

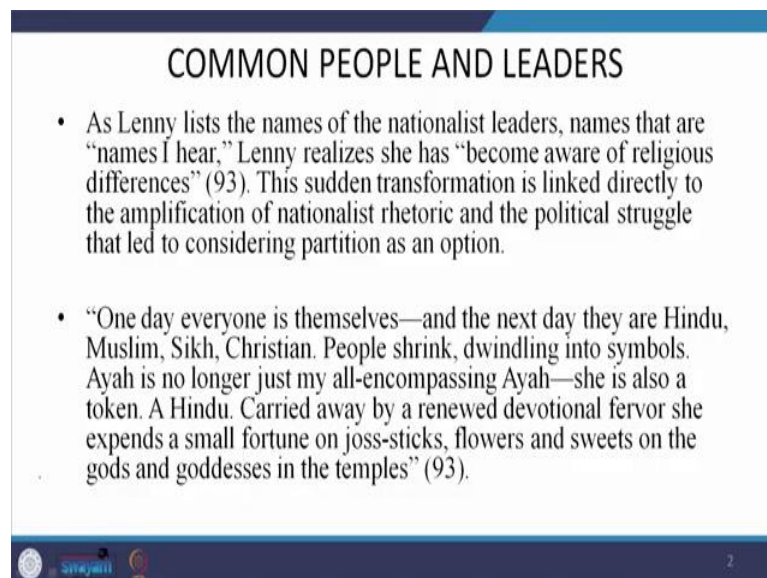
**Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema**  
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**Lecture - 31**  
**Accounts of the Survivor – VIII**

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema. We are talking about the Accounts of the Survivor, and we are discussing *Cracking India*; in continuation from our previous discussions on this novel,

we are going to talk further about Lenny's perspective, the juvenile perspective and how the innocent child is transformed into a guilt-stricken adult, as there is a loss of trust, and she actually loses a part of her childhood in the due course of her narrative/ in the due course of the novel.

By the time the country is partitioned and two new nations are born, the mentalscape with the geographical scape, the political scape...the mentalscape of the child is transformed. (Refer Slide Time: 01:59)



**COMMON PEOPLE AND LEADERS**

- As Lenny lists the names of the nationalist leaders, names that are “names I hear,” Lenny realizes she has “become aware of religious differences” (93). This sudden transformation is linked directly to the amplification of nationalist rhetoric and the political struggle that led to considering partition as an option.
- “One day everyone is themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah—she is also a token. A Hindu. Carried away by a renewed devotional fervor she expends a small fortune on joss-sticks, flowers and sweets on the gods and goddesses in the temples” (93).

We were talking about how guilt is a major motivation that propels this narrative.

This narrative is actually recounted in hindsight, as a way of purging the child. It is a kind of [reparation] on Lenny's part for having divulged about Ayah to the Ice Candy man, which goes on to ruin Ayah's life. So, it is also the story of losing one's trust, it is a

story of a drastic change in human relationships, in longstanding friendships, beyond any reconciliation.

So, Lenny lists the names of the nationalist leaders that she hears, and she realizes that she has "become aware of religious differences" at a very young age. Lenny learns about reality such as religion. She starts asking about, what is god? Because she sees different people worshipping different gods, and that is actually the point of disagreement among different communities. This was also something she learns with the passage of time.

So, this sudden transformation is linked with the amplification of the nationalist rhetoric and the political struggle, which eventually considers partition as a viable option. And finally, partition as the only option. Lenny says "One day everyone is themselves- and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols.

Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah- she is also a token, a Hindu. Carried away by a renewed devotional fervor, she spends a small fortune on joss-sticks, flowers and sweets on the gods and goddesses in the temples." So, Cracking India follows the perspective of Lenny, in the period before Partition and during the Partition riots, from the position of an affluent Parsee family in Lahore and from the perspective of a specially-abled female child that grows up in a multi-religious household.

[At] her household, we see that she does not actually...she is not accompanied by her parents all the time. The people that influence her the most are her caretakers -- her nanny and the nanny's suitors -- and they all come from varied communal backgrounds. So, the nanny Ayah is a Hindu Punjabi; her suitor, the masseur, is a Muslim. The Ice Candy man is also a Muslim. The gardener actually converts and becomes a Christian.

