

Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema
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Lecture - 59
Partition Literature in the 21st Century - II


Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India and Print Media and Cinema. So, today our topic of discussion, today our topic of discussion is Partition Literature in the 21st Century. So, when we talk of 21st century we may also need to look at the development of partition artworks that have been happening in the last decade of the 20th century.

So, in this discussion we are going to also incorporate or we are also going to include the works from the 1990s. So, and then we look at how there are new scopes, new perspectives coming up at the turn of the century, right. So, we see that talking about the partition films or the question of India-Pakistan relationship [as] the backdrop of a story.

So, talking about the partition films in the 21st century and the Indo-Pak relationship that forms the skeleton of romantic you know narratives or romantic plots, we are reminded of *Veer Zara*. *Veer Zara*, a film that won several Filmfare Awards in 2005. (Refer Slide Time: 01:56)

Partition Films in the 21st Century

- *Veer Zara* won several Filmfare awards in 2005, as well as the National Film Award for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.
- It centers on the love story between an Indian Hindu Squadron Leader, Veer Pratap Singh (Shah Rukh Khan), who is a rescue pilot with the Indian Air Force, and a Pakistani Muslim woman, Zaara Hayaat Khan (Preity Zinta), who comes to India to fulfill her surrogate Sikh grandmother's dying wish.
- The songs in the film asserts national likeness rather than national differences which in turn permeates the ideological message of the film.
- The film seeks for peace, dialogue and mutual recognition between India and Pakistan on the basis of a shared humanity.
- Madhava Prasad- *Veer Zara* reproduces patriarchal and parental authority. It is formulated through the deferral of conjugality and suppression of desire.

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And it was also a recipient of the National Film Award for best popular film providing wholesome entertainment.

So, we understand that the question of Indo-Pak relationship has also pervaded and actually occupied, you know, the world of entertainment or the Bollywood formula; it has become a stock Bollywood formula. So, the film centers on the love story between Indian Hindu Squadron Leader Veer Pratap Singh played by Shah Rukh Khan, who is a rescue pilot with the Indian Air Force; and for the female lead we have Zara Hayaat Khan played by Preity Zinta, who comes to India to fulfill her surrogate Sikh grandmother's dying wish. So, the songs in the film actually celebrate, you know, national likeness and similarity rather than differences between India and Pakistan, and that becomes ideological message in the film. The film actually appeals for peace, dialogue, and mutual recognition.

So, film actually notes how personalized relationships are oppressed, how they are violated because of hypernationalistic sentiments. So, you know, it is actually... the film is promoting the idea of a shared humanity in the South Asian context. However, critics like Madhava Prasad observe that a film such as *Veer Zara* reproduces patriarchal and paternal authority by formulating deferral and suppression of a conjugality and desire.

So, a kind of...a kind of idealized love, a kind of platonic love is depicted on screen through a deferral of, you know, consummation, deferral of unity.. man-woman unity. So, in a way there are some conventional values also propagated by the film. (Refer Slide Time: 04:41)

Partition Films in the 21st Century

- Farhan Akhtar's *Lakshya* (2004) focuses on the India-Pakistan War in 1999.
- *Lakshya* follows Karan (Hritik Roshan) as he changes from being an aimless, upper middle-class, college-going youth into a model, hyper-masculine national subject after he joins the Indian Army.
- *Lakshya* reproduces the essentialized representations of India and Pakistan as enemies.
- This film on India-Pakistan war calls for peace even as it criticizes the apathetic Indian middle-class contemporary preoccupation with globalized consumption, with career advancement that precludes national service in the Army, and with the valorization of migration to the West for upward mobility.

Next, we had in 2004 a film called *Lakshya* by Farhan Akhtar, which focuses on the Pakistan war in 1999. So, it actually traces the journey of an aimless youth towards becoming a hyper-masculine national subject after he joins the Indian Army.

So, *Lakshya* reproduces the essentialized representations of India and Pakistan as arch rivals and enemies. So, the film calls for peace, but there are certain aspects that he... that it criticizes, and it, you know, cause attention to these issues, that it you know.. the film thinks are...that the film thinks should be emergently engaged with.

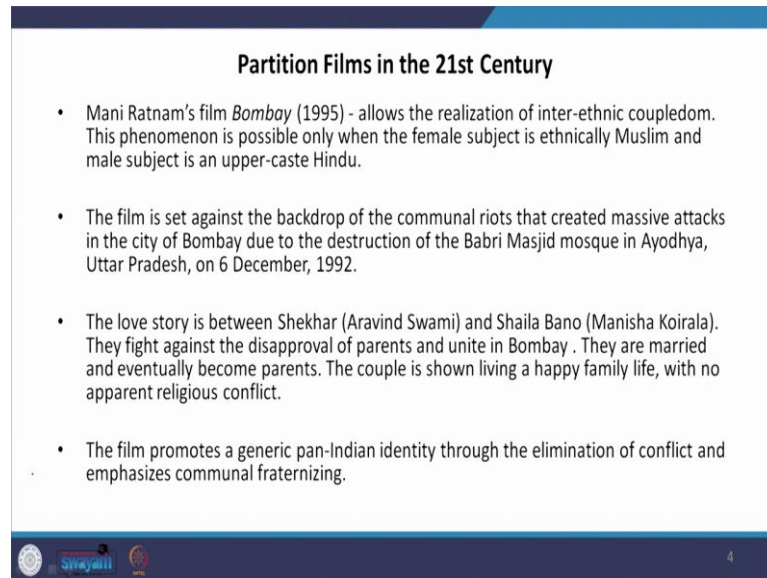
Issues such as the apathetic Indian middle-class way of thinking and its preoccupation with globalized consumption, and then how the question of career development among the youth today does not include, you know, joining National Services and the Army. And it also questions the valorization of migration to the west for, you know, upward mobility and such similar aspirations.

So, when we go back in the last decade of the 20th century, we have a very important film by Mani Ratnam called *Bombay*. It was made in 1995 and it in fact, imagines.. it gives allowance to inter-ethnic or inter-communal coupledness. So; however, it has been questioned by mainly by the Pakistani critics, how this coupledness, this Hindu-Muslim marriage is possible in Bollywood films only when the male comes from the Hindu community, whereas the female is a Muslim.

And this is also true for *Bombay*, where we see the female is not only a Muslim, but also from a socio-economically speaking lower strata of the society. She is a village girl and a

subordinate in a way to the hero's family. So, the hero's family, the man is from a Tamil Brahmin family and much well-to-do... and has a much well-to-do background.

