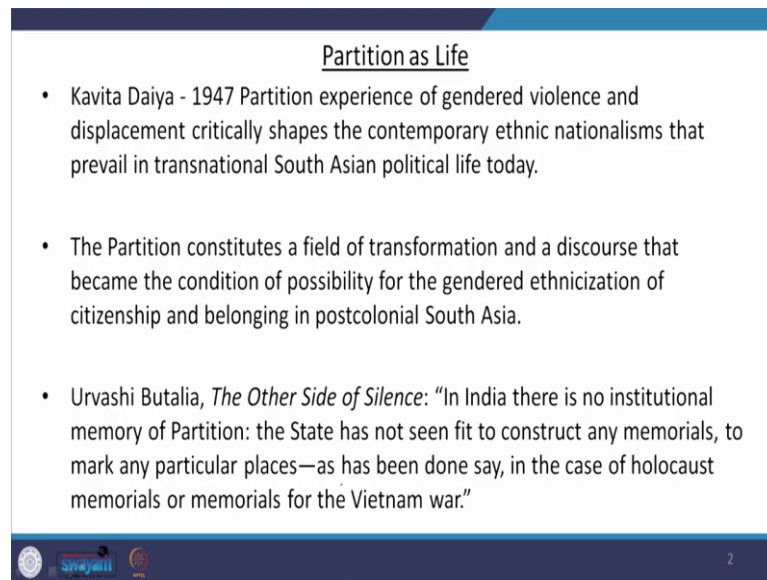


**Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema**  
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**Lecture - 58**  
**Partition Literature in the 21st Century - I**

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema. We are talking about Partition Literature in the 21st century. So, how partition scholarship has emerged over the decades is something we need to understand towards the end of this course. (Refer Slide Time: 00:53)



Partition as Life

- Kavita Daiya - 1947 Partition experience of gendered violence and displacement critically shapes the contemporary ethnic nationalisms that prevail in transnational South Asian political life today.
- The Partition constitutes a field of transformation and a discourse that became the condition of possibility for the gendered ethnicization of citizenship and belonging in postcolonial South Asia.
- Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*: "In India there is no institutional memory of Partition: the State has not seen fit to construct any memorials, to mark any particular places—as has been done say, in the case of holocaust memorials or memorials for the Vietnam war."

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Kavita Daiya notes that 1947 Partition experience of gendered violence and displacement shapes the contemporary ethnic nationalisms, which prevail in the transnational South Asian political life today.

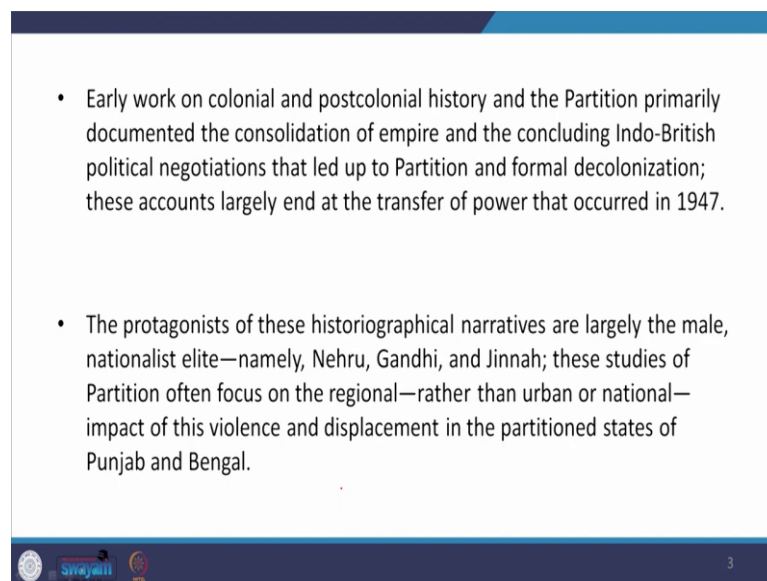
So, partition as a reality has never gone away since the 1940s. It keeps looming in the South Asian politics in the gendered politics, communal politics, in the ensuing communal riots that South Asia has witnessed; in ethnic violence and through the question of refugee crisis that keeps popping up, that keeps popping up from time to time, and a crisis that amplifies.

And, never... [it is] a crisis that has never gone away. Human crisis, the question of citizenship, who is the citizen, who is the outsider and the borderlines that construct and

deconstruct an individual's identity.. dimensions of an individual's identity - all these things trace back their roots to the decision of partition, the watershed.

