INTRODUCTION

_At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom._

Jawaharlal Nehru

_For many women, it was not only miscreants, outsiders or marauding mobs they needed to fear – husbands, brothers and even sons could turn killers._

(Ritu Menon 2004: 60)

_I am frightened of an abstraction that is willing to ignore living reality._

Rabindranath Tagore

Partition as a Never Ending Phenomenon

It was perhaps at the moment when Draupadi was humiliated in the royal court by the Kauravas that the dice was rolled for women in the subcontinent to be an integral part in the politics of the region. One such momentous event which has repercussions till today is the Partition of India into two nation states vis-a-vis the drawing of the Radcliffe line in 1947. The division was done based on the British logic of religious majority with places having Muslim majority in the west and east being allocated to Pakistan. Thus Punjab in the West and Bengal in the East were divided into two parts. However it would be wrong to look at it as a solitary event that happened only in August 1947.
Even before lines were marked, there was strife amongst communities that co-existed in relative harmony before. The cracks could be traced back as early as the 1930s, when the Muslim Leagues’ differences with the Indian National Congress reached its zenith. In the weeks leading up to the actual Partition, there was a huge movement of people across the border: Hindus and Sikhs left Pakistan while Muslims from India went to Pakistan. Punjab and Bengal became ground zero for communal violence. The Muslim League’s call for a “Direct Action Day” on August 16 1946, to give concrete shape to their demand for a separate Pakistan, resulted in the ‘Direct Action Day’ or the ‘Great Calcutta Killing’ (Leonard 2017: 4). The week that followed saw horrendous violence and bloodbath with the scale of violence escalating over time. Eventually it spilled over to other places. Based on the violence that erupted between the Hindus and the Muslims, millions were massacred, displaced and rendered homeless. The mindless violence did not end with the drawing of lines on maps by the political leaders but triggered a chain reaction of more violence which continues even today. The scale of destruction may prompt one to draw comparison with the Holocaust. But unlike the Holocaust, the violence and killings were not planned and critical works about Partition were late as compared to Holocaust writings (Kamra 2002: 305). Moreover Partition did not allow the survivors the scope to “identify ‘us’ and ‘them’ as aggressors and victims; rather ‘us’ and ‘them’ meant Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs” (Mallot 12) Though there can be no exact figures, historians and political scientists have agreed that millions of people were displaced and thousands of women were abducted during partition (Bhatia and Roy; Butalia 1994; Menon and Bhasin 1997). The mass exodus of people occurred on buses, trains or on foot. In this regard, Sunil Khilnani writes:
In a society where there was very little spatial mobility (in 1931 less than 4 percent of the Indian population lived outside the state or province of their birth), Partition unleashed the largest transfer of population in human history ... in 1951 7.3 million refugees were registered in India and in 1952 the Pakistan census counted 7.2 million muhajirs or refugees. (Khilnani 1997: 129)

Makarand R. Paranjape analyses the Partition violence using Rene Girard’s theory of violence. In his book, Violence and the Sacred (1977), Girard tries to critically analyse the roots of the nature of violence. He comes to the conclusion that desire of any form or wanting something or someone is mimetic: a person desires an object because his rival/enemy/opponent wants it too. The opponent awakens and triggers the subject’s desire for the same object which leads to hatred and rivalry amongst them and which in turn leads to a cycle of violence. Using this logic to the Partition of India, Paranjape writes that:

Muslims wanted a nation because the Hindus did it; it was a mimetic desire that led both to the wholly destructive cycle of reciprocal violence. Further this mimetic desire continued to reproduce itself, with the Sikhs wanting their own nation to the Kashmiris wanting their own nation ... and so on, each time drawing communities in cycles of fratricidal violence. (Paranjape 2014: 101)

The drawing of lines did not end the religious hatred but instead entailed a “reorganisation of political space that inevitably triggers complex reconstruction of
national identity” (Cleary 2001: 20). And in this complex restructuring, “violence is not incidental but constitutive of the new state arrangement” (Cleary 2001: 11).

It is not just India alone, but the entire South Asia continues to reel under the impact of Partition in myriad ways. Drawing of political borders and partition is one of the shared South Asian experience today. As early as in 1950, East Bengal, bore the brunt of communal strife whose effects were felt in West Bengal, which caused a huge cross border migration. (Mookerjea-Leonard 2007: 7). This vicious cycle was repeated in 1964 and then again in 1971 during the Bangladesh Liberation war which resulted in the influx of refugees into India, especially in the state of Assam. This phenomenon still plagues the north eastern states but now the notion of immigration has been replaced by a “narrative of infiltration” (Schendel 2005: 195). In the western and northern India we had the Anti –Sikh riots, Babri Masjid demolition, Godhra carnage –the list goes on and has reached a point where there is a certain everydayness to the violence influenced by the notion of ‘vicarious guilt’.iiii. Across the border in Pakistan, the dissatisfaction of the mujahirs over the treatment meted out to them, have led to violent confrontations and chaos. The scenario in both India and Pakistan is a poignant reminder that religion which was the basis of formation of both the nation states failed to bring about the desired stability. It is seen that rather than solving any “communal problem, partition aggravated the difficulties of minorities in several instances” (Tai 2004: 221). Moreover the passport system meant to bring some sort of closure to the displacement of partition led to countless number of “undefined and stateless people” (Zamindar 2008: 12). Another after effect of Partition that threatens the peace of South Asia is the Kashmir conflict where both India and Pakistan have staked claim over it. The Kashmir dispute continues to reignite those problems which the boundaries of 1947 intended to stop. The
dispute over Kashmir has threatened relations between the two nation states to a point where they have both become nuclear powers, ready to intimidate and strike one another. Scholars on South Asia have traced the nuclear deadlock as a legacy of the lines sketched in 1947. As Suvir Kaul says:

As the bombs exploded ... first ‘ours’ over two days then ‘theirs’ over a few more, it seemed hard to avoid a feeling of déjà vu: you kill one of ours, we’ll kill two of yours, you explode five we will explode six. This is after all the comparative vocabulary of 1947. It lead to apocalypse then ... and it continues to govern the vengeful discourse of border skirmishes and internecine conflicts now. An eye for an eye, a neighbourhood for a mohalla, a city for a city and now a population for a population. (Kaul 2002: 2)