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## CRACKING INDIA

- Cracking India follows the perspective of Lenny in the period before Partition, as part of an affluent Parsee family in Lahore, in a multireligious household.
- Her parents are typically elite and distant and leave the daily raising of Lenny to her nanny, Ayah, a Hindu woman from Punjab. Other servants in the house are Muslim, and they are familiar with a local young man called "Ice Candy Man," as he sometimes sells ice cream.
- As the violence of Partition rises, Ice Candy Man, who has long been a suitor of the beautiful Ayah, turns to political and religious sermonizing, taking on the role of a minor nationalist leader in their area. He eventually leads a mob to the house, and Ayah is taken away. Later it becomes known that he has resorted to pimping Ayah as a "dancer" in the red-light district of Lahore.
- Lenny's godmother, a powerful woman, rescues Ayah from this situation. Ice Candy Man disappears after crossing the border into India.

So, one sees that the household has a kind of motleyed existence; and that is Lenny's microcosm. Her parents are typically elite and distant, and they leave the daily raising of Lenny to her nanny. And other servants are from different backgrounds like we have already said.

The "Ice Candy Man" is called so because he sometimes sells ice cream. And we see towards the beginning of the narrative that none of these people, who are all subalterns, are stringent followers of their respective religions. For example, the Ice Candy Man actually treats religion as a claptrap thing.

He barely believes in god and he makes his earning through disguising as a fraud Muslim priest, who apparently, who purportedly connects between god and the common people.

And so, we realize that a religion for these people is farce. They are not very religious people, till the later part of the novel where they are all becoming visibly Hindus and Muslims.

And so as violence of partition rises, one sees that the Ice Candy Man, who used to make earning through fraudulently using/ exploiting religion and people's faith, suddenly turns to political and religious sermonising. He takes on the role of a minor leader, who speaks in the same tone as the nationalist leaders. He becomes an important figure in their area.

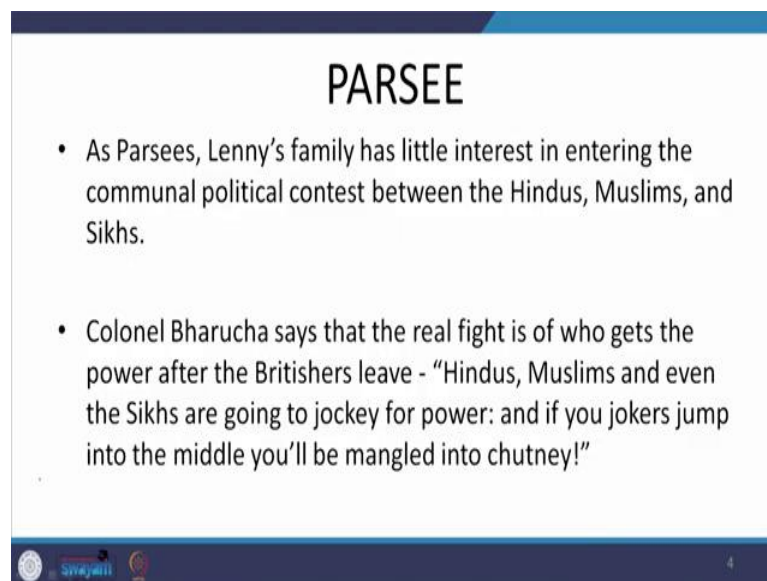
Eventually, he is the one that leads the mob to Lenny's house, and he is responsible for the abduction of Ayah and for selling her to a brothel. Later, the readers get to know that

the Ice Candy Man was instrumental..he played an important role in pimping Ayah as a "dancer" in the red light district of Lahore.

Later on, it's only through the godmother's intervention - the godmother being a powerful female figure - that Ayah is rescued from her situation. And thereafter, one sees that the Ice Candy man actually disappears; he crosses the border into India and disappears.

So, as Parsees, Lenny's family has hardly any interest in entering into the communal dispute or the disputatious arguments or the political contests... disputations between the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. There is a point, where the character called Colonel Bharucha says that the real fight is of who gets the power after the British goes, after the Britishers leave.