So, the man is not only gender wise, let us say, in a position of [dominance]..., in a dominant position, but also coming from an upper strata of the society. So, caste, class, gender-wise, the Hindu's position is more consolidated and more strengthened. (Refer Slide Time: 08:06)



Partition Films in the 21st Century

- Mani Ratnam's film *Bombay* (1995) - allows the realization of inter-ethnic coupledom. This phenomenon is possible only when the female subject is ethnically Muslim and male subject is an upper-caste Hindu.
- The film is set against the backdrop of the communal riots that created massive attacks in the city of Bombay due to the destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, on 6 December, 1992.
- The love story is between Shekhar (Aravind Swami) and Shaila Bano (Manisha Koirala). They fight against the disapproval of parents and unite in Bombay. They are married and eventually become parents. The couple is shown living a happy family life, with no apparent religious conflict.
- The film promotes a generic pan-Indian identity through the elimination of conflict and emphasizes communal fraternizing.

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This is something that several Pakistani critics actually see as questionable in the imagination of Hindu-Muslim marriage on screen, that are celebrated as, you know, bold experiments in Bollywood.

So, the film is set against the backdrop of the communal riot which created massive attacks in the city of Bombay due to the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya on 6th of December 1992. And then, we see that the love story at the heart of...you know, the love story is at the heart of this entire plot; love story between Shekhar and Shaila Bano, and this happens... the couple elope from their respective homes because they do not have their parents' approval in their marriage.

And so, they get married secretly and subsequently, they become parents and the couple is shown to be living a happy married life with apparently no religious conflict, you know, disrupting their household. So, the film actually promotes a generic pan-Indian identity through the elimination of a conflict, and it emphasizes communal fraternizing.

So, we see that as a couple, you know, couple that has married inter-communally, this home... the home that they make after their [marriage] ...the home that they make and where they have their own children is also a third space; it is a liminal space. And this liminality is suggested through the names of the children, from the names of the two sons, the twins that the couple have. One cannot really decipher whether they are... whether they belong to a Hindu family or a Muslim family.


And we see that this family is jeopardized at the time of riot. So, symbolically it is the liminal space, the third space which has nothing to do apparently with a puritan, you know, communal ideas with rabid or extremist notions that also get affected. We see at the same time that the fathers of these two, you know, the fathers of the protagonists Shekhar and Shaila Bano die during...in a case of a incendiary, and they are burned alive.

So, we see that when a riot/violence, you know, communal violence/task engulfing people... it does not really care whether the person...the person in the receiving and endorses such activities, endorses antagonism or, I mean, is far away from such discourse. So, both the fathers apparently had their own stoic positions as a Hindu and a Muslim. They died in an incendiary and the entire family, the couple and their sons actually are separated by the riots.

So, they are actually... the family is asundered, they are asundered and they are separated by the riots. So, next we are going to talk about the picturization and imagination of Kashmir in Bollywood films. (Refer Slide Time: 12:18)

Kashmir in Bollywood Films in the 21st Century

- From 1960s to 1989, Bollywood lenses have contributed to large number of films set in the backdrop of Kashmir.
- Some of the films include *Kashmir Ki Kali* (1964), *Jab Jab Phool Khile* (1965), *Roti* (1974), *Noorie* (1979), *Aarzo* (1965), *Bobby* (1973) and *Kabhi Kabhi* (1976).
- Hindi cinema has often depicted India as superior to other nations. In comparison to Pakistan, India is shown as militarily superior and in the case of the West, India is projected as culturally superior.
- Bollywood focuses more on the Kashmir conflicts, beauty of Kashmir and bravery of Indian soldiers.
- The representations often vacillate between 'Innocent Kashmiri' frame, 'Tourist Destination' frame, 'Good Kashmir/ Bad Kashmir' frame and 'Islamic Terror' frame.

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We are talking about 21st century. However, having a little bit, a somewhat... having a backdrop/ taking a look at the history would be important...taking a look at the history would enable us to understand how Kashmir has been perceived through the Bollywood lens since the 1960s and 1970s.

So, from 1960s to 1989, Bollywood lenses have contributed to a large number of films set against the backdrop of Kashmir. We had films, such as Kashmir Ki Kali (1964), Jab Jab Phool Khile (1965), Noorie in 1979, Aarzo in 1965, and so forth. A lot of these films actually showed Kashmir as the paradise, in terms of its ethereal beauty, something that is, you know, outside of an individual's normal perception of, you know, majestic and grandeur.

And something that contains thereby all superlative notions of... superlative notions of beauty, of magnificence. Ah so, we have a remarkable depiction of Kashmir in all these films. In Bollywood cinema, it has been an important element to depict India, it has been almost a mantra to depict India as superior to other nations. So, in terms of Pakistan, India is shown as militarily superior and when compared, when compared with the West, India is shown as culturally superior.

Bollywood has a way of focusing on the Kashmir conflicts in a specific way, where on the one hand the beauty of a...beauty and magnificence and pristinity of Kashmir is celebrated; and on the other hand, the bravery of the Indian soldiers that are safeguarding, that are sacrificing their lives to prevent, you know, spoiling of this beauty are also...these Indian soldiers are also kind of valorized in Hindi cinema, in Bollywood.


So, on the one hand we have the beauty and splendor of Kashmir celebrated and on the other, we have the rule of the Indian Army, the bravery of the soldiers that are recorded and that are commemorated through films centered on Kashmir, right. These soldiers play a quintessential role in safeguarding the pristinity, the unspoiled beauty of Kashmir.

So, some of the stock representations when talking about Kashmir are, I mean, the innocent Kashmiri and then the tourist destination - Kashmir is a tourist destination, where a newly married couple is shown as visiting Kashmir as their honeymoon spot. And then Kashmir is, Kashmir is also a part of the good Muslim-bad Muslim or the good Kashmiri bad-Kashmiri discourse.

And finally, the Islamic terror frame is constantly, you know, brought in vis-a-vis the context of...in the context of Kashmir, the Islamic terror frame comes back again and again. (Refer Slide Time: 16:40)

Kashmir in Bollywood Films in the 21st Century

- *Roja* (1992), directed by Mani Ratnam, narrates the love story of Rishi Kumar (Aravind Swamy) and Roja (Madhoo).
- *Roja* hovers between the genres of romance and a political thriller dealing ostensibly with 'terrorism' in Kashmir.
- *Roja* interpellates the 'common man' – upper-caste, middle-class male – to protect 'national interest' by fighting terrorism. Such a figure correspondences between family and nation.
- The filmic clichés serve to force a resolution of the crisis (Kashmiri nationalism, separatism, fundamentalism) that threaten the nation's being.
- The film presents army activities such as search operations, the interrogation of 'terrorists' and the shooting of them.

