

Blurred Visions : A Study On Ananya Jahanara Kabir's *Partition's Post - Amnesias***Bhagya V J, Rukmini Sarma, Dr Anjana R B****MA English, MA English, Assistant Professor****Department of English****Christ Nagar College****Trivandrum****(Received:25July2024/Revised:29July2024/Accepted:15August2024/Published:30August2024)****Abstract**

The 1947 partition of Hindustan into India and Pakistan resulted in widespread violence, identity crises and traumatic experiences for the citizens who were forced to choose between the two nations, leading to loss of homes and irrevocable life changes. This paper delves into the concept of repressed memory, exploring how fragmented recollections trigger feelings of trauma experienced during the partition period, drawing on Ananya Jahanara Kabir's work, *Partition's Post-Amnesias*. The enduring effects of the traumatic events, characterized by violence, displacement, and ongoing alienation, are examined. This paper aims to intertwine ideas of displacement with memory, hope and enchantment thereby rediscovering the frail bundles of kinship and memory that hold people in place even after political and personal circumstances have caused them to be unwillingly displaced from their motherland. The book's accounts reveal the horrors of partition, with thousands of men killed, numerous women subjected to sexual assault and even newborns and young children falling victim to brutality. The echoes of post-partition trauma transcend generations and geographical boundaries. Memory being the only way to relive the past, the paper aims to re-address the question of the sense of belongingness, loss of identity and mental trauma that people endured during the time of partition and show cases the emotional and mental impact of displacement on individuals from both nations. The paper explores how people attribute importance to religion and its implications in the context of partition as religious factor played a crucial role in the massive killings. The traumatic memories persist in people's minds not as coherent images but as fragmented pieces, shaping their collective consciousness.

Keywords: Identity, Partition, Violence, Memory, Trauma, Displacement, Religion.

On 15th August 1947, the Indian subcontinent achieved its long-lost freedom from British rule, which colonised India for more than one hundred years. Unfortunately, the exhilarated shouts of

freedom from colonial rule were repressed by shrieks and tears of millions, owing to the division of the subcontinent into two independent nations - India (with Hindu-majority) and (Pakistan with Muslim-majority). The partition of 1947 culminated in one of the largest mass migrations in world history. Millions of people were forcefully displaced and the nation witnessed violence to the degree that had never been seen before; trains carrying dead bodies more than passengers, beheaded bodies lying along the sides of the roads, raping of women, young girls and killing of the newborns. Moments of celebration metamorphosed itself into an affliction that was unforeseen. As remarked by C. Ryan Perkins in the article titled *1947 Partition of India and Pakistan*, " What should have been a moment of crowning triumph after years of anti-colonial struggle was indelibly marred by unimaginable violence and bloodshed."

In the chapter 'The Phantom Map', Kabir investigates Pakistan's decolonization as well as the neo-colonization of West Pakistan that is stuck over its eastern faction due to geographical constraints. Once known as East Pakistan, Bangladesh's history was 'palimpsestally' preserved and more crucially, purposefully translated through the eyes of its tyrannical neighbours. The novels are an attempt at excavation, slicing through and mucking up the layers of memory and the narrative logic of the stories often forces us to go against our better judgement in order to explore the texture of that yearning for another place and time. The stories use the year 1971 as a jumping-off point for exploring the relationship between history and memory. They also connect cartography, memory, and intergenerational differences within families by using cartography as a mediator that tangles the webs of family secrets and decisions made by earlier generations as cyphers for the work of collective amnesia. Both Bangladesh and Pakistan experienced amnesia as a result of collective violence, though for very different reasons.

The novels portray a certain attitude to history that positions the writer as a peacemaker between opposing memorial legacies. By using clues that are embedded in childhood recollections, each protagonist deciphers the secret history of 1971 through information that is transmitted over space and time. One charts the events' metamorphosis of a lived memory of East Pakistan into post memory by contrasting the chronology within the story to the external events. By commemorating through the lens of inter-family secrets, betrayals, behaviours and intergenerational crises, the multiple track narrative style recovers 1971 as the year that saw east Pakistan vanish and become Bangladesh. The novels follow the change of east Pakistan from a real location where Pakistanis lived and travelled 'through to a ghostly presence' represented by

various remnants. As a result, the generation, who experienced post-amnesia in 1971, is faced with the challenge of saving these post-memory narratives, which have been tainted by omissions and forgetting.