Thus the genesis of many problems in South Asia can be traced to circumstances created by partition. The roots of difficult relations between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh can be associated with partition. There is an increasing debate over the rights of minorities and the difficulties they face can thus be no doubt related to partition. Vazira Zamindar uses the term ‘long partition’ to expand our view of the partition pandemonium to include the continuing complex and ambiguous process of border creation (Zamindar 2008: 4). She places emphasis on the story after 1947 by highlighting the displacement, the creation of refugees, citizens and passports so as to show how the contemporary scenarios of violence can be understood to a certain extent by looking at 1947 and its aftermath (Zamindar 2008: 11).
The Initial Silence

Going back to the era of Partition, a strange game of contradiction was seen at work: on the one hand, free from the binds of the colonial masters, the nation embarked on a journey towards progress and discovery of its roots. On the other hand, countless number of people were dead and displaced- their stories pushed to the realm of the private memory. One of the markers of the 1947 violence was the torture that women were subjected to by members of both the communities. Their bodies became sites on which narratives of the new nations were written. The utter callousness with which the women were treated can be gauged from the fact that women were passed on the same way as fruits were sold (Menon and Bhasin 76). But the onus placed on patriarchal notions like honour and purity and the stigma attached on being violated, pushed these stories to the pyre of silence.

The glorified version of the post 1947 story of India has been a story of a nation trying to rebuild itself. The trauma of partition was wiped from public memory to the domain of collective amnesia. Most of the academic works focussed on the public and masculine dimensions of 1947. In this regard it would be fruitful to refer to the three types of Partition that Gyanendra Pandey discusses in his book Remembering Partition (2001). According to Pandey, the first of these partitions was the Muslim League’s demand for a separate homeland for Muslims while the second partition was the Indian National Congress’s call for a “total partition” (2001: 31) and the third Partition was the actual partition of the subcontinent (2001: 42) The corresponding narratives about the 1947 saga was nationalistic and patriarchaliv. As Kudaisya and Tan writes:
For almost twenty years after partition took place, the subject was dominated by the reflections of those who participated in the event. Biographies, autobiographies and memoirs held the field, and inevitably they focussed the spotlight on great men and their work. Many participants and observers were convinced that they had been witness to historic developments and were tempted to keep a record of their impressions by committing these to diaries (Kundaisya and Tai 2004: 8). What had been pushed in these types of discourses are representations of the trauma of the common people which would have given a glimpse of a different story. Thus the decades after partition were relatively silent on the pandemonium which engulfed the subcontinent. Of course there were voices from the margins like writers Sadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955), Rajinder Singh Bedi (1915-1984) and Amrita Pritam (1919-2005), who, as far back in the 1950s and 1960s, questioned and critiqued the nationalist efforts to give closure to Partition, by detailing the gory side of the event. There were early novels like *Mano Majra* (1956) by Khuswant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), Jyotirmoy Devi’s *The River Churning* (1967), and so on which focussed on the common people. But such literary attempts were sporadic and also what was more disturbing and alarming was the lack of, borrowing from Antoinette Burton “sustained commentary or interpretation of Partition” (Leonard and Mehta 2015; 3). Commenting on the relative lull around the atrocities of Partition, given the scale of impact, Ashis Nandy said in 1997 that, “Partition froze public consciousness into silence for decades. Thus, besides a small number of individual accounts, there have been no scientific studies of the mental and physical orgies.” (Ghosh 1997: n pag). Urvashi Butalia too talks about the difficulties in expressing the event:
We found in both India and Pakistan that partition was difficult to confront and talk about. In order to talk about it, we would have to acknowledge that both sides were guilty of violence. ... Both sides were aggressors and victims. Often, there were histories of violence within families which they silenced. There could have been history of complicity in the violence they subjected their own women to. (Ashraf 2016: n pag)

Scholars like Jill Didur, Veena Das – to name a few - has attributed this silence to the “intimate” nature of the violence inflicted on women which was difficult to be expressed in words (Didur 2006; Das 1997). While, Kavita Daiya has written about the unease of the government about the capability of the personal stories of refugees to incite more violence (Daiya 2008: 20). Anam Zakaria writes that by denying the people the language to express freely, the state can:

Erase any memories of longing, of remorse, of nostalgia ... The use of selective language, of particular words and symbols, is a powerful way to mold memories and understandings. By imposing or depriving citizens of specific words, of the tool of language, states are able to construct identities, meanings and experiences that fit national projects. (Zakaria 2018: n pag)

Memory can be a useful weapon which can be deconstructed and used by the state to serve its own purpose. In this regard, Edward Mallot writes that, “Collectives must ‘perform’ the nation and in ways reminiscent of Homi Bhabha’s work on the creation and maintenance of nationalism, this requires the community to perform certain forms
of memory” (Mallot 2012: 6). So, every year 15th August is celebrated as a day when India awoke to ‘light and freedom’, while the memory of bloodshed is repressed.

**Breaking the Silence**

However such a discourse underwent a drastic turnaround with the publication of cultural texts that began to question the production of celebratory narratives of 1947. They were motivated by the dissatisfaction with the way the partition of the subcontinent was represented in history. Different sections presented different accounts. Kundaisya and Tai writes that:

> The British documents addressed the exalted theme of transfer of power. The Indian and Pakistani scholarly accounts, on their parts deemed it perfectly legitimate to focus upon the historic movements which culminated in the birth of the nation states. These works were located firmly within the discourse of decolonization and nationalism, and in their narratives partition was a marginal theme. (Kundaisya and Tai 2004: 11)

In the written historical narrative of partition, the academicians found it problematic and disturbing that only the idea of freedom and the elite leaders were highlighted whereas the gory side of Partition – the violence, together with its accompanied outcomes such as mass migration, refugee-ism and rehabilitation – has been rarely mentioned. They critiqued that such elitist narratives portrayed only one side of the partition story. As Barkha Dutt puts it:
The muddled and schizophrenic sentimentalism of Partition has wordlessly passed on from generation to generation, almost coded into our DNA. It leaves us permanent occupant of the netherworld that lies between hostility and affection. (Dutt 2017: n pag)

Against such elitist narratives that reduced and silenced the ordinary voices of the common mass, the aim of the academicians and historians was to recuperate the voice of the marginalised. Of course there is the possibility of manipulation and distortion even in the personal stories of partition. Since many people themselves took part in violent acts, a “full testimonial would blur the distinction between victims and aggressors” and hence there is a distortion of facts (Mallot 2012: 11). However all these concerns notwithstanding, there is the belief according to Edward J. Mallot that this decision to allow the survivors to talk can, not only heal but “has the potential to challenge and change society ... and can inspire other silent sufferers to come forward themselves” (Mallot 2012: 6).