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In 1992, a film called *Roja* was directed by Mani Ratnam, which narrates this love story between an Indian army servant and his wife. So, the couple after their marriage go to Kashmir and that is where the man gets kidnapped by the terrorists.

So, *Roja* hovers between the genres of romance and a political thriller, which deals with the question of terrorism in Kashmir. And *Roja* is, in a way, it inspires the common man, common man referring to the upper-caste middle-class male to protect the national interests by fighting terrorism.


So, although the army person and the male protagonist has his, you know, romantic life and his family dimension, he is solely and wholeheartedly dedicated to the cause of the nation. And that is how he gets kidnapped and his wife also gets embroiled in this crossfire, right.

So, the filmic cliches in *Roja* served to force a resolution of this crisis posed by Kashmiri nationalism, Kashmiri separatism.. Kashmiri separatism and fundamentalism, which threatens the nation's existence. So, the film presents activities..the film presents army activities such as search operations, interrogation of terrorists and the shooting of the terrorists by the army men.

Roja refers to the emergence of a communal consensus, in which a whole series of assumptions and myths have been given the form or given the shape of commonsense that ...a whole series of assumptions and myths have been turned as commonsensical. (Refer Slide Time: 19:03)

Kashmir in Bollywood Films in the 21st Century

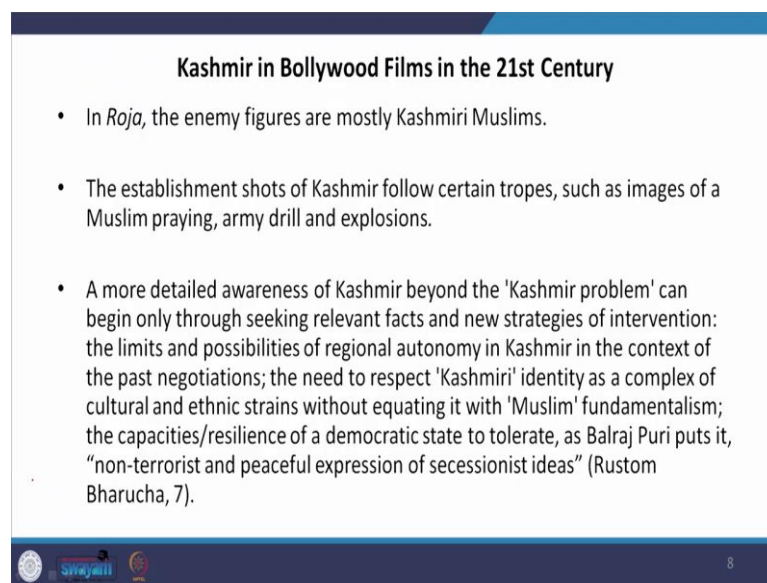
- *Roja* represents the emergence of a "communal consensus" in which "a whole series of assumptions and myths have turned into common sense."
- This is possible through the construction of "a powerful and extendable enemy image" through the appropriation of old prejudices and the combination of new ones based on media propaganda.
- Critics argue that *Roja* inscribes and reinforces the official scenario on Kashmir with an illusion of reconciliation, through emphasizing the territorial integrity of the state within the larger framework of the nation as the most important issue (Rustom Bharucha, 3).

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It constructs a powerful and extendable enemy image through the appropriation of old prejudices and a combining of such prejudices with new biases that are constantly, you know, propagated by the media.

So, critics like Rustom Bharucha argue that *Roja* reinforces the official version and the official scenario on Kashmir, and in a way brings a very glib, a very quick take on the question of reconciliation. It is also a very superficial way of dealing with the question of reconciliation that the film emphasizes; territorial integrity of the state of Kashmir within the larger framework of India as the most important issue in hand.

So, Bharucha says that rather than, you know, pushing for such glib and quick resolutions to the problem of Kashmir, which has been a longstanding problem - the Kashmir problem, it needs, you know, it seeks new strategies, novel strategies of intervention. (Refer Slide Time: 20:25)



Kashmir in Bollywood Films in the 21st Century

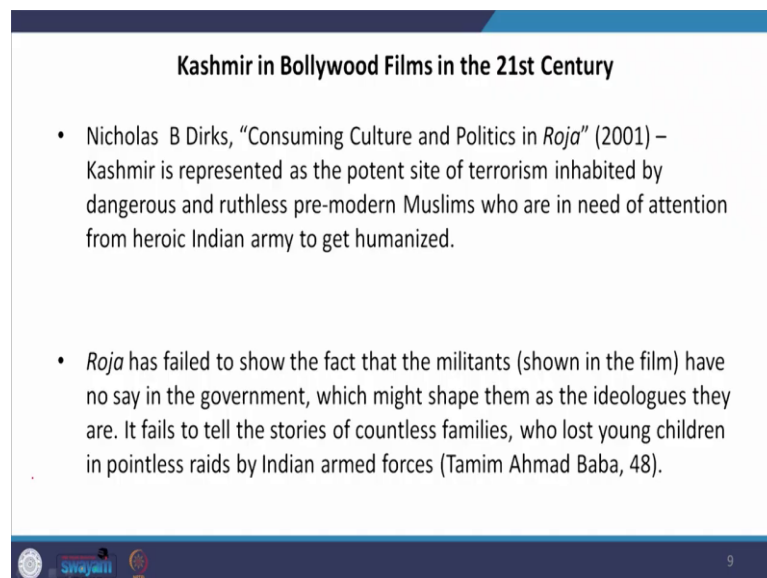
- In *Roja*, the enemy figures are mostly Kashmiri Muslims.
- The establishment shots of Kashmir follow certain tropes, such as images of a Muslim praying, army drill and explosions.
- A more detailed awareness of Kashmir beyond the 'Kashmir problem' can begin only through seeking relevant facts and new strategies of intervention: the limits and possibilities of regional autonomy in Kashmir in the context of the past negotiations; the need to respect 'Kashmiri' identity as a complex of cultural and ethnic strains without equating it with 'Muslim' fundamentalism; the capacities/resilience of a democratic state to tolerate, as Balraj Puri puts it, "non-terrorist and peaceful expression of secessionist ideas" (Rustom Bharucha, 7).

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It entails a greater awareness of Kashmir, a more detailed knowledge of an engagement with the question of Kashmir.