And he says that - "Hindus, Muslims, and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: (Refer Slide Time: 09:53)

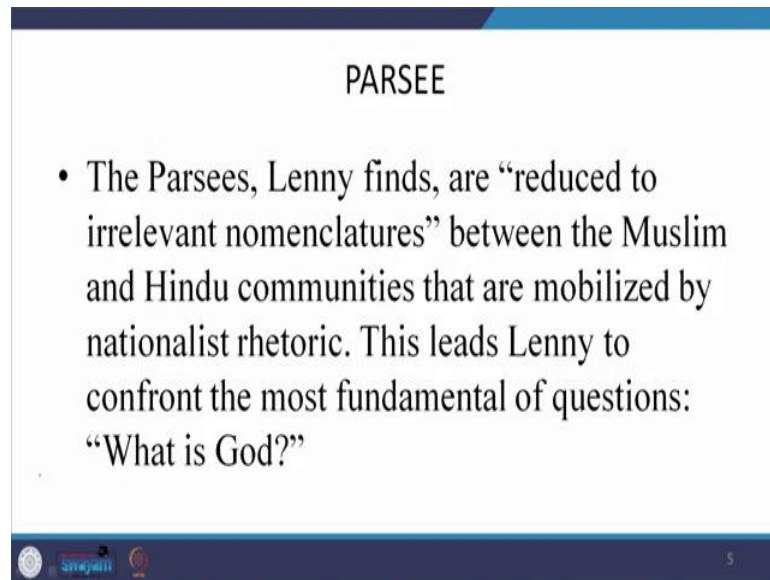


## PARSEE

- As Parsees, Lenny's family has little interest in entering the communal political contest between the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.
- Colonel Bharucha says that the real fight is of who gets the power after the Britishers leave - "Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jokers jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney!"



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And if you jokers (implying the Parsees)... if you jokers jump into the meddle you will be mangled into chutney." This is what Bharucha has to say, and this actually tells a lot about the minority community of the Parsee people, the minority community that the Parsees are in India. (Refer Slide Time: 10:16)



PARSEE

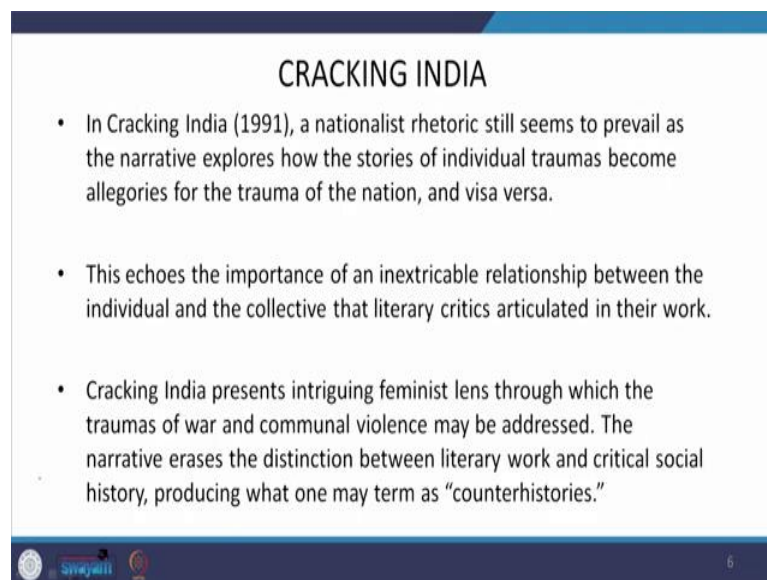
- The Parsees, Lenny finds, are “reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures” between the Muslim and Hindu communities that are mobilized by nationalist rhetoric. This leads Lenny to confront the most fundamental of questions: “What is God?”

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So, Parsee is actually...Lenny finds that the Parsees are "reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures", and I would hearken back the unreal existence on Warris Road that Lenny talks about. So, her unreal address...they are as good/as invisible as not there, because they do not participate in the disputatious relationships among different communities.




They are actually not engaging.. the Parsees are not actively a participant, an actor or a protagonist in this entire event, in this chapter of Partition, historical event of Partition. They are almost nobody. They are a nobody people between the Hindus and the Muslim communities that were mobilized by nationalist rhetoric.

This leads Lenny to ask a fundamental question: such as "What is god? Whose god is the real god? Actually whose god is the real god." (Refer Slide Time: 11:47)



### CRACKING INDIA

- In *Cracking India* (1991), a nationalist rhetoric still seems to prevail as the narrative explores how the stories of individual traumas become allegories for the trauma of the nation, and visa versa.
- This echoes the importance of an inextricable relationship between the individual and the collective that literary critics articulated in their work.
- *Cracking India* presents intriguing feminist lens through which the traumas of war and communal violence may be addressed. The narrative erases the distinction between literary work and critical social history, producing what one may term as "counterhistories."