The partition constitutes field of transformation and a discourse that became the condition of possibility for the gendered ethnicization of citizenship and belonging in postcolonial South Asia. So, in the postcolonial nation-states in South Asia, a person, an individual is produced as a citizen, a foreigner, a refugee, an immigrant through this decision made in 1947. So, an individual's identity and belonging is, to a large extent, etched by the partition.

Urvashi Butalia notes that there is no institutional memory of partition in India like we have in the case of...in the case of the holocaust in Germany or even the memorials for the Vietnam war; we do not have anything corresponding to such memorials in India, anything that commemorates or, you know, remembers partition in an institutional manner. (Refer Slide Time: 03:49)



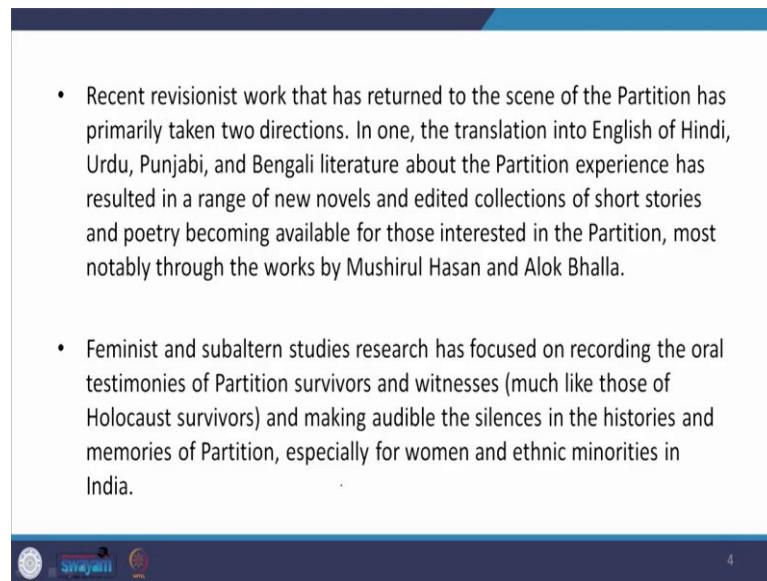
- Early work on colonial and postcolonial history and the Partition primarily documented the consolidation of empire and the concluding Indo-British political negotiations that led up to Partition and formal decolonization; these accounts largely end at the transfer of power that occurred in 1947.
- The protagonists of these historiographical narratives are largely the male, nationalist elite—namely, Nehru, Gandhi, and Jinnah; these studies of Partition often focus on the regional—rather than urban or national—impact of this violence and displacement in the partitioned states of Punjab and Bengal.

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However, having said that, we must also consider that formal historiography/ official historiography has its own way of remembering and documenting the past. There is no denying that once a discursive past is museumized, it is at the behest of some canonical works, some works that are given more importance at the expense of relegating other works. At the backgrounds, they [the non-canonical works] are treated as lesser important, you know, lesser important materials which make up the archive of partition.

Earlier work on colonial and postcolonial history and on partition primarily documented the consolidation of empire and the transfer of power basically. These accounts largely centered and they limited themselves to the narrative on the transfer of power that occurred in 1947.

And, the protagonists shown in this entire discourse were the more prominent leaders, nationalist elites such as Jawaharlal Nehru, his father Motilal Nehru, M. K Gandhi, M. A Jinnah and therefore, look at their focus, these studies focus mostly on the regional rather than the urban or national impact of violence. (Refer Slide Time: 06:17)



- Recent revisionist work that has returned to the scene of the Partition has primarily taken two directions. In one, the translation into English of Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, and Bengali literature about the Partition experience has resulted in a range of new novels and edited collections of short stories and poetry becoming available for those interested in the Partition, most notably through the works by Mushirul Hasan and Alok Bhalla.
- Feminist and subaltern studies research has focused on recording the oral testimonies of Partition survivors and witnesses (much like those of Holocaust survivors) and making audible the silences in the histories and memories of Partition, especially for women and ethnic minorities in India.

So, in the case of the revisionist works on partition, the focus has actually been on the revisionist works,... the trend, the focus has you know... primarily, two different directions been you know emphasized, the translation into English of regional artworks, such as works in Hindi.. works originally in Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali about the partition experience, [which] has resulted in, you know, broadening the audience, broadening the readership for range of these artworks.