There are many factors which can be attributed to the rise of such revivalist writing. Chief among these are the intermittent communal and sectarian violence against minority groups (anti–Sikh riots, the riots in Bombay etc) and the rise of fundamentalism which had prompted scholars to look at what Pankaj Mishra calls, “the exit wounds” (Mishra 2016: n pag) left behind by partition. Rimli Bhattacharjee and Debali Mookerjea traces the revival of scholarly interest to two other developments: first, “the tectonic changes in South Asian politics in the post-cold War era. Secondly, the increased significance of modern South Asia, India in particular as a growing field of study in the US and the UK” (Leonard and Mehta 2015: 4). Scholars like Ashis Nandy has pinpointed 1984 as the trigger that made him study the partition. He states:
I was nine years old when in 1946 when the Partition violence erupted ... I had forgotten my Partition memories, but they gradually came back to me, more so because of the anti-Sikh riots in 1984 ...until then I had never realised that my interest in studying violence was connected to my own childhood trauma over Partition violence. I was of the opinion that my academic interest grew because of my long years of studying religious riots, though there is nothing religious about them, it is organised violence. (Ashraf 2017: n pag)

Ritu Menon and Urvashi Butalia too have written about the relevance of the anti-Sikh riots in unintentionally making Partition a never ending parasitic phenomenon for the present generation. Tarun Sant calls this the “belated psychological after-effects” of the repercussion of Partition (Sant 2012: 54). Partition is not restricted to simply a date in the past but a never ending phenomenon which threatens to engulf the present in a vicious cycle of violence. Partition then “is a set of events, but also a series of material and psychological effects that move ... forward (and some might even say backward, retrospectively) in time from the event” (Mahn and Murphy 2018: 4). This is why in order to understand 1947 and its after affects, it is necessary to look back at the idea of nation, nationalism and religion. Religion, because it is one of the undeniable realities of the twenty first century that religion is a major factor in the permutations and combinations of nation building. In his book, *Idea of India*, Sunil Khilnani talks of nationalism in India as a “dhoti with endless folds” (Khilnani 2014: 6) thereby projecting the idea that no single idea can capture the dreams of a billion people as a result of which the subcontinent did not take over the territory of the British colony and was divided into two. Thus a thorough discussion will be carried out in the next chapter.
For now, it is important to come back and look at how new studies on Partition that challenge the official narratives.

Another factor which led to the rise of revivalist narratives was the development of postmodernism and post-structuralism. In the subcontinent, official “history is the grand narrative of the modern nation state” and the dastardly tales are “only memorized to be interpreted as either necessary steps towards liberation or incidents that might as well be forgotten” (Kaudaisya and Tai 2004: 15). The notion of history as a constructed phenomenon and critical concepts like Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history” and Jean Francois Lyotard’s theory of the “end of grand narratives” have subverted the idea of history as a single monolithic fact (Erill 2011: 5). Such developments have prompted academics to look at 1947 in a new light. Talking about the psychological significance behind revisiting the memory of 1947, Ashis Nandy has written that:

The past can be historicised and anaesthetised. But there is no guarantee that it will not return, like Sigmund Freud’s unconscious, unless the new generation of South Asians are willing to painfully work through it. Partition violence cannot read only as a record of what some people did to others, for it is the repressed record of what the South Asians did to themselves. The region will have to learn to give the violence priority over even the moment of freedom for only by working through the memories of that violence can it acquire the right to celebrate its decolonisation. (Nandy 2001: 14-21)

The work of uncovering the common people’s stories about partition began in the 90’s. One of the earliest works undertaken in this revivalist phase is by Alok Bhalla
and his work titled *Stories about the Partition of India* (1994). Perhaps some of the most important work undertaken in this connection includes the ground breaking research undertaken by Urvashi Butalia, Kamala Bhasin and Ritu Menon on the nature of partition violence. Books like Butalia’s *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998) and Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin’s *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition* (1998), Veena Das’s *Life and Words: Violence and descent into the ordinary* (2007), all focus on personal stories of ordinary people, heralding a shift from the public to the private and the personal. All these works highlight the importance of oral histories in understanding the humane dimension of the event. Oral testimonies too have its own sets of limitations with questions raised about the authenticity of such testimonies. In this regard, Butalia says that:

> Whatever its limitations, the oral narratives offers a different way of looking at history, different perspective. For, because such narratives often flow into each other in terms of temporal time, they blur the somewhat rigid time frames which history situates itself. Because people locate their memories by different dates, or different timeframes than the events that mark the beginning and end of histories, their narratives flow above, below through the disciplinary narratives of history. They offer us a way to look at the historical lens at a somewhat different angle ... I wish to look at the memories for themselves – even if they are shifting, changing and unreliable. (Butalia 1998: n. Pag)

Mention must also be made of the study of Partition survivors by psychoanalyst Ashis Nandy through the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies along with the institutes in Dhaka and Islamabad which revealed startling insights:
Partition is seen by the victims, perpetrators and witnesses of violence as not simply a conflict between the Hindus and Muslims but between landlord and tenant, between business rivals in the same community who had old scores to settle and who took advantage of the chaos. There is a refusal to on the part of the Hindu respondent to blame the carnage on Muslims and vice-versa ... In Naokhali where one of the worst manifestations of Partition took place, Hindu victims pointed out that they were saved by the Maulvi Saheb (Muslim religious Saheb), even though the riots were instigated in the name of religion. (Mohsin 2009: 34)

A more important finding was that the victims of Partition were “less bitter” about the partition than their children, which Nandy attributes to the fact that they got the stories in “packaged forms” (Interview with Azaj Ashraf). Other findings include concepts like ‘The Collapse of The Moral Universe’, ‘Absolute Evil’, ‘Memory Block’, ‘Utopianism’, ‘Glorification of self destructive violence’ and so on (Ghosh 1997: n pag). Such findings reveal to us that Partition violence was not only about Hindu-Muslim antagonism.

