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Recovering Memory, Choosing Forgetting: Reading My Family, Partition and Me: India 1947- A Documentary

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Abstract

In this article, we, the authors, wish to explore questions of memory and history through and in an analytical reading of partition narratives and a documentary titled *My Family, Partition and Me: India 1947 (2017)*. Our analysis intends to explore the distinction between memory and history and map its implications for story-telling using ideas from memory studies, partition narratives, and documentary film production. For argument, we intend to engage the cultural and personal choice between memory and forgetting and its implications for reconciliation, restoration, and justice. In conclusion, the authors wish to comment on the underlying purposes and function of memory recovery and the form of documentary storytelling.

Keywords: Memory, Forgetting, Reconciliation, and Restoration

Introduction:

Stories have a habit of speaking more truth than histories sometimes do— although they are inescapably integral to histories. While this proposition may appear problematic, it only plays off what Portelli signifies as narrative testimony, which is integral to the writing of history. (Portelli 2006 p.55) In the Indian context, partition stories are indeed mired in violence, loss and mourning. However, somewhat contradictorily, they also promise resilience, reconciliation and

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restoration. They crisscross the tragic, brutal, gracious, and hopeful to interrupt the abject quotidian in a lacerating struggle for meaning. Four such stories are contained in the two-episode documentary series about partition, titled *My Family, Partition and Me: 1947,* directed and produced for the BBC by Leo Burley and presented by Anita Rani (Burley, BBC 2017).

These stories are told through the journeys children and grandchildren make to their ancestral homes. They revisit the moment of violent departures at the partition and also retrace the horrific and dangerous escape their families make from the throes of brutality and death. Through their conversations and interviews, one listens to the anguish and the despair of mourning and separation. Each of them experiences profound loss and inherits its pain. Eventually, there is acceptance, reconciliation and restoration because of the nature of their journeys.

My Family, Partition, and Me: India 1947 (2017) follows both an expository and a participatory mode of documentary filmmaking (Nichols, 1991). Drawing from news and personal archives, the documentary explains pertinent historical and geopolitical events resulting in the partition. The narrative of partition is offered by two immigrants, Bim Bhowmik and Asad Ali Sayyed. They are accompanied by three first-generation citizens, Binitha Kane, Samir Sayyed, and Anita Rani, who reside in the United Kingdom. The first one of these stories, however, follows Mandy, British by origin, whose grandfather, Arthur Weiss, an expat born and raised in colonial India, is claimed to have shot some of the actual footage of all the gore and violence in then East Pakistan. He is significant because he attempts to mediate peace between communities but does not achieve much. He and his family have to return to England just before partition because of the impending violence that is to ravage the Indian subcontinent.

The Documentary presenter, C Anita Rani, a journalist at the BBC, gives narrative continuity to the series. In her opening remarks, Anita talks of partition as "the largest forced migration ever recorded" when "millions of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs fled their

homes…" (Burley, BBC 2017). Anita concludes her inaugural observation by saying:

> Families like mine were torn apart. Many partition survivors decided to rebuild their lives in Britain. And now, 70 years on, we, the children and grandchildren are going back to discover how partition dramatically changed our family stories forever.' (Burley, BBC 2017)

This inaugural statement, accompanied by visual images, offers us not just an introduction to an experience but anchors a point of view that signifies the struggle with inherited loss on the one hand and the redoubled eagerness to resolve that loss on the other.

Standing at the bustling highway leading to Lahore, after airing footage of the flag-lowering ceremony on the Wagah border, and interspersed with archival partition images, the presenter frames the invocations of personal memory of families against the insufficiency of the grand narratives of partition. This deliberate call to memory over history raises critical questions about partition and its stories. Partition historians—including Urvashi Butalia (1988/2017), and Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin (2007)—would vouch for how oral narratives record a much deeper authenticity than the deliberate silences big-picture historians are implicated in (Butalia 1988 & Menon and Bhasin 2007).