There are also a lot of Indian writings in English, which have dealt with the episode of partition. We have Anita Desai's *Clear Light of the Day* as a case in hand, and many such works which are originally written in English, and such a work basically is exposed to a wide range of readers. So, they are made available to a larger number of audience who are interested in partition scholarship.

And, two of the important critics that have contributed significantly in this regard are Mushirul Hasan and Alok Bhalla, right, among many others of course. So, we see that the desire to have partition literature in translation is a remarkable step towards taking the scholarship one step ahead and making it available to everyone, to scholars coming from different backgrounds, who are even outside who are even from outside of South Asia, right.

For example, we have scholars like Erin O Donnell who has extensively worked on Ghatak's films. She has written on Ghatak's films; we have Shelley Feldman who has studied the case of Bengal partition. We have film critics like Thomas Stubblefield that has examined/ that has studied Ghatak's works. So, a lot of scholars from the west have become interested on this topic, thanks to the translations or films being made available with subtitles, right.

So, feminist and subaltern studies research has focused on recording the oral testimonies, the survivor's witness, and this is much similar to that of the holocaust survivors and this gives...this renders voice... this expedition by, you know, spearheaded by scholars such as Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Nandi Bhatia, Anjali Gera Roy, and then Gyanendra Pandey.

They have been writing about the importance of rendering voice [to the subalterns/marginal subjects] and breaking the silences that have remained in the histories and in the memories vis-a-vis partition. So, the gaps need to be further explored and

examined and reinvestigated, especially in the case of women and ethnic minorities in India.

So, in the case of...I could give a small example how partition literature is far from, you know, arriving at a closure or a dead end. It has more to explore, it is still a burning topic and there are some further milestones to be met. So, for example, in the case of Bengal, there was a point where due to censorship, political censorship, the chapter of Marichjhapi, the chapter of Marichjhapi remained obscured and under-researched, not discussed.

It was only, you know, scholars like Ross Malik who were publishing with Oxbridge (Cambridge and Oxford), who were not actually situated in India that could discuss a chapter such as Marichjhapi, not the scholars residing in India.

From there on, there have been some daunting works, some daring ventures you know literary ventures that have openly criticized the then governments in Bengal and that have, you know, elaborately/ vividly described the Marichjhapi experience, Marichjhapi chapter as [experience of] survivors, as you know firsthand witnesses.

And, further, so in the first stage such writings were in the vernacular, they were written in Bengali. From then on, I mean from that point, today we have a work like Blood Island written in English by a Dalit from within the community of the Bengali Dalit refugees, who witnessed and survived Marichjhapi and who is taking the incident to the rest of the country.

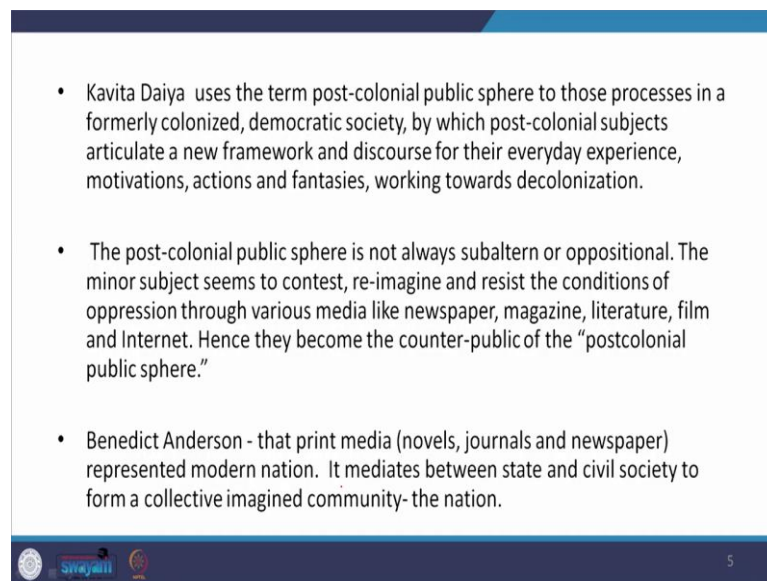
So, Marichjhapi is no longer a regional incident of violence of human rights. It is something that has reached out to the larger audience, it has become, you know, it is available on a pan-Indian scale now. So, this is a development. This is a very positive development in the field of literary works, you know, literary writings where the question of literacy also becomes very important over the generations, over the decades.