It demands further delving into the limits and possibilities of regional autonomy in Kashmir in the context of the past negotiations of the state with the central government. And also the need in general to respect the Kashmiri identity as something that is complex and not necessarily and simply equivalent with Muslim or Islamic fundamentalism. Not all Kashmiris are naturally fundamentalists or terrorists.

And also something that Balraj Puri states - the capacity or the resilience of a democratic state, to bear, to incorporate the peaceful expression of secessionist ideas, right. (Refer Slide Time: 21:39)



Kashmir in Bollywood Films in the 21st Century

- Nicholas B Dirks, "Consuming Culture and Politics in *Roja*" (2001) – Kashmir is represented as the potent site of terrorism inhabited by dangerous and ruthless pre-modern Muslims who are in need of attention from heroic Indian army to get humanized.
- *Roja* has failed to show the fact that the militants (shown in the film) have no say in the government, which might shape them as the ideologues they are. It fails to tell the stories of countless families, who lost young children in pointless raids by Indian armed forces (Tamim Ahmad Baba, 48).

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Something that does not conform with the governmental dictators, but which is not automatically, you know, which does not automatically, which thereby cannot be thought of as automatically you know terrorizing the nation, because of its different/alternative way of thinking and being.

So, Balraj Puri, what Balraj Puri is trying to see is that not you know [not accommodating], not reconciling with the government/governmental dictates, governmental dictates does not automatically suggest you know having terrorist intentions. So, I mean, to have a more open and multiple views and multiple possibilities of dealing with the Kashmir question is something suggested by these critics.

Now, Nicholas B Dirks reads Roja as a representation of, you know. Kashmir... you know Nicholas B Dirks notes that Kashmir in Roja is represented as a potential site of terrorism inhabited by dangerous and ruthless pre-modern Muslims, who are constantly seeking attention from the heroic Indian Army. And they are greatly in need to get humanized, and this is a very generalized way of treating the Kashmiri on screen, right.

So, Tamim Ahmad Baba for example, points out how such films actually failed to incorporate the other's point of view. For example, how the militants, the so called violent militants do not have much say in the governmental policies, which shapes them as the ideologues and as the extremists that they are. And how these stock, you know, stock metaphors and stock, let us say, these motifs and stock characters in films...in Bollywood films fail to tell the stories of many such Kashmiri families that have been afflicted because of the war, the ongoing war that [claimed] their young children in pointless raids initiated by the Indian Armed forces. (Refer Slide Time: 24:42)

Kashmir in Bollywood Films in the 21st Century

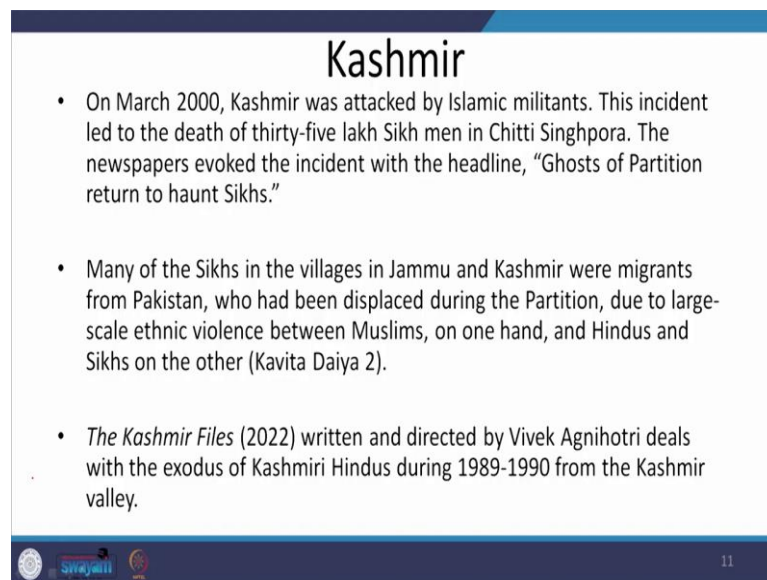
- Films like *Fanaa* (2006), *Maa Tujhe Salam* (2002) and others have associated terrorism with Islam. The terrorist is pitted against the “patriotic” Muslim character.
- Militancy in Kashmir has always been an appealing factor to the Indian audience.
- *Mission Kashmir* follows the similar trope as any other Bollywood film that good Muslims do not possess any sense of their own and are often manipulated by devilish personalities.
- The film speaks for the Kashmiri Pandits but does not broach other allied topics, such as hardships of refugee Muslims, who are residents of Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Now, we had a film such as Fanaa, Maa Tujhe Salam and others that dealt with the topic of terrorism and that, in an unproblematic manner, associated terrorism with Islam.

In these films, there is a common you know trope to pit the terrorist against the patriotic Muslim character. Now, militancy in Kashmir has always entertained the Indian audience at large. So, it has been an appealing factor and it actually adds to the popularity of a film.

So, Mission Kashmir in a similar way shows the vulnerability of the Muslim youth, who is constantly being, you know, brainwashed by the evil Muslim. And it thereby implies that the youth do not possess a sense of their own or any ideology or any sense of reasoning of their own, and they are often manipulated by some hardened...hardened criminals.

So, these films have many a times you know alluded to the ...to the exodus of the Kashmiri pandits, the plight of the Kashmiri pandits, but not many films have touched on the topic of the hardship of the refugee Muslims also, the ones that are residents of a Pakistan Administered Kashmir. (Refer Slide Time: 26:32)



Kashmir

- On March 2000, Kashmir was attacked by Islamic militants. This incident led to the death of thirty-five lakh Sikh men in Chitti Singhpora. The newspapers evoked the incident with the headline, "Ghosts of Partition return to haunt Sikhs."
- Many of the Sikhs in the villages in Jammu and Kashmir were migrants from Pakistan, who had been displaced during the Partition, due to large-scale ethnic violence between Muslims, on one hand, and Hindus and Sikhs on the other (Kavita Daiya 2).
- *The Kashmir Files* (2022) written and directed by Vivek Agnihotri deals with the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus during 1989-1990 from the Kashmir valley.

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Talking about Kashmir, on March 2000, Kashmir was attacked by Islamic militants. This incident had led to the death of 35 Sikh men in Chitti Singhpora.

The newspaper evoked the incident with the headline as ghosts of partition...ghosts of partition return to haunt Sikhs. And many of the Sikhs in the villages in Jammu and

Kashmir were migrants from Pakistan, who had displaced during the partition due to the large scale ethnic violence between the Muslims and the Hindus and Sikhs.

So, we see Kashmir as a volatile spot, which has always caught the attention of Bollywood and other you know popular [films]; it is not only films, but also other popular genres. It is ...depicted through animation, it is, you know, Kashmir has been experimented through different genres, it has been seen through a number of.. through a number of lengths.