The responsibility of creation of political borders of the Indian Subcontinent was rendered to Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer. Radcliffe, who had little knowledge about the subcontinent, was offered a period of five weeks to alter the existing borders and recreate a new one. With the intention of conveying to the newer generations about the gruesome events of Partition, many writers, in their works, began insisting on depicting real life incidents that occurred during partition. The partition stories chronicled the physical and mental traumas that people endured during the time of partition. West Pakistan is distinguished by its continental openness, says Kabir in "Terracotta Memories," in contrast to East Pakistan's quiet and insular illumination. Clay is used extensively in the post-partition era, from pre-modern architecture to terracotta toys and figurines discovered in prehistoric sites to the littering shards made by artisans. It also plays a significant role in artistic endeavours and institution building in India and Pakistan, and after 1971, it continues to do so in the new nation of Bangladesh. Terracotta pieces made from clay that has been kneaded, scarred, and burned represent overlapping traumatising events that have shaped and striated the post-partition person. From pre-Aryans to Buddhists to Greeks, West Pakistan, the pre-Islamic country served as a temporary meeting place for wide range of cultures. "Memory, as they remind us, is not just about remembering, it is also about forgetting." (Alam and Sharma 98). The author laconically depicts two convergent lines between the reinterpreted artisanal capitalism and the multiculturally primal and "mythified" archaeology using the emblem of the Terracotta. Terracotta serves as a connecting element throughout time and is the only material that has been continuously used for domestic and votive purposes across all cultures and time periods. When author discusses the syncretic and perilous contiguity between two but irreconcilable generations, the supposed literary examples that she uses to illustrate her point provide exquisite evidence for her final claim. In addition to paying respect to the popular, folk, and fairground arts of Bengal, the stories that describe the terracotta series guide us through a never-ending sequence of psychological hide-and-seek delays or prevarications. The chapter attempts to bridge the gap between two amnesias—national and familial—by illuminating how the split gave rise to a mentality that justified various alienations under the general banner of modernity.

Millions of people were uprooted from their original homeland and were forced to accept another place as their new homeland. The refugees were dominated by a sense of alienation in their new land. Memory became their only connection to the past. It ensured a specific identity to the home-seeking refugees, who had lost their home and loved ones in the tussle of partition migration. The pre-partition Hindustan is accessible only through what remains in the memories and the accompanying feeling of detachment in their new homeland, which made the refugees the prisoners of the past. The present had very little to offer and as a result their whole existence was shrouded by the memories of the past. The memories shared by the refugees are traumatised memories of physical violence, sexual assaults, forceful displacement and the loss of identity. A sense of nostalgia linked the present and the past lives of these refugees, thus there existed a constant conflict between the identity imposed onto them and the one they already had. Anasua Basu Raychaudhury, in her work, "Nostalgia of 'Desh', Memories of Partition" observed, Memory indeed 'is the engine and chassis of all narrations'. In fact, memories are objects that tumble out unexpectedly from the mind, linking the present with the past. From the narratives of past it becomes possible to understand how these displaced persons perceived their own victimisation and to what extent it came into conflict with the identity 'imposed' on them or the one they accepted. The reinvention of the pre-partition subcontinent could be made possible only by retrieving the memories that remain repressed in the minds of the migrants.

The emergence of two new independent nations, as Muslim majority Pakistan and Hindu majority India, further infused the notion of religious differences in the minds of the people, which ensued the rigorous violence and bloodshed, identity crisis and traumatic experiences. With the birth of two separate nations, communal tension seized the subcontinent. Communities that lived together peacefully for years, started attacking each other in the pretext of difference in religion and community. The mass migration was responsible for uprooting fifteen million people and had claimed the lives of around two million people. The episode of partition is crucial to both India and Pakistan, as the memories of violence and bloodshed are forever etched in the history of these nations. Bengal and Punjab, experienced violence more intensely, as these two provinces were divided between India and Pakistan. Thousands of people had become innocent victims of the mass communal violence. Before partition, religion was never used as an identity tool.

It is fascinating to see how Kabir incorporates both ancient and modern arts as articulating mechanisms in the construction of Bangladeshi and Pakistani identities in 'Deep Topographies' through archaeological analysis. This chapter pursues a romance of place as a means of reconstructing Pakistan from the shadows of collective memory in the tumultuous present. It examines how archaeogeography is mobilised and connects the two worlds using intricate topographical tropes. This excellent rewrite seeks to identify the key geopolitical and intergenerational causes of this pre-Islamic inheritance burial in this first 'Terracotta Memories' part. The terracotta memories are giving way to an organic search for a strong Indus-based Pakistani identity that, although being uprooted and transferred, can survive in the current context of the post-partition debate. Sindh appears to serve this purpose for the Pakistani geobody, which is described as saying that the search for a geobody typically yields a focal point for the nation's collective emotions. Kabir does in fact call for a lot of attention from this encased Pakistani geo-body. The gaps that Zia-ul-Islamist Haq's dictatorial dictatorship left in its wake, on the one hand, and the orientalised post-9/11 Western perspective of the West over Muslim nations, when it is not being constantly and improperly compared to a Talibanized neighbouring Afghanistan. The creative connections between the writers allow us to trace the legacy of archaeogeography's imagined possibilities for Pakistanis in a post-1947, post-1971, and post-9/11 world, rather than just interpreting them in light of the information provided by the archaeogeographic field. Contrarily, these traumas are, as already mentioned, very much linked to a visually rich and occasionally fetishized artistic past that, in terms of appropriating identities, becomes anachronistic and voyeuristically colonial.