Another important and painstakingly done research initiative is the 1947 Partition Archive by Guneeta Singh Bhalla in 2011 to record and highlight oral histories and experiences of survivors. The idea was inspired by her visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Tokyo that honours the unfortunate victims of the 1945 atomic bombing which made Bhalla realise that there was no public memorial to honour the victims of Partition who died a gruesome death or were displaced. Today there are thousands of oral histories of victims collected by volunteers.
Yet another dedication is the Partition Museum, the first of its kind in the subcontinent, opened in 2016 in Amritsar, Punjab, honouring the untold legacies of Partition. It contains a “representation of a well to signify honour killings and contains extracts of oral histories from a spectrum of witnesses ranging from significant players ... to ordinary refugees” (Mahn and Murphy 2018: 1). Such efforts serve as a sort of “restorative justice” (Mahn and Murphy 2018: 2) to those who suffered.


Apart from studies dealing with the partition of Punjab, scholarships have also come up which deal with the Partition of Bengal. Works like *Trauma and Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India* (2003), *Partition of Bengal: Fragile Histories and New Borders* (2016) by Debjani Sengupta, Debali Mookerjea Leonard’s *Literature Gender and the Trauma of Partition* (2017) try to fill up the gap regarding focus on the trauma in the East, at the same time comparing it with the Partition in Punjab. While distinguishing between the Partition of Punjab and Partition of Bengal, Bagchi and Dasgupta writes that as compared to the bloodied catastrophic violence of Punjab, felt immediately before and after 1947, the effects of Partition in Bengal was of a “slower” and less bloodied category spread gradually across decades and which were manifested through the dismal conditions of the refugees (Bagchi and Dasgupta 2003: 1-11). So there is a difference in the scholarly and artistic depictions of the Partition of Bengal and Punjab. In this regard Debali Mookerjea Leonard writes that:

> While writings in the west typically depict the pathological violence that was commonplace in the Punjab Partition, writings from Bengal focus on the struggles and privations of the displaced. The tone, in the latter, is subdued, melancholic, and the content usually much less dramatic when compared to the brutalities presented in the writings of the Punjab Partition. In short, writings on the Bengal Partition do not conform to the model of literature on the division of Punjab with which most critics are familiar and which whether for reasons of their dramatic content ... has come to define Partition Literature. (Leonard 2017: 23)

Drawing from critics- like Sisir Kumar Das, Bashabi Fraser – Leonard goes to say that Bengali Partition deals with the “longue duree” of Partition, the refugees and
displacement, and hence there is a “melancholic strain” in the depiction as compared to the writings on Punjab (Leonard 2017: 24). There is no doubt that the partition of the two provinces were conditioned by different political and historical conditions, however it would be wrong to assume that the Partition of Punjab did not have a longer effect or that creative texts on it, do not deal with the lingering and never ending after effects of 1947 on the victims. In fact, this thesis would try to dispel such myths by also focussing on culture texts that deal with people displaced by the Punjab Partition and trying to come to terms with it, decades after it had happened. This theme would be picked up again a little later. But for now, coming back to the topic of revivalist studies of Partition, it is safe to assume that the wheels of trying to redress the gaps left by official narratives of Partition have been set in motion by such revisionist studies. These works serve as, quoting Debali Leonard Mookerjea, “re-directional memory” or works that breaks free from older models of analysis because they do not fulfil the criteria of the present (Leonard 2017:10).

Focus of this Thesis

This research project concerns itself with these types of revivalist narratives. Combining film, partition and gender studies, this project aims to carry forward the work done by these scholars and discuss the stories of female victims of partition in Hindi films. It is not that only the women suffered but a focus on women can as Jill Didur suggests throw light on how the catastrophe of 1947 has been remembered and how in the national narrative of India it has been placed (Didur 2006:11). Ayesha Jalal has pointed out that the partition violence was a contest over the three z’s: “zar, zameen and zan” or to translate in English, between wealth, land and women (Jalal 2000: 504-
62). The proclamation by Gayatri Spivak that, “woman is the most primitive instrument of nationalism” (Spivak 2010: 20) sums up how the discourse of nationalism has been scripted onto the bodies of women. Elleke Boehmer writes that “Gender informs nationalism and nationalism in its turn consolidates and legitimises itself through a variety of gendered structures” (Boehmer: 6). If during partition the women’s bodies became sites where the desires and ideologies of the nationalists were imprinted then after 1947 “the reconfiguration of relation between communities, the state and women in the wake of a bitter and violent conflict amongst Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs took place around ... around the bodies of abducted women” (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 109).