We have witnessed what can be called as the first generation literates from among the Dalits. So, ah the people that came to India as destitutes, as beggars in the tail end of population exchange and who have no profession virtually... who have virtually no profession in the new land, their children go to schools. They become literate; such is the case of Adhir Biswas and Manoranjan Byapari from Bengal.

They are Dalit intellectuals, Dalit writers, they start writing in Bengali. There are other poets also that write about partition in Bengali. We have Kalyani Thakur Charal, we have Lily Halder and of course, there are some important works by Mouli Manohar Biswas, Nakul Mallik who are engaging with the topic of partition from very different angles, from very different perspectives, and new realities are emerging thereby.

So, recent works actually have gained a lot through two of these things - one is a section of society starting to speak up because they have earned the literacy within the period of a generation. The Dalits write about their own experiences. Their experiences are not written by the mainstream upper caste people and that is a very different kind of writing altogether. The language is imbued with/ enmeshed with the struggle and the marginality that they come from, right.

The importance of translation cannot be emphasized enough; it is a boon to have, you know, partition scholarship available in Indian English now. So, feminist and subaltern studies research have focused on recording the oral testimonies of partition survivors. (Refer Slide Time: 15:28)



- Kavita Daiya uses the term post-colonial public sphere to those processes in a formerly colonized, democratic society, by which post-colonial subjects articulate a new framework and discourse for their everyday experience, motivations, actions and fantasies, working towards decolonization.
- The post-colonial public sphere is not always subaltern or oppositional. The minor subject seems to contest, re-imagine and resist the conditions of oppression through various media like newspaper, magazine, literature, film and Internet. Hence they become the counter-public of the “postcolonial public sphere.”
- Benedict Anderson - that print media (novels, journals and newspaper) represented modern nation. It mediates between state and civil society to form a collective imagined community- the nation.

Kavita Daiya uses the term post-colonial public sphere - a public consciousness that is formed in the post-colonial nation - and it is [formed, you know]... through processes in a formerly colonized democratic society by which post-colonial subjects articulate a new framework and discourse.

So, they have the... post-colonial subject has the colonized democratic... formally colonized democratic society to inform their consciousness, to shape their identity, and yet they are churning out a new framework and a new discourse that explain their everyday existence, their everyday experiences, their motivations, aspirations, actions and fantasies in the process of working towards decolonization.

So, a lingering of the colonial reality and, you know, also being exposed to new ways of being, new motivations and new desires, and that is how one gets, one decolonizes oneself as the postcolonial subject, a complex subject. We have to understand that the postcolonial public sphere is not always-already oppositional or, you know, subaltern.

They have an agency of their own, the minor subject can still re-imagine and even resist the conditions of oppression through media, such as magazines, journals, newspapers, literature, films and through internet, through social media. So, they form the counter-public of the postcolonial public sphere, right.

In fact, Benedict Anderson asserts that print media such as... which includes novels, journals, newspaper can very well represent the modern nation. It does very well represent the modern nation. It acts as an intermediary between the state and civil society to form a collective imagined community, which the nation is, right.

So, just talking in the Derridean sense, the center is constantly moving towards the margin and the margin is constantly pushing for and striving for the center. Nothing is located in one position forever, and the media plays a great role in this dynamics....in this, you know, ever-shifting..., in this ever-fluid and ever-shifting dynamics. (Refer Slide Time: 19:34)

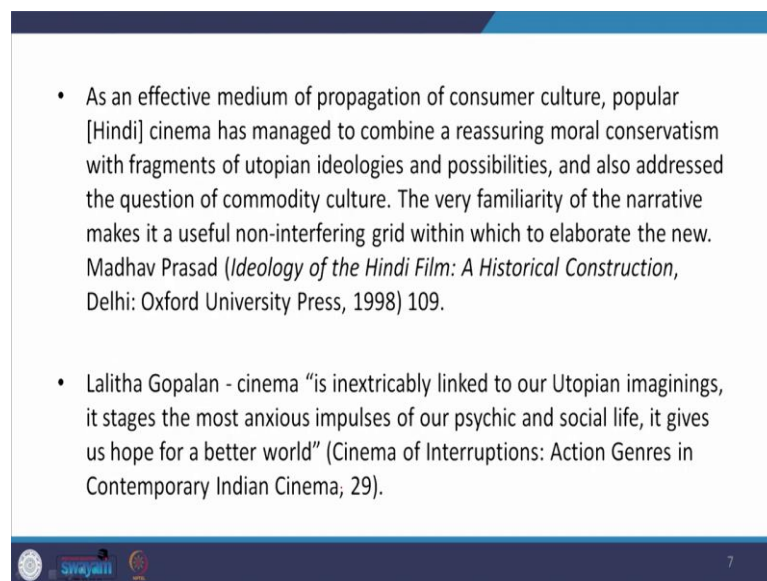
- Film technology emerged as a powerful tool in the post-colonial urban India, that bridged public and private, elite, minor, local and the national through the mediation of civil society and citizenship.
- Film shaped the collective memory by representing the unrecorded histories and survivor's oral testimonies through their alternative stories about national history.
- Bollywood films attempted to melodramatically reconfigure contemporary questions about geopolitical war and peace, the relation between ethnicity and citizenship in national culture, and to memorialize women's experience during partition in transnational public sphere.