In an article titled *What really caused the Violence of Partition* by Guneeta Singh Bhalla, it is revealed that, "Despite the violent times they endured, we find that the vast majority of the eight-thousand individuals we have interviewed do not hold grudges against those belonging to religious groups that were hostile toward them in 1947." The article further raises the argument that the strong feelings of the next generations toward "the other side", "is due to partition witnesses having pre-partition memories of pleasant coexistence with 'the other', while only memories of violence and regret associated with, which are more pronounced, are selectively passed down to the next generation". The article further records the interview of a woman named Ranjit Kaur, who endured the agony of migration after partition. "I still don't know what happened. Why did we have to move?". The state of perplexion revealed by the above statement

reassures the fact that, although many years have passed after partition, the sufferings endured makes it unable to reconcile with the brutal episodes in the minds of people.

There has been collective amnesia as far as the incidents of partition and migration were concerned. Memory plays a crucial role in delineating the effect of partition on the minds of people. The feeling of nostalgia toward the original homeland of migrants is one of the major factors that contributes to the sense of alienation experienced in their new land. At the same time, the memories of the mass violence and bloodshed remain suppressed within the migrants, causing them to depend and have faith on their new homeland for ensuring security and peace. Even today, there is difficulty in processing and comprehending the episodes of partition and the migration that followed. The hope of being able to live in a free nation was shattered by the division of the subcontinent and the resulting violence and bloodbath. The author draws the conclusion that these un-/shared cultural signifiers, in addition to domestic and personal isolation, sparked the unsettling condition of South Asian people who were either physically or figuratively isolated between trenches. She demonstrates how the landscape and culture of the GangesBrahmaputra delta combine with the remembered space of east Bengal to generate a potent affective heritage for the contemporary Bengali and the concluding chapter consolidates the evolving perception of 1947 and 1971 as connected occurrences. Kabir examines the enduring mythopoesis of enchantment, illuminating not only its origins but also the nuanced interplay between status, spirituality, and ethnicity that upheld the complete range of post partition identities throughout the two Bengals. As a result, the 'unhomed' have used these archaeogeographic discrepancies to purposefully develop new multicultural identities based on this vacillating and in-between state.

"Indians and Pakistanis are still, despite the ongoing and encouraging liberalisation of the visa regime in 2006, kept apart. For sixty years Indians and Pakistanis have been largely segregated in a manner unthinkable to the protagonists who agreed to the plan at the fateful meeting on 3 June 1947. The way in which Pakistan and India have evolved as nation states and the literal, pedantic, policing of nationality in the interim seems in retrospect a product of the anxieties and insecurities of Partition. The failure at the time to define Indian and Pakistani citizenship fully, the contradictions of imagined nationalisms and the territorial realities of state-making left a difficult and acrimonious legacy. Today, queues outside visa offices remain long and depressing as families camp out from early in the morning trying to acquire the necessary paperwork to

cross the border, while the visa regime explicitly favours the wealthy and cosmopolitan. Visas, when issued, still restrict visitors to specific cities, only allow trips of a short duration and involve complicated and dispiriting registration with the local police on arrival. It has become ever harder to recover a sense of what it was like to be pre-Indian or a pre-Pakistani.”(Kabir 97).

Stories surrounding partitions includes both small-scale, differentiated stories of belonging, love and loss, power, and survival and those that link such stories to the bare, obtuse interests and discourses of nations and empires. The creation of new metaphors by historians is possible, but they will only be understandable in a novel setting that transcends accepted boundaries. There must be areas within the partition where such transgressions can occur. The Partition of 1947 serves as a stark reminder of the perils of colonial interventions and the formidable challenges that come with regime change. It is evidence of the errors of empire, which disrupt the evolution of communities, skew historical trends, and force violent state creation on cultures that would have otherwise followed other, unknown, pathways. The lessons of partition include the perils of imperial hubris and the consequences of radical nationalism. Two Countries are still coexisting in South Asia, for better or worse and they are still dealing with these legacies

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