Films can be said to be a suitable medium for articulating the hidden stories of partition as film critics have observed:

Films have a disconcerting resemblance to memory ... an intimation of memory perfected ... they may create a commonality of experience more powerful and consistent as social memory ... these public images can serve at large in the way that family photographs serve smaller communities as emblems of significant events and transitions, constructing a concept of the past but also providing ways of overcoming it. They may assist in what Yannick Geoffrey describes as ‘the work of mourning the lost past’. (David Macdogall 1998: 231)

Thus in cultural texts such as films “a collective experience crystallizes, whose meaning when touched upon, may suddenly become accessible again across millennia” (Assman 1995: 129). As such, films derive their imagery from official and non official sources, so we get multi layered narratives where “objective history meets with non
Thus films can “give back to society a history it has been deprived by the institution of History” (Ferro 19). This can also prevent the privileging of “empirical truth and objectivity” as the only criteria for reconstructing the past (Uri Mukhapadhyay 2013: 5). According to Gauri Vishwanath and Salma Malik:

> Cinema in confronting the trauma of Partition paves the way for collective mourning in a public space such as theatre. There is a big difference in the way in which contemporary problems are represented in other genres of media, namely, news or television, especially media that is responding to developing events. Cinema is different in this respect, as the temporal dislocation between the occurrence of an event and its recreation in the film allows space for contemplation. (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 62)

Apart from the fact that cinema offers a space for collective mourning, the effectiveness of cinema as a medium, as compared to literature, in depicting the trauma of partition can be explained by Christian Metz’s psychoanalysis of the cinematic spectator. According to Metz, the viewers, while watching a film, are in a state of denial or disavowal. He or she believes that the events depicted on the screen are real. Even though he knows that it is only a film, the film spectator suspends his disbelief. For Metz, this division of belief into two different states is based on the denial associated with the castration anxiety. Denial is founded on the child’s belief in the phallus of the mother despite knowing her lack of it. As Metz writes, “In the face of unveiling of a lack ... the child ... will have to double up its belief ... and from then on forever hold two contradictory opinions ... In other others, it will perhaps definitively retain its former
belief beneath the new ones” (Metz 68). For Metz, the viewers’ ability to hold on to two contradictory impulses has its genesis in the child’s denial of castration and his persistent belief in the maternal phallus. The viewer is split into two contradictory impulses: one is to believe that whatever is depicted on screen is the reality (persistent belief in the penis of the mother) while the other impulse is to know that it is not (belief that the mother does not have a penis). According to Metz, this split in the consciousness is very important for the process of viewing. And this is why cinema is a much more powerful medium in depicting the other side of partition. In this regard Vishwanath and Malik says that a woman confessed that it was only after watching a movie on partition that she came to know about the violence and abduction of women during that period (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 61).

There has been no dearth of literary scholarships on the theme of Partition. However as one browses through it, one would be surprised with the little work done in the field of Partition films in the domain of Hindi cinema. This is quite surprising considering the fact that during partition many directors, producers and actors had themselves been victims of the mass displacement of Partition. Apart from a few books which deals with the subject directly, the theme of Partition finds only a passing mention (a footnote perhaps) in them. This has to do with the fact that in an industry which boasts of producing the highest number of films every year, the topic of partition has not been a popular one. As Saibal Chatterjee writes:

We look in vain for any significant film in Hindi on the Partition of India ... Except for a few isolated efforts, it still remains a mystery why Hindi cinema bypassed the Partition without so much as a perfunctory look. (Chatterjee 2003: 70)
Sumita Chakravarty’s argument that Hindi cinema is a “microcosm of the social, political, economic and cultural life of a nation” (Chakravarty 1993: 31) is useful to unravel the mystery of this cinematic amnesia. Most of the films which were produced in the years leading up to partition and immediately after it were mostly mythologies, biopics and historica...
The Primary Texts

In this research work, the focus will not only be on the established canon of partition films but also on those films that do not share the same popularity as a Deepa Mehta’s *Earth*.

The primary sources are as follows: *Mammo* (1994) by Shyam Benegal; *Earth* (1998) by Deepa Mehta; *Pinjar* (2003) by Chandraprakash Dwivedi and *Khamosh Pani* (2003) by Sabiha Sumar. Only a few Hindi films have been selected because it would have been a momentous task to take up films from all the different film industries in India and though during the course of this work, there will be a reference to films in other languages (say for instance, the Ritwik Ghatak Partition trilogy consisting of *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961) and *Subarnarekha* (1962) but my primary source would be the films mentioned above. Another strand which binds these films is the fact that they deal with the partition of Punjab. I haven’t taken films like *Gadar* which is couched in anti-Pakistan jingoism or which end with what Jyotika Virdi calls a “last ditch effort to reinstate official rhetoric ... and plead for a truce with the status quo” (Virdi 2000: 97). While analysing these films, my focus will be on how these films reflect the socio-political reality.

There are two ways in which the filmmakers have engaged with the theme of partition: in one, the films view partition from a distance and are more concerned with its far reaching effects while in the other mode, partition is at the forefront of the narrative and deals with this event openly. In films like *Earth* and *Pinjar* there is a more direct representation of the violence, rape and abduction. On the other hand, in films like *Khamosh Pani* and *Mammo*, partition provides the backdrop to the stories as the
characters are forced to live with the death and displacement that occurred in 1947. It is films like this that dispel any notion by scholars like Debali Mookerjea Leonard, that cultural texts on Partition in Punjab only deal with the bloodied violence which was restricted to in and around 1947. Taking forward the theories of scholars like Urvashi Butalia and Kamala Bhasin, these film texts show how the protagonists of these films go through a violence of a different kind where they have to negotiate and fight circumstances created by their displacement from their homes. The significance of this thesis lies in the fact that it does not restrict the meaning of partition and its subsequent violence to in and around 1947 but extends the time frame well beyond 1947 to pick up issues of refugees, rehabilitation and citizenship.

While most official versions of Partition, gives us snapshots of politically charged sagas of nationalism and anti-colonialism, these filmic texts locate the stories in the realm of the personal and provide a human dimension to the trauma. What is the official version of partition, one might ask. It can be perhaps be those versions which view 1947 as the successful culmination of a struggle which resulted in the birth of a democracy which can be best summed by Nehru’s famous “Tryst with Destiny” speech delivered on the eve of India’s independence. However such official versions of Partition co-exist with various other versions of partition. As against those who view partition as an event which occurred and ended in 1947, these films focus on what Gyanendra Pandey calls the “third partition” which was characterized by violence, displacement and rehabilitation (Pandey 2001). Thus these films provide a different perspective to 1947. They provide a space for understanding the trauma that accompanied India’s independence. Migration, displacement of people resulting in the breaking up of families, breakdown of friendships sexual and structural violence against
women – are some of the themes that binds these filmic texts together. Some of the issues, which will be explained in this thesis are as follows:

- How does the filmic texts capture the far reaching and never ending impact of partition by focussing on its impact on the private space
- Symbolic value attached to women’s bodies
- How the personal tales, showcase the story of nation formation from the point of view of women
- Questions of belonging that torment the subcontinent even today and the rise of fundamentalism
- How memory reflects and refracts the story of 1947.

