of a very contrary, let us say a very dualistic portrayal of brothel madam is, but very natural. Now, we see some of these brothel characters emerging as very powerful in the movie.

For example, Gulabo who displays her agency over her body when one of her customers tries to touch her wrongly, and she aggressively stops him. She sets the boundary even for her customers that are going to pay a price for the act of sex, and she does not tolerate any kind of breach. So, she dares to dream a life beyond the brothel, which she found after a point as oppressive. (Refer Slide Time: 31:46)



Gulabo

- Gulabo turns out to be a powerful character in the movie. She displays her agency over her body when one of her customers tries to touch her breast and she aggressively stops him. She sets her boundary with the customers in the act of sex and doesn't tolerate its breach.
- Even though cheated by the teacher, she dares to dream a life beyond the brothel which she found oppressive. Time and again, she tries to rise against the accepted oppression in the brothel and Begum Jaan's strictness. Towards the end of the movie as she chooses a life with the teacher and runs away with him, she acts in defiance of Begum Jaan.

So, she tries to rise against the accepted or normalized oppression in the brothel and go beyond Begum Jaan's strictness. So, towards the end of the movie, we see her choosing a life with the teacher and she runs away with him. So, she is the one that defies, she is the one that defies the dominant the dominating you know female figure Begum Jaan. She is defying the disciplinarian or let us say the strict figure of Begum Jaan in the film.

So, the movie reiterates time and again the irrelevance of class and caste at different junctures, and it hints against the division of people on the basis of religion. It actually questions that, if prostitutes who are considered as you know the basest people inhabiting

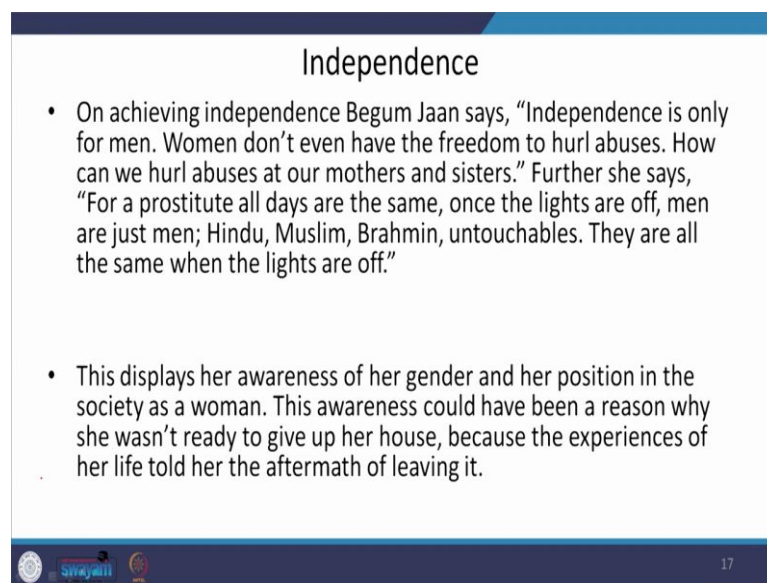
in a society, if the prostitutes can live with such harmony regardless of their, you know, social religious backgrounds, why cannot other people? (Refer Slide Time: 33:11)

Class-Caste

- The movie reiterates the irrelevance of class and caste at different junctures and also hints against the division of people on the basis of religion. In one of the scenes the child Ladli asks the old woman, “Amma! Is it the same thing to kill a Hindu and a Muslim?”, to which the old woman reacts with a thoughtful silence.
- The movie refers to the hypocrisy of men who do not touch these women in the daytime on the basis of their caste, but have sex with them.

So, in one of the scenes, the child prostitute Ladli actually asks the old woman, "Amma is it the same thing to kill a Hindu and a Muslim?" And, the Amma is you know cogitating, there is a thoughtful silence. She cannot immediately reply. And, the movie of course, refers to the hypocrisy of...you know the movie refers to the duplicitous, hypocritical characters of men that do not touch these women in the day time, but they choose to have sex with them in the dead of the night.

So, they treat these women according to their caste and religion and render them an untouchable status during the day time. But, in the dead of the night they all come to the brothel to establish a sexual relationship with these women. (Refer Slide Time: 34:11)



Independence

- On achieving independence Begum Jaan says, "Independence is only for men. Women don't even have the freedom to hurl abuses. How can we hurl abuses at our mothers and sisters." Further she says, "For a prostitute all days are the same, once the lights are off, men are just men; Hindu, Muslim, Brahmin, untouchables. They are all the same when the lights are off."
- This displays her awareness of her gender and her position in the society as a woman. This awareness could have been a reason why she wasn't ready to give up her house, because the experiences of her life told her the aftermath of leaving it.

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And, on the eve of independence, Begum Jaan says something very important. She says independence is only for men, women do not even have the freedom to hurl abuses. How can we hurl abuses at our mothers and sisters? Further, she says, for a prostitute all days are the same, once the lights are off, men are just men; Hindu, Muslim, Brahmin, untouchables. They are all the same when the lights are off.

Here, we see that heteronormative man-woman sexual relationship is also shown in the light of violence. So, in the larger set against the larger plot of communal violence, the heteronormative sexual relationship is also portrayed as something that is forceful at least for the woman. Especially, when money is involved, when the body becomes an exchangeable object, the question of violence amplifies, right.