But what is...what is observable in most of the cases is that we do not or maybe we do not want to see Kashmir as a normal case, as a mundane case. Kashmir as a mundane life hardly appears in any of the artworks. Kashmir is always synonymous with some exceptional and burning issue. Either it is more beautiful than the rest of the India, unimaginably more beautiful and completely a disjuncture, a point of you know.. a space of disjuncture vis-a-vis its natural beauty and its culture; or it is you know or its devilish aspects are you know depicted and its devilish aspects are highlighted. So, for example, I mean there are never films on how a regular Kashmiri youth ah is, you know, part of the larger Indian fabric; they could be a doctor, an engineer.

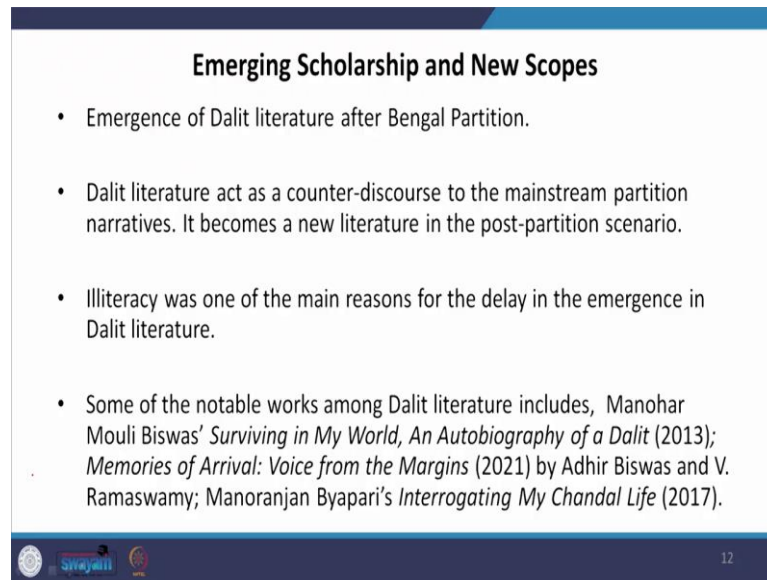
Or we do not, for example, see in Bollywood cases of Kashmiris in the mainstream narrative; we do not see a Kashmiri character in the mainstream narrative, in a plot that involves people from other parts of India. A Kashmiri that has or, let us say, a Kashmiri Muslim that has done well in the field of medicine, research, engineering, teaching, and so forth.

We do not talk about the carpet industry or the booming you know industries in Kashmir. We do not talk about the mundane life, the ordinariness. So, Kashmir is always recognized, if at all, in terms of its extraordinary presence, and this is also something that... the others' way of perceiving Kashmir also seeps into their own self-perception, that is how Kashmir chooses not/never to be integrated within India.

Because thinking remains that they are different. They are either better or worse than the rest of the Indians, than the rest of the Pakistanis. In the South Asian context, Kashmir is an actually unexceptional case; the exceptional has never been intercepted, intervened and you know questioned, and it would be very interesting to see how Kashmir also has



an ordinary regular you know life in an office, in schools, in colleges, besides the issues of you know, army and militants.

So, it would be interesting to see the ordinary life, to depict and to examine the ordinary life of the Kashmiris, apart from the question of or besides the question of exceptionalism and conflicts. (Refer Slide Time: 31:31)



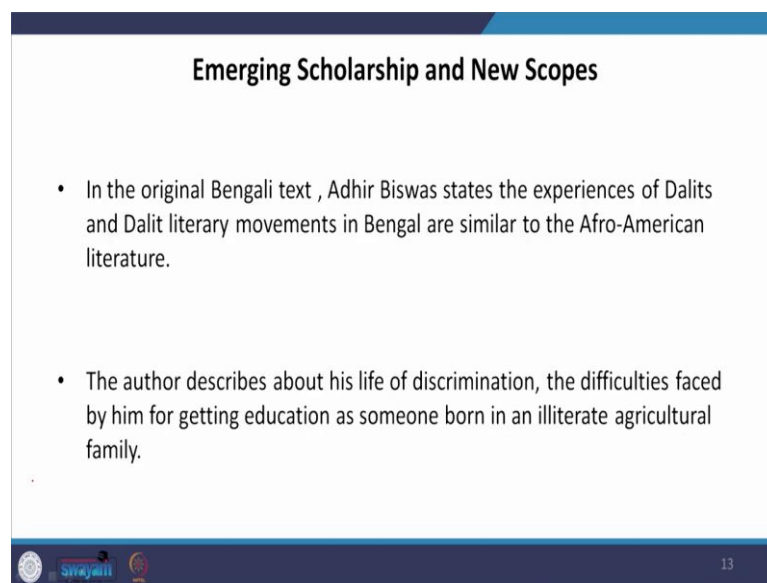
Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- Emergence of Dalit literature after Bengal Partition.
- Dalit literature act as a counter-discourse to the mainstream partition narratives. It becomes a new literature in the post-partition scenario.
- Illiteracy was one of the main reasons for the delay in the emergence in Dalit literature.
- Some of the notable works among Dalit literature includes, Manohar Mouli Biswas' *Surviving in My World, An Autobiography of a Dalit* (2013); *Memories of Arrival: Voice from the Margins* (2021) by Adhir Biswas and V. Ramaswamy; Manoranjan Byapari's *Interrogating My Chandal Life* (2017).

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Now, emerging scholarship and new scopes also talk about... talking about the emerging scholarship and new scopes, we have Dalit literature coming back, where the Dalit's version of partition acts as a counter-discourse to the mainstream partition narratives.