The relevance of the thesis lies in the fact that like in 1947, the question of belonging is a pertinent one even today. Any talk about nationality is incomplete without invoking the ghosts of partition. This is true as regards to issues relating to religion, nationalism, gendered violence, identity and citizenship. The thesis puts forth the idea that the Partition of 1947 and the gendered violence and displacement that accompanied it, shapes contemporary idea of nationalism and identity in the subcontinent. It created the condition for the rise of religious nationalism and also questions about citizenship and belonging. Research projects like this which focus on the private dimension are important because as Barkha Dutt puts it:

> the wilful amnesia and the silencing of memory are a sure recipe for ensuring that the India-Pakistan relationship status will always be stuck in the same category. To borrow from current Facebook parlance, “Its complicated”. (Dutt 2017: n pag)
But it is not only about Pakistan - India enmity, because the silencing can and have complicated relationships between communities in India itself. Her/story is not an alternative to his/story but an attempt to fit in the missing pieces of the jigsaw puzzle by looking at the stories from down below.

**Review of literature –**

In the review of literature, various areas such as film theory, post colonialism, feminism, nation, nationalism, partition theory and other relevant areas will be looked upon.

There are many works which have helped in better understanding the concept of nationalism in India. One such book is Partha Chatterjee’s *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (1993) where he tries to trace the historical journey of nationalist thought in the colonial world. The focus is exclusively on India and not on any other anti colonial movements. He charts nationalism in India into three phases: the “moment of departure” (symbolized by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay) (Chatterjee 1993: 54-85), the “moment of manoeuvre” (epitomized by Gandhi) (Chatterjee 1993: 85-131) and the “moment of arrival” (exemplified by Nehru) (Chatterjee 1993: 131-167). He talks about the paradoxes of nationalism as it tries to break free from Western domination and at the same time is unable to do so.

Yet another book by Chatterjee is *Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993), where he compares and contrasts the nationalisms in Asia and Africa with nationalism in the west. In order to fight against the British, the anti-colonial nationalists divided their culture into the domain of material and spiritual.
The spiritual domain belonged to the women and family. The nationalists imagined the nation in the spiritual sphere and used it in their political battle against the colonisers.

Sunil Khilnani’s work, *The Idea of India* (1997), as the name suggests, traces the story of India from before 1947 till present times. He points out how the system of governance in pre-colonial India was different from the modern system of government gifted by the British. It engulfs the various contradictory impulses that have gone into the shaping of India and raises the important question of whether the foundations on which India was invented can hold its own in the ever changing atmosphere of the subcontinent in the twenty first century.

Ashis Nandy’s book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Discovery of Self Under Colonialism* (1983) gives us psychological insights into the ways the colonisers made inroads into Indian society. Instead of armed conflicts, they achieved this using the frames of masculinity and femininity (Nandy 1983: 7-11). The colonisers believed that the Indians, specially the Bengalis were not masculine enough by the standards of the West and hence were deemed unfit to rule. Ashis Nandy delineates the ways the Indians fought back this domination and the role of Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of non-violence to counter the allegations of femininity.

The book *On Nationalism* (2016) containing essays by Romila Thapar, Sadanand Menon and A. G. Noorani, provides an illuminating study of the nature and origin of Indian nationalism. Romila Thapar talks of the distinction between nationalism and pseudo nationalism. She also makes the point about how merely raising slogans is not the criteria for proving one’s nationalism. What is noteworthy is that she begins the essay with a general discussion of nationalism as put forth by scholars like Benedict
Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm etc, and then moves on to a discussion about India (Thapar 2016: 1-59). A. G. Noorani writes about the “law of sedition” can be used to indiscriminately target artists and political opponents (Noorani 2016: 59-105). Sadanand Menon writes about the menace of cultural nationalism that threatens to create havoc to the unity of the country (Menon 2016: 105-149).

One of the pioneering works on partition stories about women is Urvashi Butalia’s *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from Partition of India* (1998) where she uses oral history to look at partition. In the book, Butalia incorporates interviews of Partition survivors, mainly women and her own views on them. The hegemonic nationalistic narratives sought to shroud Partition in a veil of silence, as if such a dastardly event never disrupted the process of nation-building. The book argues that by looking at the partition through the voices of women and telling the stories of their unspeakable fates, will add to one’s understanding of partition.

The question of belonging is a dominant area of concern in Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin’s book, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s partition* (1998), as they track the violence and mayhem after 1947. Through the stories of women, the ambivalent treatment of women by the community, religion and the state is depicted. It leads to a basic questioning about women’s identity and their unequal status in society. Menon and Bhasin’s reading of partition provides a stinging critique of the accepted version of the official history of 1947. It puts forward the notion that the newly formed nation states had no real interest for women in the programme of recovery of abducted women where women’s rights and desires were sacrificed in the pursuit of protecting the purity of the family, the nation and religious community. The books explore how the abducted women came to symbolise the rupture of the land.
Works of postcolonial theorists and scholars who discuss the ways in which women are symbolically constructed as bearers of meanings in colonial and postcolonial India will be looked at. In an essay “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question”, Partha Chatterjee elaborates the connection between the upliftment of women and the politics of Indian nationalism in the nineteenth century. According to Chatterjee, the women’s question was a central issue in the social reform agenda in the early and mid-nineteenth century Bengal, but these women’s issues were pushed to the margins in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

In his book *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (2001), Gyanendra Pandey identifies three different levels of Partition and in doing so underscores the plethora of intellectual, ideological, social and religious processes that operated in the massive transformations and ruptures of 1947. In the process he provides a critique of history writing and how it helps in the process of creation of history.