And, when Begum Jaan says that independence is just for men, she refers to the fact that politics, war, claiming of territories, claiming and reclaiming and and conflicting for territories are all, you know, these are all.. they are all domains of you know the males, domains of the males. They belong to the homosocial discourse, women are invisible in this entire process, in this larger schema. We cannot even and she says something very sharp...

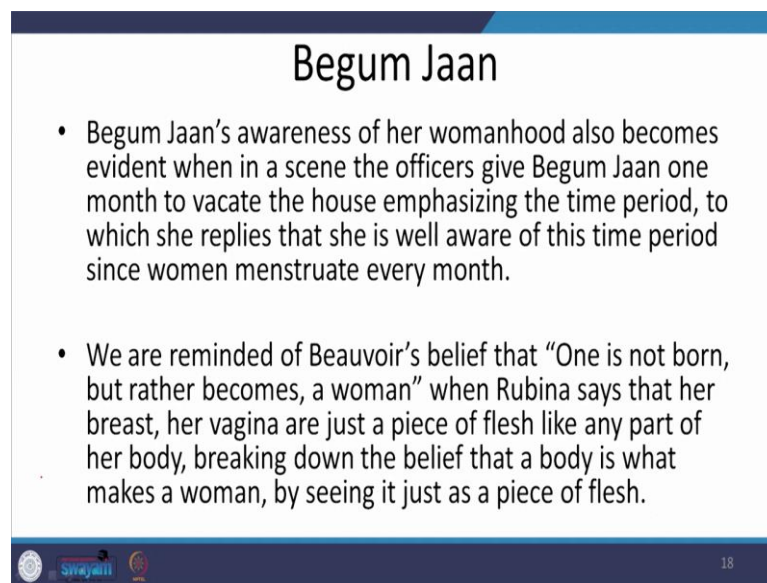
We cannot hurl abuses and abuse also has a very hypermasculinist signification, or abusing makes someone a man or a male; it has a hypermasculinist connotation. So, and thereby she is referring to how males refer to the the other, the rival's female kin through abuses. Abuses among males generally involve the rival's female kin. So, how can a woman, you know, become part of the same grammar? they cannot abuse themselves.

So, the man can abuse the enemy's mother and you know sister, but the woman cannot abuse herself. That is why for a woman, there is a kind of a linguistic crisis also, which prevents the woman from becoming you know, part of the mainstream masculinist discourse. It entails some kind of.. some criteria to be able to abuse as a male, to be able to fight for territory and you know, fight around the body of the woman, around the question of purity of the woman. These are you know parts of the homosocial discourse.

And, the woman has no role whatsoever to play. Leave alone the prostitute woman, even the normal woman, the 'good' woman has no role to play rather than supporting her male kin as a good partner. So, she is aware... I mean, this dialogue that all men are same after

the lights are off exposes or tells the audience about her awareness of her gender and her position in the society as a woman, as a prostitute.

This awareness is also the reason why she does not want to give up the brothel, because the brothel as a way of victimizing her also empowers her in different ways. She is a sex trader, but she is also the boss in the house, which she will.. which she can never be once she is thrown out and sent into a refugee camp. So, the experiences of her life tells her about the aftermath of leaving the brothel house. She already knows what will be her fate, if she quits, if she gives up on the house. (Refer Slide Time: 39:29)



Begum Jaan

- Begum Jaan's awareness of her womanhood also becomes evident when in a scene the officers give Begum Jaan one month to vacate the house emphasizing the time period, to which she replies that she is well aware of this time period since women menstruate every month.
- We are reminded of Beauvoir's belief that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" when Rubina says that her breast, her vagina are just a piece of flesh like any part of her body, breaking down the belief that a body is what makes a woman, by seeing it just as a piece of flesh.

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So, Begum Jaan's awareness of her womanhood also becomes evident in the scene, where one of the government officials come and give her a warning - one month's notice to vacate the house. And, here the officer is emphasizing the time period and she replies in a very feminine manner. She says that I am aware of the time period, we understand months and years, we are not illiterate, our bodies have made us literate about time and temporality, because the body menstruates.

The body menstruates every month and that is how we understand that a month has passed. We are innately educated about time, our body has taught it. So, this agency that exudes through the body and which she can assert would no longer be there once she is not into this kind of trade. So, she is also enjoying some degree of freedom that would be curbed if she turned into a permanent liability of the nation-state.

So, through these women, through studying these women we are reminded of Simone de Beauvoir's belief that,... Simone de Beauvoir's belief that one is not born a woman, but rather she becomes, she is made into a woman. This is when Rubina says that her breast, her vagina are just a piece of flesh like any other part of a body. And, they are sexualized, they are turned into dirty objects through coming in terms with or coming in touch with the male customers.

And so, by this Rubina breaks down the belief that a body is what makes a woman. She sees it just as a piece of flesh, a lump of flesh and it is given its meaning, whether it is the lustful body or the disgusting hate toward the body; all these meanings are given, ascribed to the body by the larger society. Otherwise, the body itself is not born with its meanings, with innate meanings.

With this, I am going to stop today's lecture here and our discussions on Begum Jaan. We are going to meet again with another round of discussions and another lecture.

Thank you.