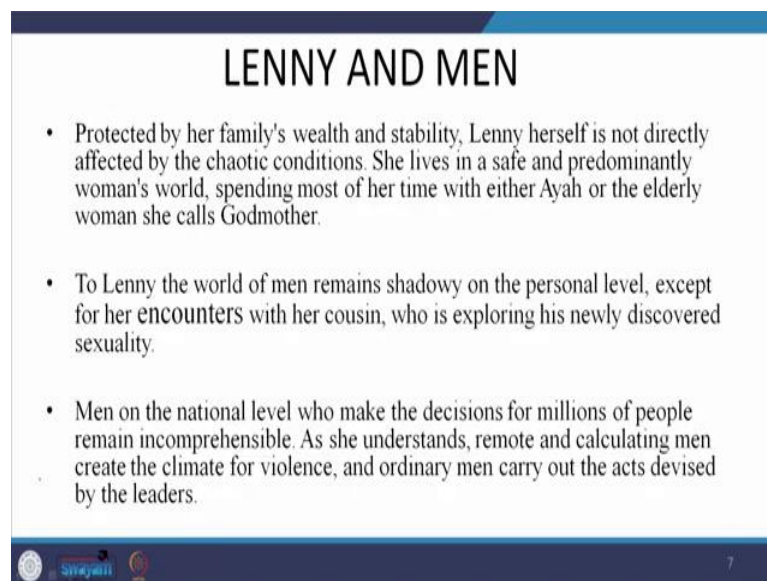
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So, in *Cracking India*, the nationalist rhetoric seems to prevail as the narrative explores how the stories of individual traumas actually resonate with the trauma of the nation; how individual stories are allegories for the trauma of the nation and vice versa.

And this echoes what the literary critics have already articulated in their work regarding the inextricable relationship between the individual and the collective. How the individual is a part of the collective and vice versa. We see this being reflected in *Cracking India*.

So, the story presents an intriguing feminist lens through which the traumas of war and communal violence are addressed. The narrative erases the distinction between literary work and critical social history. One could read *Cracking India* in so many different ways -- as the autobiography of a juvenile, as an account of confession, as a critical social history as well as a fiction (the work of fiction and the literary work). And in many ways, it has the quality of what could be termed as a "counterhistory", something that is shifting/that has moved away from the larger nationalistic events, the celebratory stories that one get to hear most often about the independence of India.

It is a kind of counter-narration to such a glorified picturization, glorified imagination of anti-colonial struggles. Away from that, it is a story of a microcosm and of a child growing up during partition. (Refer Slide Time: 14:31)



The slide features a title 'LENNY AND MEN' in bold, black, uppercase letters at the top center. Below the title, there are three bullet points, each starting with a small black dot. The text is left-aligned. At the bottom of the slide, there is a dark blue footer bar containing three small circular icons on the left and the number '7' on the right.

## LENNY AND MEN

- Protected by her family's wealth and stability, Lenny herself is not directly affected by the chaotic conditions. She lives in a safe and predominantly woman's world, spending most of her time with either Ayah or the elderly woman she calls Godmother.
- To Lenny the world of men remains shadowy on the personal level, except for her encounters with her cousin, who is exploring his newly discovered sexuality.
- Men on the national level who make the decisions for millions of people remain incomprehensible. As she understands, remote and calculating men create the climate for violence, and ordinary men carry out the acts devised by the leaders.

Lenny is protected by her family's wealth and stability, and therefore, not directly affected by virtue of being wealthy and being part of a minority community, the

community of the Parsees. She is hardly affected by these chaotic conditions. She is ensconced and lives predominantly in the women's world and spends most of her time either with Ayah or with some elderly woman, with an elderly woman that she calls as her godmother.

She does not have very direct interface with the men's world. Although she definitely communicates on an everyday level...she communicates with the ice candy man and the masseur..these are all subalterns and they are not male protagonists. They are not the hypermasculine characters until, of course, ice candy man transforms himself and becomes someone similar to the nationalistic leaders.

So, although she knows men around her, they do not play a vital role in churning the larger national events in the nation. They are chiefly subalterns. The world of men remains shadowy [at] the personal level of Lenny, except her encounter with her cousin, that is a juvenile male she encounters, who is trying to explore his newly-discovered sexuality, and that is where we see that the two children are talking about topics that are generally discussed among the adults. Men on the national level who make decisions for everyone remain incomprehensible and mythical figures for Lenny.

As she understands, there are some men that are remote, cannot be easily accessed, and the ones that are calculating, that are responsible for creating the climate of violence, their decisions/ their machinations and schemings are actually imposed on the ordinary people and these machinations are carried out by the ordinary men, who merely act as cogs and as pawns in the hands of such leaders.