It becomes a new literature that testifies to or that documents the post-partition scenario. Illiteracy was one of the main reasons for the delay in the emergence of the Dalit literature. So, some of the notable works include, you know, Manohar Mouli Biswas's *Surviving in My World An Autobiography of a Dalit*, *Memories of Arrival: Voice from the Margins* by Adhir Biswas and V. Ramaswamy, and then Manoranjan Byapari's *Interrogating My Chandal Life*. (Refer Slide Time: 32:27)



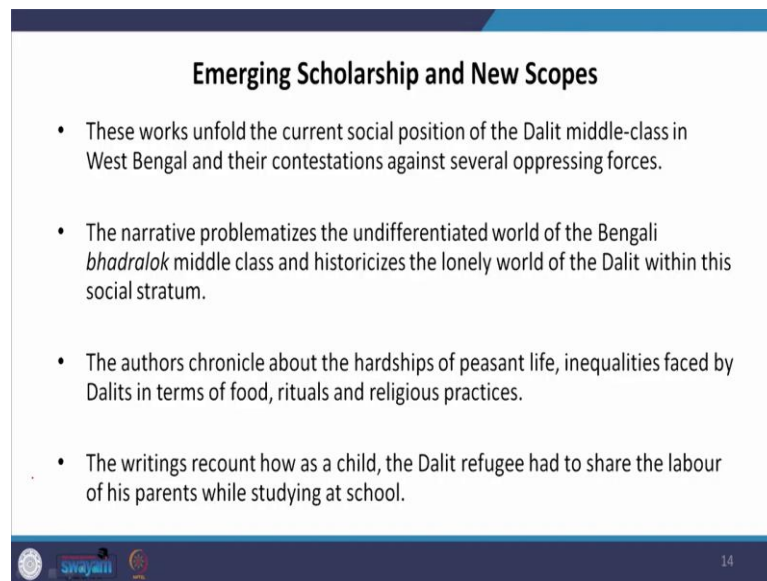
Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- In the original Bengali text , Adhir Biswas states the experiences of Dalits and Dalit literary movements in Bengal are similar to the Afro-American literature.
- The author describes about his life of discrimination, the difficulties faced by him for getting education as someone born in an illiterate agricultural family.

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So, the talk about the the Dalits and Dalit literary movements in Bengal and authors, such as Adhir Biswas, compare the Dalit aesthetics with that of Afro-American literature. The authors describe about their lives of discrimination, the difficulties that they faced while getting educated and how they had, as children they had to share the labour of their parents while also studying in school.

So, their hardships, the inequalities that they faced as Dalits in terms of food, rituals and religious practices are described extensively through their writings. (Refer Slide Time: 33:17)

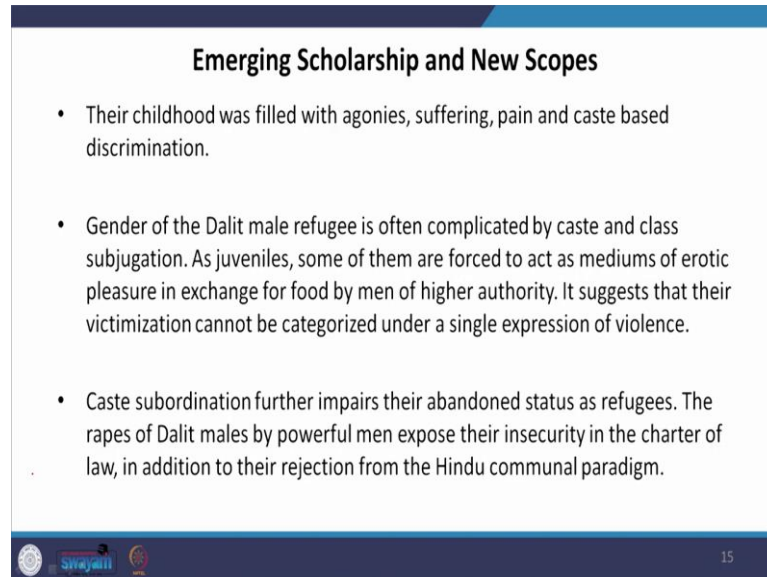


Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- These works unfold the current social position of the Dalit middle-class in West Bengal and their contestations against several oppressing forces.
- The narrative problematizes the undifferentiated world of the Bengali *bhadralok* middle class and historicizes the lonely world of the Dalit within this social stratum.
- The authors chronicle about the hardships of peasant life, inequalities faced by Dalits in terms of food, rituals and religious practices.
- The writings recount how as a child, the Dalit refugee had to share the labour of his parents while studying at school.



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They talk about the undifferentiated world of the Bengali bhadralok middle-class; against such a setting, they historicize the lonely world of the Dalit, the lonely world of the Dalit, right. (Refer Slide Time: 33:33)



Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- Their childhood was filled with agonies, suffering, pain and caste based discrimination.
- Gender of the Dalit male refugee is often complicated by caste and class subjugation. As juveniles, some of them are forced to act as mediums of erotic pleasure in exchange for food by men of higher authority. It suggests that their victimization cannot be categorized under a single expression of violence.
- Caste subordination further impairs their abandoned status as refugees. The rapes of Dalit males by powerful men expose their insecurity in the charter of law, in addition to their rejection from the Hindu communal paradigm.

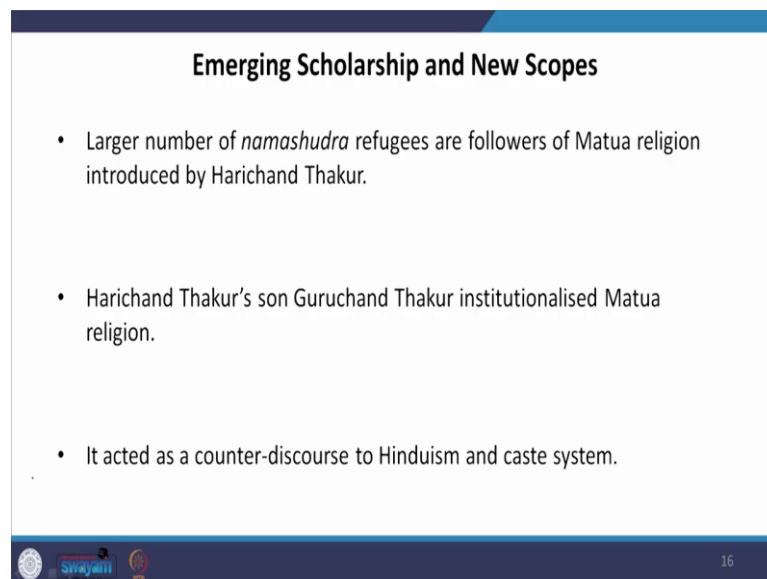
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The question of gender for the Dalit male refugees is, you know, often complicated by the class and caste subjugation that they faced. So, as juveniles, some of them are forced to act as mediums of erotic pleasure in exchange for basic, you know, in exchange for basic requirements such as food and shelter. And so, they are sexually exploited by men from the higher authority, mainly you know police, you know government or police representatives.

And it suggests that their victimization, therefore, cannot be categorized under any single expression of violence. They cannot be etched as, you know, the powerful male figure who is the architect of nationalistic discourses, and you know, who are architects of the partition. They are far away from such schemations right, such schemes.