Reading as Method: A Brief Discussion

At this juncture, we wish to outline the method for reading and interpreting the documentary text we wish to explore. While we assume reading as interpretation in the general Cultural studies sense as the method for analysis and argument, we wish to invoke in specific ways Urvashi Butalia's now invaluable *The Other Side of Silence: Voices on the Partition of India* (1998/2017) and Ritu Menon's and Kamala Bhasin's instructive *Border and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (2007). The above shows how oral narratives of the experience of partition are often read against the omissions that regular historians make. Historians reject oral narratives as the basis for history writing because they are far too subjective. However,

voices, rather than discourses, as such narratives are often marked, emphasise orality. In order to substantiate this notion, we employ Portelli's notion that oral sources are a necessary condition for a history of the non-hegemonic classes" (Portelli, 2003, p.56) and less beneficial for the history of "the ruling classes" (Portelli, 2003, p.56). That has led us to claim that oral narratives come from below, from among the suffering masses, and question the history of rulers and their associates. That, we argue, makes the oral narrative more meaningful than written history because they are testimonies of experience, quite different from the selective nature of history itself. Effectively, if one applies the testimony concept to oral narratives of partition, they arguably become more authentic than the grand narratives of history.

To thicken our approach further, we invoke the Memory Studies scholar Barbara Misztal (2005), who shows how "remembering" is essential for justice as "forgetting" is as well (Misztal, 2005 p.1322 &1324). Hence, the memory of suffering and the forgetting of it remain two sides of the same coin, mainly because one articulates just restoration (Misztal, 2005, p.1325) and the other equally just reconciliation. All these are possible only through "collective memory" shared (Misztal, 2005, p.1321), i.e. through voicing the pain and anguish of experience among and with people. Hence, the suffering of partition, articulated through oral narratives by authentic voices of experience—as pointed out earlier— can find the justice of reconciliation and restoration (Misztal, 2005 p. 1326). Therefore, oral narratives, particularly of suffering in partition, carry historical value hitherto not accounted for in our history writing. At this juncture, we consider Derrida's perspective of absence (Derrida, 2007, p.109) significant because the notion unveils how the absence of partition stories is integral to the history of partition in history-writing. Such absence is a presence of discursive violence that elides, if not omits, the suffering, particularly of the generations beyond and after partition. The many stories we read as we analyse the partition experience would tell how the inheritors of such struggles currently find the justice of reconciliation and restoration because their biographies or personal memory narratives are now accounted for,

unlike earlier in professional history writing. This double absence, avoiding such narratives on the one hand and hiding them on the other, calls us to employ Derrida in this specific way (Derrida, 2007, p.109). Our reading as a method speaks of uncovering absence, particularly regarding hidden stories of suffering, in the oral narratives of partition, founded on the principles of memory-recovery and oral narrativisation.

However, as we argue across the debates between memory, partition, orality, and absence, we know that we write at the intersection between documentary and oral narratives as forms of truth-telling. Hence, we wish to cast our reading across the following perspective concerning documentaries. The structuring of the documentary allows us to look at various actors in the retelling of the story. The call to restore and retell memory is entrusted from a generation anguished by suffering to a generation charged with recovering and preserving them. While revisiting those moments of loss, pain and anguish, there is a specific role for the task of witnessing, often of the generations that inherited partition violence. The witness is also given a glimpse of home and the life that might have been lived before the partition. The other significant actors are custodians of this memory, people who can testify to the violence in the events associated with partition. They are former neighbours who have witnessed life's quotidian before the troubled moment of departure and displacement. Hence, they provide authentic narratives of living without hate before the violence ensuing partition.

In what follows, we will explore questions of memory and history in the partition. We intend to map their implications and effectively comment on intersections between partition and story-telling. Since memory recovery and the documentary form are integral to this process, we wish to read their interconnection anchored in the experience of partition.