Ashis Nandy’s work “Death of an Empire” is a psychological study of the fear and trauma felt by the people of the soon to be divided subcontinent. He highlights the need to go beyond the celebratory mode of looking at 1947 and instead confront the painful memories created by it. Only then can there be an assurance that the past would not come to haunt the present (Nandy 2002: 14-21). Another work, “The Defiance of Defiance and Liberation for the victims of History: The Multiple Selves and Strange Destinations of Ashis Nandy” is another piece where he gives a psychological insight into partition, its difference from the holocaust and the depictions of partition in cultural media.
In her book, *Hindu Wife Hindu Nation: Community Religion and Cultural Nationalism* (2001), Tanika Sarkar brings forth the plethora of ideas that colluded in the constructions of notions like womanhood and the importance of such constructions in imagining the nation. She analyses socio-cultural traditions, literary texts (works of Bankim, memoirs of women, the press) and other forms of popular culture to present the ideas that have given shape to present day India. She also focuses on how religious traditions are manipulated to form a narrow and non inclusive form of Hinduism.

Sugata Bose’s book, *The Nation as mother and other Visions of Nationhood* (2017), analyses the various factors (Bankim’s evocation in his song ‘Vande Mataram’; Dwijendralal Roy’s song; Abanindranath Tagore’s painting and so on) that led to the ideological construction of the nation as mother. He also goes on to delineate the relation between nation, women and religion.

In order to understand the aspects that are involved in the process of filmmaking, books such as *Film Theory and Criticism* (2004) by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen and Sergei M. Eisenstein’s *The Film Sense* (1970) will be used. In the *Film Sense*, Eisenstein has defined the concept of montage. Apart from the discussion on montage, the book also help one get acquainted with various terminologies used in films like close-up, dissolve, *mise-en-scene* and so on.

Coming to the world of Indian cinema, Ashis Rajadhyaksha’s *Indian Cinema: A Very Short Introduction* (2016) is a concise yet helpful historical overview of the history of Indian cinema right from its inception to the point where it acquired the moniker Bollywood. He begins from the era of silent films in the pre partition days to the present and thereby encompassing the various changes it encounters. He discusses the complexity of the industry.

Ashis Nandy and Vinay Lal’s work, *Fingerprinting Popular Culture: The Mythic and the Iconic in Indian Cinema* (2006) is a critical commentary on the influence of Indian cinema on society. The 21st century belongs to the middle class. It has made its impact on every sphere of Indian life. And cinema is the chosen medium of expression of the middleclass. Indian Cinema is a culture specific product and western theories are inadequate tools of analysis.

Jyotika Virdi’s book *The Cinematic Imagination: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (2003) talks about how the lack of critical attention to Hindi Films is due to the hegemony of western/ Hollywood film cultures. A focus on non western cinematic medium like the Hindi films will, she believes, will balance out the stagnation that has filtered into the domain of film studies. Virdi analyses almost fifty years of Hindi Cinema, starting from independence. She also steers clear of the cinema as low culture vs literature as high culture binary. She sees Hindi cinema as simultaneously consolidating as well as challenging the elite discourses.

*Bollywood Nation: India through its Cinema* (2013) by Vamsee Juluri is another book which delineates the journey of Indian cinema from the time of *Raja Harishchandra* to the present. He puts forward cinema as the mouthpiece of the nation
and it is through cinema that one can learn about the story of India which in turn helps us comprehend our place in the world. He divides the films under four topics: God, Country, Home and World. These four topics correspond to four phases in Indian history: God refers to the mythologies; Country to the cinema of the post independence; Home to the various new developments in the 1980s including the rise of television; World to the impact of globalization on mass media and culture.

One of the important books published in recent years on Indian films is Bhaskar Sarkar’s *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition* (2009). Sarkar divides his study into two major parts. In part 1, he devotes two chapters to analyzing the Hindi films of the 1950s and 1960s and the third chapter to an overview of popular Bengali films. In part II, in the first chapter he returns to some key partition films such as *Nastik* and *Dharamputra* and then moves on to present Ritwik Ghatak films and some recent films of the last two decades like *Tamas, Pinjar, Naseem* and so on.

Meenakshi Bharat and Nirmal Kumar’s book *Filming the Line of Control* (2008) is another book which charts the history of the relationship between India and Pakistan as represented in cinema. It is geared towards understanding one of the most crucial political and historical relationships in the continent.

As this thesis consists of two adaptations, Julie Sander’s book, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), is a useful guide for understanding the different types of adaptations and appropriations not only of novels and plays but also of myths. For instance, citing Debrah Cartmell, she writes that an adaptation can be a transposition or commentary or an analogue (Sanders 2006: 21). She also focuses on the socio-cultural
politics behind an adaptation. She also focuses on how theoretical paradigms influence adaptations.

Brian McFarlene’s book *Novel To Film* (1996), is considered a seminal work on the theory of adaptation. He divides the work into two parts. The first part attempts to offer a methodology for transposing novels into films. In the second part he applies the technique to case studies like *The Scarlett Letter, Great Expectation, Cape Fear* and so on. He has not theorized about television serial adaptation or the issue of authorship. However he does raise the issue of fidelity to the source text.

*A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) by Linda Hutcheon is another work which talks of the universality of adaptations and also challenges its status as a secondary product. She writes that “Whether it be in the form of videogames or a musical, an adaptation is likely to be greeted as minor and subsidiary and certainly never as good as the “original” (Hutcheon “Preface”). She argues that an adaptation can hold its own as an independent product. She does away with the fidelity to the source text debate.

Astrid Erill’s book *Memory in Culture* (2011) is an important introduction to the domain of memory studies when one needs to study traumatic events like Partition. It documents the history of memory studies. It highlights the importance of memory studies in the discipline of literature. The book focuses on the nexus between memory and culture and also that between memory and media.