Film technology for one has emerged as a powerful tool in the postcolonial urban India, and it plays a great role in bridging the public and the private. So, on the one hand we have the elite, and then we have the minor, local and the national; everything is mediated through, I mean, all these different let us say realities, different cosmos...the public and the private, the elite, the minor, the local, the national - all these supposedly (conventionally understood as) oppositional stratas, oppositional ecosystems or realities are, you know, these opposed spaces or cosmos are mediated through films. So, film acts as a kind of liaison, as a kind of bridge between the civil society and the state-making process and citizenship, right.

We see that on the one hand, we have the state machinery, on the other hand we have the civil society and citizenship, and the film technology actually plays to a great extent as a liaison between the two. So, film shapes the collective memory through representing the unrecorded histories and the survivors' testimonies through producing/ through creating alternative possibilities on screen about the national history.

Bollywood films have actually emphasized melodrama to a great extent and used melodrama, in fact, to reconfigure contemporary questions about geopolitical war and peace, the relation between ethnicity and citizenship in national culture, and has also memorialized the women's experience during partition in the transnational public sphere. (Refer Slide Time: 21:51)



- As an effective medium of propagation of consumer culture, popular [Hindi] cinema has managed to combine a reassuring moral conservatism with fragments of utopian ideologies and possibilities, and also addressed the question of commodity culture. The very familiarity of the narrative makes it a useful non-interfering grid within which to elaborate the new. Madhav Prasad (*Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) 109.
- Lalitha Gopalan - cinema "is inextricably linked to our Utopian imaginings, it stages the most anxious impulses of our psychic and social life, it gives us hope for a better world" (*Cinema of Interruptions: Action Genres in Contemporary Indian Cinema*, 29).

Hindi cinema or Bollywood; Bollywood is synonymous with Hindi cinema, but not quite if we consider the mainstream Hindi cinema, the pot boilers, popular Hindi cinema - it[Bollywood] is an effective medium of propagation of consumer culture. It[Bollywood] has managed to somehow retain moral conservatism with fragments of utopian ideologies and possibilities, and it has also addressed the question of commodity culture.

So, the question of film being sold and taken well by the public, the glamour quotient being retained and yet trying to drive home a quick message - something that is profound, that keeps the audience thinking while also not giving up entirely on moral conservatism are some of the traits that form the popular Hindi cinema.

So, it is liked by the most, it tries to include the most of the audience. The very familiarity of the narrative makes it as a useful non-interfering grid, within which something novel something different can be experimented. One case in hand could be Mani Ratnam's film *Dil Se*, which deals with the question of nation/nationalism, the coerciveness and violence that is involved in the preservation and in the celebration of nationhood, not addressing the human rights of certain sections that belong to the same geopolitical space.