Caste subordination is a further impairment to the already abundant status and the tabooed status as refugee; to once already, you know, abandoned and tabooed status, as stigmatized status as a refugee. So, the rape of and sexual exploitation of Dalit males by powerful men exposed their insecurity once in terms of, you know, once within the charter of law; so, the law does not exactly protect them because the protectors of law, the makers of law such as the policemen come and rape the young boys. And it also portrays the rejection from the Hindu communal paradigm. So, they you know, their

marginalization is twice or thrice explained, once as a juvenile and then as the refugee, as the lower-class and then also as the lower-caste or Dalit. (Refer Slide Time: 36:06)



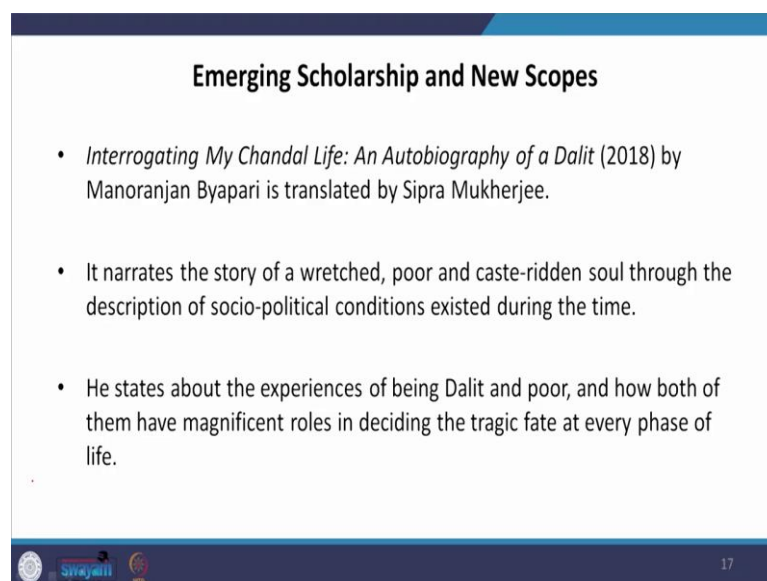
Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- Larger number of *namashudra* refugees are followers of Matua religion introduced by Harichand Thakur.
- Harichand Thakur's son Guruchand Thakur institutionalised Matua religion.
- It acted as a counter-discourse to Hinduism and caste system.

16

So, we see that most of the...at least a significant population of the Dalit refugees, the Namasudra refugees are followers of Matua religion, which is introduced by Harichand Thakur. And Harichand Thakur's son Guruchand Thakur institutionalized this Matua religion; it acted as a counter-discourse to Hinduism and caste system.

So, in *Interrogating my Chandal life* similarly, Manoranjan Byapari talks about his wretched, you know, wretched and caste-ridden existence, and he describes the socio-political conditions at that time. (Refer Slide Time: 36:52)



Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit* (2018) by Manoranjan Byapari is translated by Sipra Mukherjee.
- It narrates the story of a wretched, poor and caste-ridden soul through the description of socio-political conditions existed during the time.
- He states about the experiences of being Dalit and poor, and how both of them have magnificent roles in deciding the tragic fate at every phase of life.

17

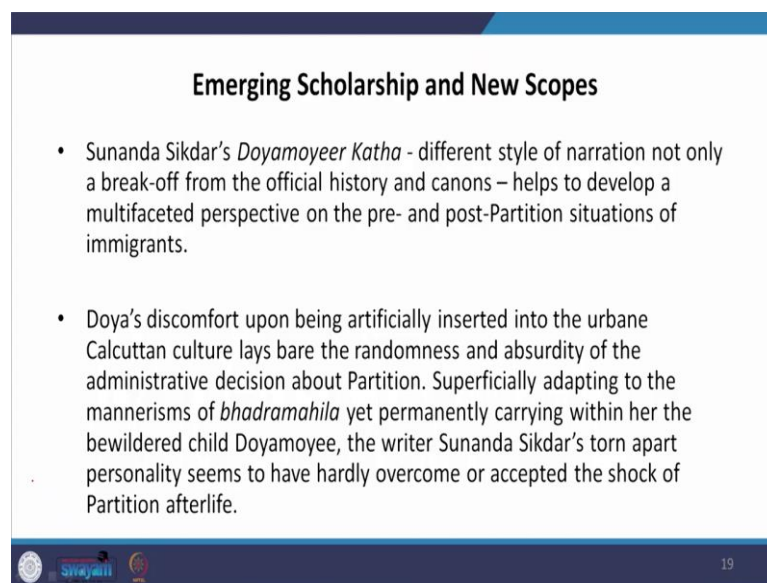
The tumultuous political situations in which he grew up, he talks about his camp life, the dismal conditions in the refugee camps where he grew up. So, being a Dalit and poor had [played] great roles in deciding the tragic fate and, you know, inform his marginalized status at all stages of life, at every phase of life. (Refer Slide Time: 37:34)

Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- Mahasweta Devi draws out the writer in Manoranjan Byapari by publishing his writing in the journal *Bartika* by the name of Madan Dutta.
- Byapari plays multiple roles as a Rickshaw-wallah, a Naxalite, a criminal, a cook and a writer in the circle of his Chandal life.
- "The life that I have lived must be shared with many. I have come back from the jaws of death many times. Recently again I was fighting death, and I had a strong feeling that my life-story must be documented in print, or else it will be lost with me. It's important for people to know that someone survived in such horrid conditions. My writings represent all those people who continue to live in such inhuman circumstances" (J. Sarangi 2012).


So, we see that it is only after coming in touch with Mahasweta Devi that he starts writing books. So, he becomes... he plays multiple roles as a rickshaw-wallah, a Naxalite, a criminal, a cook. His life is extremely you know checkered and through these vicissitudes, he tries to identify his self, his existence in his autobiography. It is a very complex/layered existence, where he questions everyone, but he also does not fringe from questioning or problematizing his own complex self, right.