While describing her meeting with Gandhi, Lenny mentions how she lowers her eyes in the vicinity of a man for the first time. And then [once] she starts to understand, when she later on starts to understand the magnanimity, the impact and the dimension of the amount of damage that has been wrought by this massacre and the role of the men in it, she says - when I raised my head again the men lowered their eyes.

So, when she raises her head she means to say that it is a kind of counter-gaze, it is her feminine self. It is a transformation from being a juvenile to becoming a feminine...a feminine subject, who starts understanding/ actually engaging with the largest scheme. When she raises her head, there are questions which cannot be answered by the men and so, they lower their eyes. (Refer Slide Time: 19:25)



## LENNY AND MEN

- While describing her meeting with Gandhi, Lenny mentions how she lowers her eyes in the vicinity of a man for the first time. Later on, when she starts to understand the magnanimity of the massacre and the role of men in it, she says "Then, when I raised my head again, the men lowered their eyes."
- This can be understood as a revelation about the biggest truth of Partition, which was a decision taken by men impacting thousands of women much more than it impacted the men. At this point, the sentence is spoken by Lenny's feminine self.

So, this is the process of Lenny transforming or Lenny's entry into adulthood, into womanhood, right. This brings about a kind of revelation. This happens as a result of the revelation of the biggest truth of Partition, and Lenny realizes that it is a decision taken by men, which impacts women much more than it impacts the men. This sentence is spoken by an adult and feminine self in Lenny.

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## WOMEN

- On one hand, a section of the society is concerned about women being exposed to the gory violence in the initial phase of the outbreak. When Lenny and the Ayah see the riot scenes, the masseur raises his concern, saying "They shouldn't see such things..." Women who are apparently too sensitive to merely see the violence created by men, afterwards face brutal rapes and murders.
- The concept of bodily violence and animosity inflicted on women's bodies become part of the child's common parlance, as Lenny and her cousin enact rape on a ragdoll. They talk about "fallen women" who were rape victims.

So, one sees that a section of the society is concerned about women being exposed to the gory violence, especially in the initial phase. So, the masseur for example, is concerned.. he is expressing his concern by saying that Lenny and Ayah should not witness the riot scenes, "they should not see such things".

Later on, women are actually the recipient of the greatest form of violence. They are brutally raped and murdered. The initial sensitivity, where women are barred from seeing an act of violence, actually is replaced by the woman's body becoming the site of violence.

The masseur is the kind of man that Ayah would call as a gentleman. And that is precisely why she gets attracted to the masseur, because he wants to protect Ayah and take her away from the violent scenes. On the other hand, we have the figure of the ice candy man, an

otherwise fun-loving and frolicking man, who later on implores/ beseeches that Ayah marry him. And if Ayah becomes his wife, his partner, then he would be able to control the animal in him. Because Ayah refuses the ice candy man, the animal in him is unleashed.

We see here that expression of love or romantic overtures also take on a hyper-masculinist tone. Ice candy man, transforming from his flirtatious romantic self, wants to marry Ayah merely to control the animal feelings.

There is also this question of the ice candy man wanting to marry Ayah in response to his own sister being raped by the Hindus. So, one could see this entire romantic overture from/through a communal meaning, where ice candy man is not merely Ayah's suitor, but a Muslim fanatic wanting to establish his claim and control over the Hindu woman's body.

So, all these equations... the long standing friendships, romantic relations, transform and take on/acquire communal colorations; and so, situation becomes grave and serious. What is ironical is that at the heart of this communal disturbance,

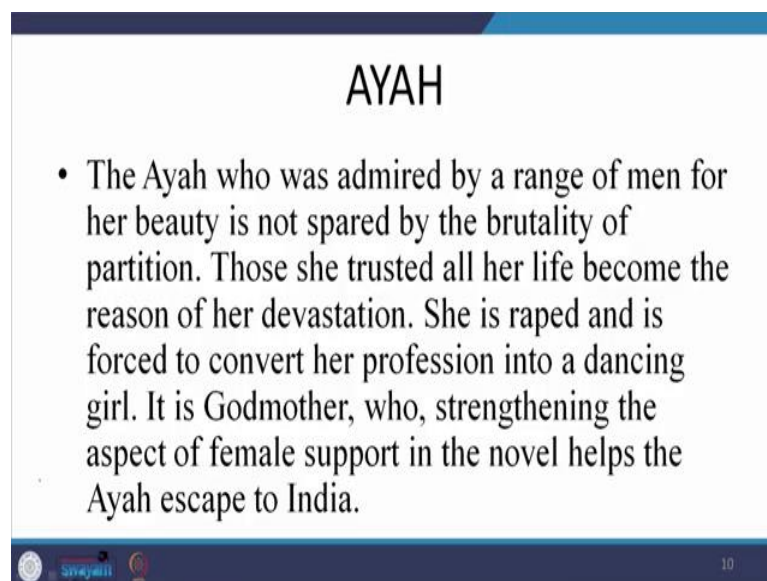
we have the story of a love triangle seen through Lenny's eyes, where the arch rivals are both Muslims. So, Ayah's lovers are both Muslims and in the end, a Muslim man actually ends up killing another Muslim man as a way of taking revenge.