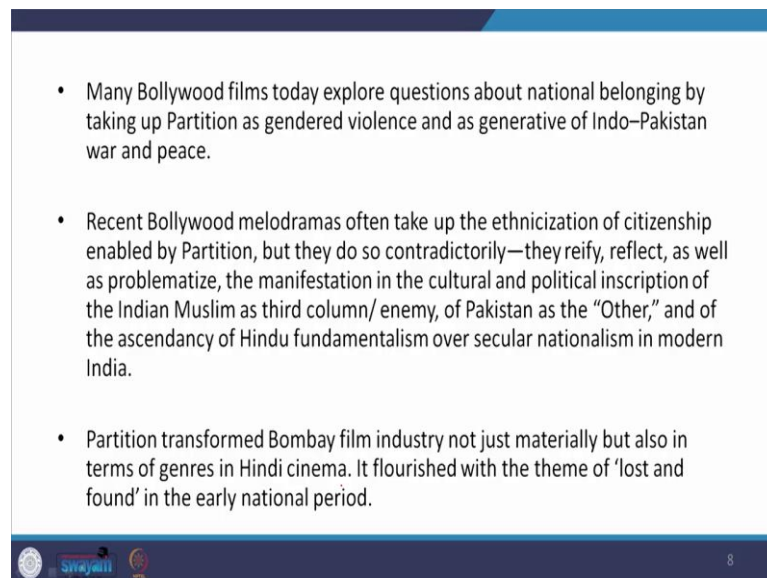
So, it is dealing with, I mean the film actually tells us about a woman, who belongs to an extremist outfit; she endorses an extremist outfit and she is a member of such an organization. And, so, we see that such a figure of a female rebellion who wants to avenge her families' killings by the military, by the Indian military forces is contained within mainstream Bollywood formula because in the end, there is nothing radical happening in the film however.

In the end, as many critics have noted, the film does relapse and reconcile with some conservative message. It has... the film relapses to moral conservatism, it gives some conservative and straightforward messages, where the woman in the end actually dies. She is hardly shown as an agent; as a terrorist, as a female terrorist she is through and through a victim.



And, she does not belong anywhere, neither to her outfit nor to the mainstream society, and she cannot even participate in her own love story - a half- hearted love story with a man who is, I mean, who is a symbol of the mainstream society, he is a journalist and son of a military officer.

So, we see such films, you know, striving for a radical ... some utopian and radical let us say goals, or such films aiming for some radical objectives, but in the end, they fall back in such a way that these works, the messages that they carry are more acceptable to the larger public, right. So, the films are dealing with a familiar, let us say, repository which is the partition, then they are also experimenting with the question of partition, citizenship, nation and nationalism.

Lalitha Gopalan states that cinema is inextricably linked to our Utopian imaginings. It stages the most anxious impulses of our psychic and social life. It gives us hope for a better world. So, the utopian dimension is never gone -- what if, what could be. (Refer Slide Time: 27:42)



- Many Bollywood films today explore questions about national belonging by taking up Partition as gendered violence and as generative of Indo-Pakistan war and peace.
- Recent Bollywood melodramas often take up the ethnicization of citizenship enabled by Partition, but they do so contradictorily—they reify, reflect, as well as problematize, the manifestation in the cultural and political inscription of the Indian Muslim as third column/ enemy, of Pakistan as the “Other,” and of the ascendancy of Hindu fundamentalism over secular nationalism in modern India.
- Partition transformed Bombay film industry not just materially but also in terms of genres in Hindi cinema. It flourished with the theme of ‘lost and found’ in the early national period.

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A lot of films have actually flourished - Bollywood films have flourished by exploring the question about national belonging and through, you know, further exploiting or capitalizing the Indo-Pakistan.. the topic of Indo-Pakistan war and peace.

So, recent Bollywood melodramas often take up the ethnicization of citizenship that has been enabled by Partition, but different films do this or approach this topic from different directions and contradictorily, some films reify, reflect, and others problematize the manifestation of the cultural and political inscription of the Indian Muslim.

For example, the Indian Muslim as the third column, as the quintessential enemy and an insider-outsider and then, you know, portraying of Pakistan as the essential other and the timeless enemy of India. These are some of the topics that have been explored.

Partition transformed Bombay film industry not just materially, but also in term of the genres in Hindi cinema. This also reminds me of another film by Mani Ratnam called Roja. It came in the 1990s, where we have a very nationalist or we have ...the question of nation, nationhood and war, and against the backdrop of such larger dealings or against the backdrop of nation and war, we have a love story.

At the heart of it there is a love story and so, the couple is, you know, shaped and portrayed in a very predictable way in some sense, and the Muslim, the Kashmiri terrorist shown in Roja is also the good man who turned bad and a bad man who has the possibility of becoming good.

So, this is something, I mean, that we have recurrently seen in Bollywood films. We have similar character - the male protagonist... We have a similar character in Mission Kashmir, the male protagonist is an innocent boy who turned into a terrorist and now he needs to be taken back into the fold, and he has some very loving women around him to inspire him become a better human being. He has a nice mother and a very understanding you know love interest or girlfriend.