So, next we also have a very interesting, a very remarkable work called *Doyamoyeer Katha* by Sunanda Sikdar. It is a very different style of narration, which is a departure from the canonical works that we have on Bengal partition. (Refer Slide Time: 38:37)



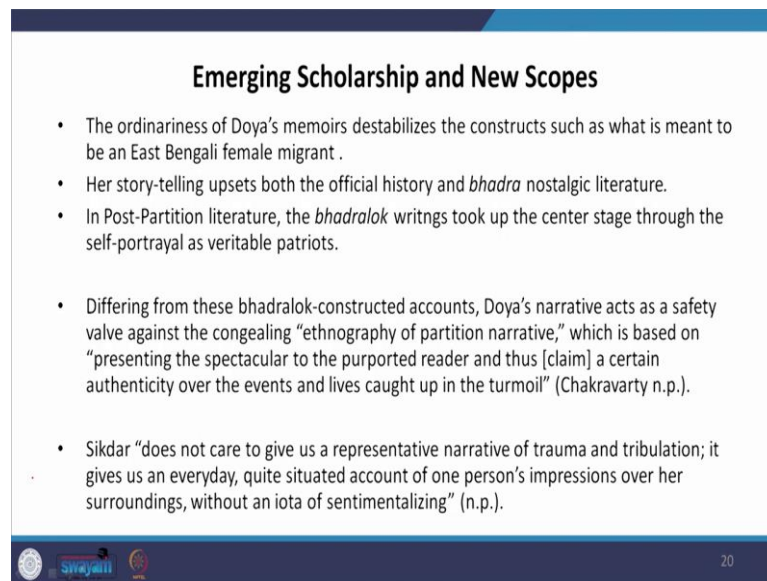
Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- Sunanda Sikdar's *Doyamoyeer Katha* - different style of narration not only a break-off from the official history and canons – helps to develop a multifaceted perspective on the pre- and post-Partition situations of immigrants.
- Doya's discomfort upon being artificially inserted into the urbane Calcuttan culture lays bare the randomness and absurdity of the administrative decision about Partition. Superficially adapting to the mannerisms of *bhadramahila* yet permanently carrying within her the bewildered child Doyamoyee, the writer Sunanda Sikdar's torn apart personality seems to have hardly overcome or accepted the shock of Partition afterlife.

 19


So, we see that there is constantly a disjuncture or fracture between the narrator...the juvenile protagonist narrator Doya and the current adult writer Sunanda Sikdar's persona, and there is... there has been no attempt interestingly to reconcile these two facets of the same person.

So, Doya is the rural child, the bewildered child who could never inwardly come in terms with the Calcuttan culture, the artificiality; or, let us say, the the refined woman's characters that were artificially inserted or forced on her could never be internalized by Doya. (Refer Slide Time: 39:25)



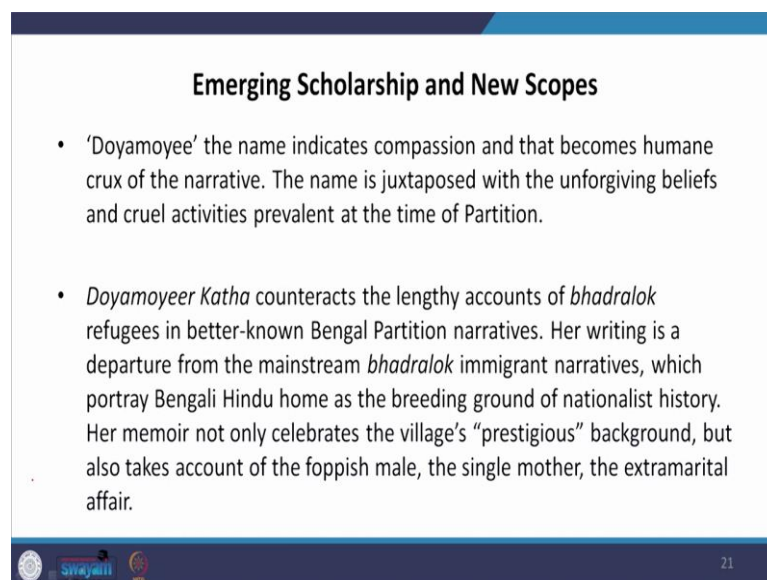
Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- The ordinariness of Doya's memoirs destabilizes the constructs such as what is meant to be an East Bengali female migrant .
- Her story-telling upsets both the official history and *bhadra* nostalgic literature.
- In Post-Partition literature, the *bhadralok* writings took up the center stage through the self-portrayal as veritable patriots.
- Differing from these *bhadralok*-constructed accounts, Doya's narrative acts as a safety valve against the congealing "ethnography of partition narrative," which is based on "presenting the spectacular to the purported reader and thus [claim] a certain authenticity over the events and lives caught up in the turmoil" (Chakravarty n.p.).
- Sikdar "does not care to give us a representative narrative of trauma and tribulation; it gives us an everyday, quite situated account of one person's impressions over her surroundings, without an iota of sentimentalizing" (n.p.).

 20

The ordinariness of this memoirs destabilizes the constructs such as what it means to be an East Bengali, a female immigrant and what it means to look back at the past after many years. So, in post-partition literature, the *bhadralok* writings had always taken up the center, you know, the centerstage through the portrayal.. through their self-portrayal as the veritable patriots and the veritable victims.

Now, moving away from that position, the narrative acts as a safety valve against you know congealing any kind of ethnography of partition narrative, and it does not try to be spectacular and claim a certain authenticity over the events. It does not want or aim at becoming a representative narrative of trauma and tribulation; it rather delves on everyday-ness, on you know one's every day, and it actually is able to overcome any sort of sentimentalizing; it actually steers clear of any kind of sentimentalizing. (Refer Slide Time: 40:50)



Emerging Scholarship and New Scopes

- 'Doyamoyee' the name indicates compassion and that becomes humane crux of the narrative. The name is juxtaposed with the unforgiving beliefs and cruel activities prevalent at the time of Partition.
- *Doyamoyeer Katha* counteracts the lengthy accounts of *bhadralok* refugees in better-known Bengal Partition narratives. Her writing is a departure from the mainstream *bhadralok* immigrant narratives, which portray Bengali Hindu home as the breeding ground of nationalist history. Her memoir not only celebrates the village's "prestigious" background, but also takes account of the foppish male, the single mother, the extramarital affair.

21

So, we see that *Doyamoyeer Katha* is a way of a moving away from the mainstream *bhadralok* narratives, which have an archival quality. We have already discussed the role of canon and archives in our earlier lectures. So, her memory not only celebrates the village's prestigious background, but for example, it also does not refrain from talking about the 'others', you know the transgendered person, the foppish man, the single mother.

Or it does not fringe from telling the narratives of or telling the stories of extramarital affair in the village. So, it is not, you know, it does not fit very well with the nationalistic

renditions of Bengal partition literature. It does not fit very well with the accounts.. with the nationalistic accounts on Bengal partition.

It is rather, I mean, a moving away from the unforgiving beliefs and cruel activities. Doyamoyeer Katha actually dwells on and celebrates the humane crux of the narrative with the village as, you know, a unit; the village with Doya growing up [where Doya grows up], alright. With this, we are going to stop today's lecture. We will meet again for another round of discussions.

Thank you.