Recovering Memory as Catharsis: The Possibilities of Remembering and Forgetting:

Recovering memory implies re-living past struggles and emotional pain. However, it also involves cathartic coping that includes restoration and reconciliation. We argue that the documentary form mediates this cathartic possibility (Sachs Joe, https://iep.utm.edu/aristotle-poetics/9-10-2024) through and in the choices we make of remembering and forgetting. As this exploration progresses, this aspect of memory will be made more visible.

Indeed then, for Bim Bhowmik, the father of the travelling informant, Binita, the memory of partition begins in 1946, with his mother's voice calling out in the night: "Shh, just run". As Binita reports this experience of grave fear and trembling, the scene pans over the largely quiet but sprawling grain fields, the home of her ancestors. In this deliberate juxtaposition between the quietness of the rural scene and the silencing whisper of the past, one hears the voice of first-hand accounts of what was suffered in the aftermath of partition violence in the subcontinent. This scene demonstrates what Urvashi Butalia (1998 /2017) suggests:

> What I collect or what people send me or give me are *memories* (Emphasis added), their recollections and stories of Partition…the stories have never stopped coming… I hoped that if I came back to this subject, I would do so with stories of friendship…
>
> (Butalia 1998/2017 p. xvi)

Butalia's comment is indicative of how memories of partition are also those of irreconcilable violation. However, she points to a hope that someday, these stories may carry the warmth and value of shared friendships.

For us who read Binitha's story, Bhim Bhowmik's heavily fear-laden utterances slither through the almost idyllic scenes of the vast hinterlands of undivided Bengal, now in Bangladesh. At this juncture, and as earlier pointed out, that juxtaposition between his

retelling of horror and fear and the calmness of the current natural scenery, only punctuated by a stray farm worker, invokes an *absence* (Derrida, 2007, p.109). We argue here that that absence in the Derridean sense, as earlier articulated, suggests how the experience of the horrors of partition seems to have been elided by the writing of history, which provides simple data, often just numbers of deaths, but not significant accounts of the emotional devastation or the toxic nature of partition violence. In this respect, Urvashi Butalia's statements make sense and provide relevance here, as they insist on oral sharing and articulation as both offering emotional empathy and deep intellectual veracity. Hence, Butalia's hope and the Derridean absence breed the possibility of memory and its recovery.

One notices that absence (Derrida, 2007, p.109) in history writing unfolds in Binitha's contemporary travel and the persistent flashbacks of hurt recalled. However, these accounts and testimonies of prominent village elders testify with acute oral evidence the authenticity of this memory— as explained through the signifying invocations of Butalia (Butalia 1998/2017). As Bim's utterances further unravel the depths of cruelty, both the walls of the Bhowmik home and the field that hid them resonate with the sense of loss contained in such partitioned memory

Binitha receives great acknowledgement at this juncture. The village community hails her as "their daughter" (Burley, BBC, 2017 Ep.2) and invites her to stay. Binitha then reenacts the haunting boat ride, reliving the dangerous escape of her father and his family. The young boatman, Wajullah Botteri, who enabled that rescue, lives. Binitha, at that moment, says, "Thank you" (Burley, BBC, 2017 Ep2). In that context, one reads a sense of profound graciousness marked by reconciliation.

Once again, Butalia's perspective clarifies that one does not remember "a violent history for the sake of those who lived through it and died" but "equally for those who lived through it and survived" (Butalia1998/2017 p. xv). Butalia implies that the nature of partition has a duality, in which both the loss and the survival have equal meaning simultaneously. The remembering in Bhowmik's tale is

less about its disappearance "from public memory" than about its lived experience (Butalia1998/2017 p. xiv).

Binitha's tale extracts a profoundly personal moment of mourning and loss from what would otherwise have remained a public tale of sorrow and despair. It sutures together a deeply personal tale of belonging to family and friendship with an equally threatening story of violation. Hence, the subjectivity of the tale extends way beyond the gore of the moment and into further travels that depict both the anguish of dispersal and the value of commitment.