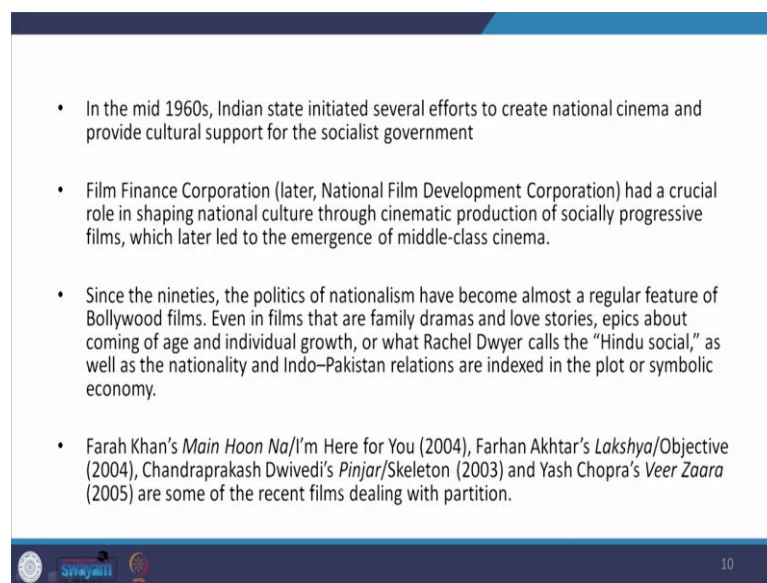
So, these are some of the stereotypical [characters], based on which Bollywood films have flourished in the 1990s and at the turn of the decade. We see, you know, stock narratives about the siblings belonging to nuclear families that get separated or lost in childhood.

This becomes a kind of motive, a kind of stock [theme]... this becomes a kind of theme and we have some stock characters, where traumatic experiences are.. you know, these traumatic experiences actually draw on the reality of thousands of families that got separated and never successfully reunited after the partition. (Refer Slide Time: 31:52)

- The siblings belonging to nuclear families are separated or lost in childhood, their traumatic experiences with reference to thousands of families who have not successfully united.
- R.B. Chopra directorial *Afsana* (1951), narrates the story of identical twin brothers separated from parents and each other during partition.
- *Waqt* (1965) directed by Yash Chopra talks about three brothers separated at the time of partition.
- *Nasik* (1954) by I.S. Johar is a social film narrating the experiences of a refugee family displaced by partition.
- Yash Chopra's *Dharmaputra* (1961) is based on Acharya Chatursen Shastri's Hindi novel, which centers on an illegitimate Muslim boy who is raised in post-partition India by Hindu parents.

So, siblings belonging to different families and they getting separated or lost, and later meeting after many years is a stock theme that keeps coming back in Bollywood. R.B. Chopra's film *Afsana* narrates the story of identical twin brothers separated from parents and from each other during the partition.

*Waqt* directed by Yash Chopra talks about the three brothers that separated at the time of partition. *Nasik* by I.S. Johar is a social film that narrates the experiences of refugee family dispersed by the partition. Then Yash Chopra's *Dharmaputra* is based on Acharya Chatursen Shastri's Hindi novel, which centers an illegitimate Muslim boy who is raised in post-partition India by Hindu parents.. foster Hindu parents. (Refer Slide Time: 32:40)



- In the mid 1960s, Indian state initiated several efforts to create national cinema and provide cultural support for the socialist government
- Film Finance Corporation (later, National Film Development Corporation) had a crucial role in shaping national culture through cinematic production of socially progressive films, which later led to the emergence of middle-class cinema.
- Since the nineties, the politics of nationalism have become almost a regular feature of Bollywood films. Even in films that are family dramas and love stories, epics about coming of age and individual growth, or what Rachel Dwyer calls the "Hindu social," as well as the nationality and Indo-Pakistan relations are indexed in the plot or symbolic economy.
- Farah Khan's *Main Hoon Na/I'm Here for You* (2004), Farhan Akhtar's *Lakshya/Objective* (2004), Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar/Skeleton* (2003) and Yash Chopra's *Veer Zaara* (2005) are some of the recent films dealing with partition.

By the mid-1960s, the Indian state initiated several efforts to create national cinema and provide cultural support to the socialist government. And, in this regard, we cannot definitely forget the quintessential film, *Mother India*.