So, we see that human behavior being extremely complex cannot be fitted very well to merely explain/ cannot be fitted or contained within the communal rhetoric...the rhetoric of communal rivalry and enmity because in this story, we see that a Muslim actually goes on to kill another Muslim, (like I said) which does not fit very well into the Hindu versus Muslim rhetoric.

So, the concept of bodily violence and animosity inflicted on women's body becomes part of children's conversation. It becomes part of the child's common parlance and at a point, Lenny and her cousin are seen as enacting the rape of a ragdoll. It becomes part of children's game and (like I have already discussed before), we see the children talking about "giri hui aurat", the fallen woman, who were actually rape victims.

So, we see that they are acquiring some understanding of Partition through direct witnessing and sometimes, they are picking up from what the adults say. So, right from the beginning of the narrative, one sees that Ayah is admired by a range of men for her beauty and yet, she is not spared by the brutality of the Partition.

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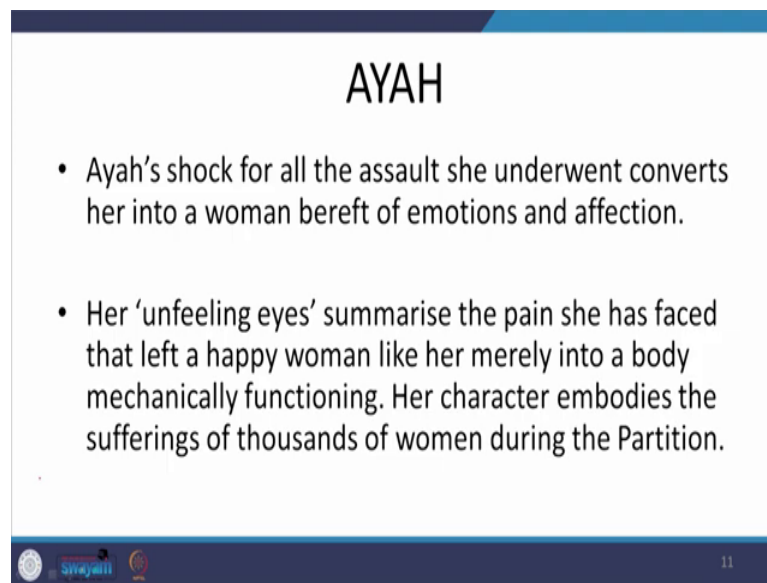
## AYAH

- The Ayah who was admired by a range of men for her beauty is not spared by the brutality of partition. Those she trusted all her life become the reason of her devastation. She is raped and is forced to convert her profession into a dancing girl. It is Godmother, who, strengthening the aspect of female support in the novel helps the Ayah escape to India.

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Her trust is actually [broken as] all the men fail her. So those she trusted all her life become the reason, they become the reason of a devastation. She is raped, she is abducted, and she is forced to convert her profession into a dancing girl. And later on, it is the godmother who is a figure of great strength and so, she rescues Ayah and helps her escape to India.

Yet, Ayah's shock for all the assault that she underwent converts her into a woman that is bereft of emotions and affection. (Refer Slide Time: 27:24)



## AYAH

- Ayah's shock for all the assault she underwent converts her into a woman bereft of emotions and affection.
- Her 'unfeeling eyes' summarise the pain she has faced that left a happy woman like her merely into a body mechanically functioning. Her character embodies the sufferings of thousands of women during the Partition.

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Lenny the narrator talks about her 'unfeeling eyes', which summarize the pain she has undergone, she has suffered and which has left her an unhappy woman.

From a chirpy, bubbly woman that Ayah was, she turned into a body that could merely or mechanically function.. a callous individual or a carelessly functioning body. So, her character embodies the sufferings that thousands of women actually underwent during the Partition, and with this, I am going to stop today's lecture. I will meet you again for another round of lectures.

Thank you.