Memory and Forgetting:

Jamini Bhowmik, Bim's father, died in a refugee camp in Chandranagore, wresting from his little boy the promise "Go, Be a good doctor someday". A chain of decisions would then lead Bim into medicine and caregiving for the elderly. Bim himself could not have fulfilled that dream until and unless he chose to remember his father's expectations of him. However, simultaneously, if he did not choose to forget the memory of the violations that accompanied the experience, he would have lived bitterly in the past. It is precisely this contradictory coming together of both remembrance and forgetting that makes reconciliation possible.

For, despite one's consistent predilection to memorialise the past, the value of remembering is contingent on the desire to forget. In that curious back-looping of remembering and forgetting, in the so-called philosophical polemics between emphasising presence and eliding absence (Derrida, 2007, p.109), the opportunity to forgive, reconcile and restore takes significant shape and finds meaning. If one chooses only to remember and, therefore, to memorialise the violence, one's chances of forgiving or awarding justice may be lost to a generation inheriting the past. Remembering is cathartic, and forgetting is reconciliatory, but both must pass through the extraordinary contradiction between the horror of vengeance and the potential for restoration (Misztal, 2005).

Binitha's journey symbolically retraces the horrors of partition in the sense that it is both a re-enactment of the dangerous escape and the suffering of past loss and present mourning. However, paradoxically, it is also a way to forget, not in the manner of simple erasure but in the ability to set aside and forfeit so that memory might heal. In this sense, reconciliation and restoration will lead to justice and avoid the atrocity of vengeance.

Memory, Recovery, Restoration and Resolution

However, everything is different with Samir, Assad's grandson, now living in England. Samir's journey ends with his commendation of the displaced refugee:

> The people that suffered partition…they need
> commending for what they went through…
> The sacrifice that that generation made was huge
> Moreover, it should not be forgotten
> (Burley, BBC, 2017, Ep.2).

The reason for that memory appears to be the recovery of unimaginable courage and determination. However, it is laced with the "first sacrifice" (Burley, BBC, 2017, Ep2) Assad and his family make. Despite the threats and challenges, Samir and his grandfather's family make it to Pakistan. However, that journey costs much emotionally. Ramona, Assad's younger sister, dies of the cold on the Moghulpura platform as the family escapes Ambala to a new country, namely Pakistan. For Samir, unlike the other two, Bonita and Anita Raj, whose ancestors are trapped in the historical inevitability and the political storm that results in partition, Samir's great-grandfather has been an early proponent of the formation of Pakistan. He desires a separate state as a separate identity. Moreover, in the increasingly polarising times leading up to the partition, he finds himself isolated in a place that is not their home. Even as Samir's grandfather celebrates the new country, it is Ambala to whom he returns and looks for the home he has left behind. He is disappointed and unhappy, though he is welcomed by the people

who now own his ancestral home. On camera, he says: "This is not my country; this is not my home" (Burley, BBC, 2017; Ep.1).

Remembering historical loss is also about honouring the ancestor, whose sacrifice has often rebuilt lives from nothingness. Samir's grandfather's utterance, "This is not my house, this is not my country" (Burley, BBC 2017; Ep.1), suggests that another time is always another place, and the fortuitousness of this loss, including the horror of the ruins, the absence of living people in a home once bustling with children, the large columns seemingly small and insignificant—all produce the imagery by which partition loss is characterised. In a sense, it is a terrifying moment of belonging neither here nor there.

While Samir retraces his grandfather's near-death journey, he meets, along the way, other partition victims who have made the reverse journey from Pakistan to Ambala. One of them, Gyan Chand, Punjabi- Sikh by origin, describes the complete elimination of three compartments of Hindus and Sikhs during partition violence as the trains head to refugee camps and safety. On recall, Gyan Chand restores both sanity and acceptance in a cathartic resolution by a powerful and reassuring instrument of memory, a mnemonic (Misztal, 2005, p.1333), so to speak, namely that of Punjabi Poetry.