*Mother India* where the woman is the incarnation of India, the nation, and she is single-handedly... she is a powerful, compassionate and long-suffering woman with great resilience, who is single-handedly bringing up her sons. So, she is like the great mother and in the end, she says something which became a popular dialogue - you know, she says that I can give away my son, but not the modesty of a woman.

And, allegedly because her son has molested this village girl, she takes the initiative to kill her own son, and takes laws in her own hands. And, that is how the mother figure [is

shown] as nurturing and someone who renders justice, who renders justice and who in a way is in charge of warding off the social evils.

So, this is something... this film had become very popular. It is the imagination of the... it actually took after or it was inspired by the, you know, imagination of the ideal Indian woman and her resilience/ range of meanings that can be accommodated within the image, within the figure of/ by the figure of the ideal Indian woman.

Film Finance corporation, later known as National Film Development Corporation had a crucial role in shaping national culture through cinematic production of socially progressive films, which later led to the emergence of the middle-class cinema. And later on, we have this genre of the parallel cinema, which has its own target audience, a close-knit smaller group of educated middle-class upper middle-class audience.

Since the 1990s, the politics of nationalism has become almost a regular feature in Bollywood films. Even in films that are family dramas and regular potboilers and love stories, epics about coming of age and individual growth, the Hindu social [mores/values] are at the heart of such narratives and also the question of nationality and Indo-Pak relations. These topics are indexed in the plot. They are inbuilt in the plot or they are, you know, they have a symbolic economy, right.

Farah Khan's film which is a potboiler, a mainstream Bollywood film *Main Hoon Na* (I am here for you) made in 2004; as well as *Lakshya* or *Objective* made in the same year and then Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar* or *Skeleton* made in 2003 and even Yash Chopra's *Veer Zaara* made in 2005, or some of the recent films that were made in the last 20 years or so, which dealt with partition at the turn of the century. (Refer Slide Time: 36:46)

- The popular Bollywood film *Main Hoon Na*, written and directed by Farah Khan, was released in 2004 and is considered a box-office success.
- The film was criticized from two standpoints- the masculinist valorization of the nation-state and the representation of military is problematic.
- On the other hand, however, the film critically argues for secular, de-ethnicized citizenship and international peace.
- *Main Hoon Na* also explicitly allegorizes the popular Hindu religious epic Ramayana; the protagonist is named Ram after the Hindu god Ram, and the character of Ram's brother is named Lakshman, as in the epic.
- Ram is "exiled" from his home, like the God, by a step-mother who rejects him—though in this modern version, it is because he is the illegitimate product of an extra-marital affair .

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So, Main Hoon Na is considered as a box office success and the film was criticized mainly from two standpoints - the masculinist valorization of nation-state and the representation of military as problematic. So, the film critically argues for secular de-ethnicized citizenship and it vouches for, it stands up for international peace.

The film also allegorizes the popular Hindu religious epic Ramayana and the rhetoric that emerges from Ramayana... the protagonist in the film is called Ram, who is named after the Hindu god and then the character of Ram's brother is Laxman in the film..I mean just like in the epic.

And, Ram is exiled from home like the god by a stepmother, who rejects him because he is the illegitimate product of an extramarital affair, right. (Refer Slide Time: 38:35)

- The film insists that there should be, and "there will be peace (aman), there will be friendship (dosti) too" between India and Pakistan. The film optimistically ends with the national exchange of innocent prisoners on the Wagah border by India and Pakistan. Also, it does not posit the Pakistani, the Afghani Taliban, or the Indian Muslim as the militant villain or as an enemy of the Indian state.
- The new wave of "cinepatriotism" in 1990s Bollywood cinema ties the filmic representation of the Muslim as terrorist "to the construction of the abnormal monster in contemporary discourses of counter-terrorism both in the West and in India."

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The film insists that there should be peace or Aman, there should be friendship or Dosti between India and Pakistan. The film optimistically ends with the national exchange of innocent prisoners on the Wagah boarder by India and Pakistan. The film also does not posit the Pakistani, the Afghani, Taliban or the Indian Muslim as the 'other,' the militant villain with respect to the Indian state.

So, we see all in all that a new wave of cine-patriotism emerges in the 1990s Bollywood cinema, which ties the filmic representation of the Muslim as terrorist to the construction of the abnormal monster in contemporary discourses of counter-terrorism, both in the West and in India.

We will harp more on this and we will look at more films that speak to this topic in our next lecture. With this, I am going to stop today's lecture and let us meet again for another round of discussions.

Thank you.