**Chapter divisions**

Before moving on to an analysis of the filmic text, the first chapter titled “Nation, Religion and Women” focuses on – using Sunil Khilnani’s term- the idea of
India, with emphasis on the notion of the nation and nationalism. Scholars like Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, etc and their ideas on nationalism will be discussed. In India, the moment of birth is also accompanied by the painful pangs of division. If for Anderson, the “dawn of nationalism” in Europe “at the end of the eighteenth century coincided with the dusk of religious mode of thought” (Benedict 1990: 15), then in the Indian case it was and still is impossible to discuss the idea of the nation without invoking religion. Works of scholars and critics like Sunil Khilnani, Ashish Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, Romila Thapar, Sadanand Menon, Gyanendra Pandey to name a few shall be brought in to see the various colours and phases of nationalism in India. Along with it, the paradoxical position of women – their reverence as the nation incarnate as well as being at the receiving end of partition violence and their dispensability – shall also be discussed. Analysis of scholars like Uma chakravarty, Tanika Sarkar, Kumkum Sangari, Sugata Bose will be brought in to look into the transformation of women as the nation incarnate. Partition scholars like Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin, shall be referred to look into the violence from various quarters – the enemy, their own family and the state – that they were subjected to.

In order to understand why Partition was such a rare topic for filmmakers, the chapter titled “Cinema and Ideology” traces the journey of Hindi Cinema from Dadasaheb Phalke’s Raja Harishchandra to the 90s. The process would help to analyse how films influence the nation and how the nation in turn affects the narrative of the Hindi film. The process would help to analyse the amnesia regarding partition films and to look at the films produced in its place. Pioneering works by Jyotika Virdi, Ashis Nandy, Ashish Rajdhyaksha and Sumita Chakravarty, on the relation between nation building and cinema, shall be discussed. Thus looking at the history of Hindi films is
important to analyse the relative silence regarding the impact of Partition on the lives of the common people and also the factors leading to the production of films which actually focus on the lives of the common people. Reference shall also be made to Bengali films. Apart from this, the history of Partition films across the border in Pakistan shall also be analysed briefly so as to compare it with the industry in Mumbai. The factors influencing its production shall be discussed.

In the next chapter, titled “Sita’s Progeny: Revisiting 1947 Through Earth and Pinjar”, the focus is on two filmic adaptations of texts written by two women who have themselves witnessed partition – one as a young woman and the other as a child. The films are Chandra Prakash Dwivedi’s Pinjar (2003) based on Amrita Pritam’s novel Pinjar written in 1950 and Deepa Mehta’s Earth (1998) based on Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice Candy Man. How the political story affects the lives – Ashis Nandy uses the phrase “the loss of a Utopian world” (Ghosh 2017: n pag)- is shown through a change in the living situations of the women before and after partition using film scholar George Bluestone’s idea that films create time by using space as against novels which create space by using time. The chapter will zoom in on the simmering religious tensions but also about how in the two films, the violence against women is shown to be not peculiar to 1947 but is deeply rooted in the society and trace it to the Ramayana. So for the narrative of 1947, religion provided the validation for the patriarchal society to execute the violence against women. At the same time, reference shall be made to the novels, not to engage in the fidelity to the source text debate but how the ideological stance of the narrative changes as the films try to negotiate the tight rope between politics, propaganda and entertainment.
In chapter 4 titled, “Midnight’s Women: Structural Violence and Women in Mammo and Khamosh Paani”, Johan Galtung’s notion of structural violence is used to show the plight of the women survivors of partition and how it became difficult for them to belong in the newly created nation states. The two films taken for analysis are Shyam Benegal’s Mammo (1994) and Sabiha Sumar’s Khamosh Paani (2003). Along with it, the question of how did the women mourn the violence shall also be raised. Veena Das’s analysis of the silence of the women survivors of Partition shall be used to interpret the silence of the protagonist of the film. These silences highlight issues which objective and official versions of history simply push to the margins. The rejection of the melodramatic mode which hinges on a good/bad dichotomy and stock figures is also highlighted so as to show how it helps the directors to present multiple perspectives while rejecting homogenising official narratives. There will also be a reference to Ritwik Ghatak’s Partition trilogy – Meghe Dhaka Tara (1960), Komal Gandhar (1961) and Subarnarekha (1962) to compare the experience of the survivors on the Eastern side of the border.

Conclusion: In the conclusion, the various findings of the thesis will be discussed.

**End notes**

1 From Nehru’s speech “Tryst with destiny” delivered on the eve of independence
3 Social activists Harsh Mander calls the ‘doctrine of Vicarious guilt” as the idea that an “entire community must collectively carry the guilt for crimes – real or imagined,
committed now or in history – which any of its members may have perpetrated” (Mander 2018: n pag)

Pandey discusses Bipan Chandra’s *Modern India* (1971) and Sumit Sarkar’s *Modern India 1885-1947* (1983) which are textbooks for students which are full of the glorification of the leaders with only a few lines mentioning the violence (qtd. in Pandey “In Defence”, 30)

Kundaisya and Tai writes that many colonial officers were anxious about the way posterity would remember them. Their views could be abundantly found in official paperwork and this impacted the early impressions about 1947. Some of these colonial officers were the last Viceroy Louis Mountbatten, Sir Malcolm Darling, Sir Francis Tuker, V. P. Menon, Penderal Moon and so on. The common view in all these works was that though the months leading up to partition were full of violence and the political leaders had failed miserably, the British were successful in maintaining a certain level of law and order. In his book, *Mission with Mountbatten*, Alan Campbell Johnson writes that it was Mountbatten who was able to salvage a rapidly deteriorating solution (Kundaisya and Tai 1999: 10-11)

The premise of Anderson’s theory is that the nation is a group of people who will never meet one another but who are connected and that connection is imagined. For Anderson, this connection is made possible through print media. Jyotika Virdi makes the point that in India where a large number of people are illiterate, this imagination is done through cinema (Virdi 21)


---.“Urvashi Butalia on why men killed women and children during Partition”.


---. “The Death of an Empire”. *Sarai Reader* 2.7 (2002): 14-21


Films
Meghe Dhaka Tara. Dir. Ritwik Ghatak, 1960

Komal Gandhar. Dir. Ritwik Ghatak, 1961

Subarnarekha. Dir Ritwik Ghatak, 1962

Mammo. Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1994

Earth. Dir. Deepa Mehta, 1999


Khamosh Paani. Dir. Sabiha Sumar. 2003

Pinjar. Dir Chandraprakash Dwivedi, 2003