> The days of sorrow are over, brother
> Now, new days are coming
> New life has come alive now
> Those days of sorrow are over now
> I am happy now (Burley, BBC, 2017; Ep.2)

Poetry is that moment of grace many call status, the slow counterpoise of reverse similarities. That is, a moment of awakening that demands quietus because similar violence is received by opposing parties to the trouble during partition. Often, it is one's acknowledgement of the enemy's suffering that spells a certain calm, particularly among violated communities during any form of mass violence. Poetry seems to offer that humanist potential for humane understanding.

The poetics of the tragedy provide emotional resuscitation driven by the profound recognition that others have endured the same. Moreover, the oral recovery of such past tragedies mediates the identification with the pain and anguish of other than one's own— violence equivalent to what Samir struggles with. Therefore, if Samir's grandfather loses his home, and that creates a sense of profound loss, Gyan Chand suffers because of knowing the violence first-hand. In that sense, the loss of property causing emotional discontent and displacement is placed across the experience of violence. While one does not aggregate the differing degrees of violence here, the emotional anguish differs in kind but remains equivalent to each other.

In this regard, Portelli (2003) explains: "The function of mourning is to protect the survivor from the excesses of his sorrow, to find meaning and order in despair." (Portelli, 2003, p. 208). That is, if the horror of loss and violence lingers into angst and anger, then the danger of ongoing violence persists. It implies that retaliatory violence may result as a means to set the record straight. Such violence may worsen into systemic violation. It is precisely this disconcerting possibility that Barbra Misztal (2005) insists deserves attention in memory studies. She argues that reconciliation and restoration are possible if memory can be purgative, not vengeful and coercive. So, the memory of partition violence could quickly run into situations of current violation. Only if such memory is mollified by the restoration of honour for loss endured can reconciliation be possible. This is precisely what all the characters in the Documentary promise and offer to the public, only because of the journeys they retrace and the memories they recall. These memories are then resolved by meeting people who empathise with their loss, repent for their failings, and reconcile with the generations that have inherited such historical pain. These emotions are reinvented for partition sufferers through poetry's contribution to purgation and reconciliation.

Furthermore, Barbara Misztal (2005) writing, at the cusp of what she calls the "cultural turn" (Misztal, 2005, p. 1321) in history writing—i.e. when cultural experiences became central to history-

writing—argues that individual remembering particularly of past trauma (like in the holocaust) is usually more than "a personal act" as "most personal memories are embedded in social context" (Misztal, 2005, p. 1321) inflected ever so often "by what has been shared by others" in the social experience. She calls that remembering "intersubjective" (Misztal, 2005, p. 1321) memory. By that, she implies that the remembering carries meaning only when shared with others, which, in a significant way, this documentary and its actors do. It is in the sharing with people one does not know. However, who knows about partition, not in its generic sense but intimately, that mediates the intersubjectiveness of such memory? Additionally, she suggests the following:

> …it is only by remembering that we can construct the future, transmit the meaning of past events to the next generation, and become heirs of the past. The duty to forget is a duty to go beyond anger and hatred… (Misztal 2005 p. 1323)

Misztal's ultimate argument suggests that both memory and forgetting are inevitable conditions of both "social harmony" (Misztal, 2005, p. 1335) and social justice (Misztal, 2005, p.1324). However, she argues that it is in balancing "the generosity of forgetfulness" and "the honesty of remembrance" (Misztal, 2005, p.1328) that much healthy democratic justice may be served (Misztal, 2005, p.1324). At the same time, none can escape "the truth about the past" (Misztal, 2005, p. 1236), remembering crimes against humanity such as partition eventually provides "mutual care" (Misztal, 2005, p. 1327) like between Gyan Chand, Samir and Asad. Forgetting heals because it "overcomes the resentment" that accompanies the wounding of the past. Finally, Misztal affirms:

> Remembering is not a remedy for all problems, as certain matters require the generosity of forgetfulness… (Misztal 2005 p.1327)

Truth-Telling and Documentary:

Truth-telling facilitated by cultural recovery and mediated by the Audio-visual documentary then heals differing subjects of this

trauma as and when it resists/rejects hatred and resentment. Memory as an instrument not just of recall but primarily of shared emotional pain becomes relevant in such contexts. One is made aware by memory that one is never alone in contexts of mass violence. Even one's enemy suffers as much. The presence-absence conundrum of human cruelty and rescue, of remembering that cruelty as presence and rejecting it paradoxically as absence for simply the sake of rescue, offers healing of past wounds and restoring future hope.

If the reconciliation for Assad, Samir and Gyan Chand emerges out of the ambivalence of memory and forgetting, Anita's stories are recovered differently: in the horror of not knowing. Most times, if women have been forced to death to prevent dishonour at the hands of the enemy, then one would not know. Even history will elide that story. Only oral memory will articulate it. It is precisely that omission, that not knowing, that Anita struggles with: how exactly did her grandfather's first wife, Pritam Kaur, die? However, the story being told is that she chose to jump into a well to avoid "dishonour", usually rape, in the hands of the violent mob. (Burley, BBC, 2007)

Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin (2007) observe that it is common to encourage, even force women to preserve "family and community honour" (Menon & Bhasin, 2007, p. 42) by either forcing them to jump into the well to drown or burning oneself in groups or get strangled by family (Menon & Bhasin, 2007, p. 42). However uncertain as some personal accounts might be about what had happened to some women victims of partition violence like Pritam Kaur, one—sometimes historians as well—privileges a simplistic narrative that suggests that these victims have chosen to sacrifice their lives in order to protect their honour. What is disappointing, however, is the inability, sometimes the impossibility, to find concrete evidence about what had happened to them. Oral narratives and documentaries at least attempt to resolve this lacuna of history.

As respondents to Anita's experience, we first cite this easy-to-accept narrative in certain partition documents as perhaps the worst form of absence—as implied by Derrida and earlier explained. It is what has been glossed over and not investigated at a profoundly personal level, mainly what may have been, that Anita's narrative seeks to remember, recover, and even uncover. The unravelling of such a complex narrative of uncertainty is more traumatic because of the problem of not knowing, effectively the silences of anonymity; the people of the village only vaguely describe what might have happened to Pritam Kaur. For historians, these are but accounts of "forced deaths, not just "suicides" in the name of national or community honour (Menon & Bhasin, 2007, p. 45). Menon and Bhasin point out that "the shame-fear-dishonour syndrome" (Menon & Bhasin, 2007p. 29) continues the cycle of violence beyond the easy closure which claims that "they preferred to die" (Menon & Bhasin, 2007, p.56).

For Anita, recovering her grandfather, Dheru Ram, from the fond recollections of Abdul Hamid, the oldest witness and Dheru Ram's friend, is a moment of hope that restores the presence of an absent figure. It vocalises the absence and the silence caused by the empty rhetoric of numbers on the one hand and the vaguely presumptuous writing on the other. However, as Anita persists in asking Hamid about Pritam Kaur's death, she receives only an uncertain 'yes, it might be.' (Burley, BBC, 2017, Ep.2) Later, Anita sits at a nearby well in another moment of stasis, quietly honouring the dead woman. Once more, it becomes, as earlier argued, a profound moment of quiet awareness that begs respect for the honourable dead. For Anita, she would never be sure about her relative's death. All she could do was reconcile with the loss she suffered.

The final story we read here is that of Mandy and her grandfather, Arthur Weiss. Weiss was born in India, spent most of his childhood in Calcutta and returned to England after Partition. An amateur filmmaker, he has archived extensive footage of violence in Bengal in the years that lead up to the partition. Two smaller stories crisscross the larger narrative: one of British apathy, which Arthur Weiss distances himself from and the other of rigorous negotiation

with the two religious communities. Mandy meets with Weiss's friend from his childhood in Calcutta, who shares the sorrow of seeing his father die in partition violence while the British battalion nearby does nothing; in the other account that Mandy receives, we hear of Arthur's commitment to Gandhi's vision of Peace. (Burley, BBC, 2017, Ep.2) Knowing that her grandfather worked for peace gives Mandy a sense of great relief that shapes some form of restorative justice for her journey and the experience she meets. In some sense, Mandy, too, is reconciled— simply because she now knows, not comprehensively, but at least marginally, that the English man, Arthur Weiss, was at least redeemed himself by working for peace.

Conclusion

The documentary, because the BBC produces it, comes to the viewer wrapped in the "institutional framework" (Nichols, 1990, p.9) that "imposes an institutional way of seeing and speaking" (Nichols, 1990, p.9). BBC production fits the frame of an institutional documentary by employing the voiceover to characterise the reality constructed by ways of "seeing and speaking" (Nichols, 1990, p.9). It also stays true to the conventions of documentary filmmaking of not openly taking sides. However, here, in the narrative voice of Anita Rani, the documentary also achieves some degree of self-reflexivity. Anita Rani's narrative does provide balance. So, we can safely assume that the filmmakers of this documentary attempt to capture something unscripted and unguarded. However, they must frame the narrative within factual and historical detail.

One standard current in all the stories appears to be the place and position of *outsiders* to partition violence. One need not cite scholarly references to establish notions of the outsider. Effectively, anybody who fails to belong within the frames of any community or space, imagined or real, is depicted as an outsider. It is in this sense that we employ the term and concept here. Every story identifies a neighbouring village, another district, and sometimes even another region as the originator of violence upon one's own. Even in Mandy's Calcutta story, the people armed with weapons come from

outside. Effectively, the one foreign to one's space and community inaugurates the violence. Thus, the imagery of violence represents the consistent play of the inside-outsider complexity. Indeed, the scramble for self is ultimately mediated by the recognition of the other. That is, the perpetrators of violence are the others to the receivers of such violence and vice-versa. Hence, the ambivalence of meaning, i.e. who is morally depraved and who is not, lives in the conjuncture between memory and forgetting in the narrative recovery of the documentary.

The documentary, even as it frames the problematic disjuncture between the so-called every day and the violence of partition, between what might have been the quotidian and the brutality of divisiveness, between those who have lost their home and country and the location of both the survivors and the generation that follows—all seem to be awarded this historical moment of recognition and reconciliation because they have moved twice from the location of the trauma. They move from an undivided land to England and back again on a journey of recovery and remembering. As immigrants to another country, their homecoming and ability to tell the truth of their lives is also a privilege afforded by an absence, both from time and place.

The possibility of recovering or returning home is offered to them as historical compensation. However, more significant questions that affect the subject of partition experience and its history prevail: How do we tell these stories except to mark a presence for people who inhabit mourning and loss? Perhaps, by plainly saying they lived there and they suffered loss and death! Moreover, how do we retell these stories to those who pass through/live in the exact locations as their ancestors have when the trauma of the event has not entirely passed? Except perhaps as forgetting, perhaps as forfeiting a memory, for restorative justice!

Relations between communities continue to be wrought with tensions, and the overarching narratives of othering have now been made more concrete. What are the possibilities of telling the 'truth' and extracting it from layers of amnesia, apathy and bureaucracy,

even as we contend with narratives given to historical distortions? The most common examples are the differing numbers provided by historians from different nations on either side of the national boundaries. What recovery and restoration of memory is made possible for those who, in some sense, continue to live in the moment of disruption?

Somehow, all we are left with is the resilience of memory, which, for all practical purposes, informs people of the invaluable recovery and reconstitution of absences. Perhaps more significantly, forgetting is valuable for reconciliation and restoration.

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