

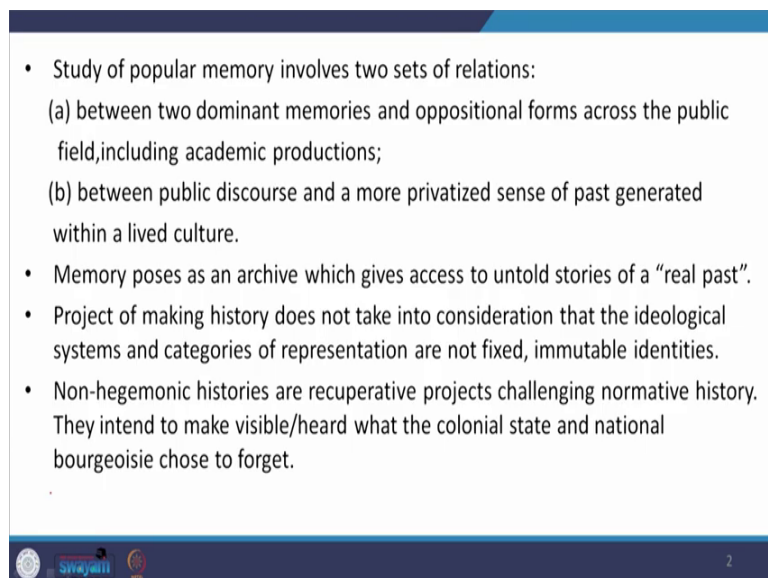
Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema
Prof. Sarbani Banerjee
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture - 09
History and Alternative Memory Writings - II

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India in Print Media and ah Cinema. So, today we are going to continue our discussion on History and Alternative Memory Writings, and the focus will be on the question of trauma and trauma survivor; and then the later part of the discussion is going to look at the question of the Subaltern and the role of the Subaltern in Partition studies.

Why it is important to look into the perspective of the Subaltern? Who is the Subaltern and how [does] the presence of the Subaltern destabilize the formal historiography? So, when talking about popular memory, there could be two sets of relations that different memories share.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:30)



- Study of popular memory involves two sets of relations:
 - (a) between two dominant memories and oppositional forms across the public field, including academic productions;
 - (b) between public discourse and a more privatized sense of past generated within a lived culture.
- Memory poses as an archive which gives access to untold stories of a “real past”.
- Project of making history does not take into consideration that the ideological systems and categories of representation are not fixed, immutable identities.
- Non-hegemonic histories are recuperative projects challenging normative history. They intend to make visible/heard what the colonial state and national bourgeoisie chose to forget.

2

One could be a kind of oppositional relation or contestation between two dominant memories across the public field that produce different forms of academic knowledge. So, knowledge is also not a monolithic formation. There can be different ways or different schools of thought, different ideologies that inform our approach to knowledge.

So, dominant memories backed by different ideological positions can have oppositional relations, where they do not agree at many points. And then, the next set of relation in popular memory is between the public discourse and the more privatized sense of past that actually generates from within a lived culture; a live notion of memory.

Memory that is not coming from above, let us say, but from below. Memory as an archive gives access to untold narratives of the real past. The limitation of formal history is in the fact that it takes different ideological systems and categories of representation as a priori and thereby immutable and fixed.

History is most of the times not adequate in justifying how a subject or a category is in a state of flux or how the larger circumstances, the changing dynamic relations also determine the making and unmaking of a category or a subject. So, non-hegemonic histories are recuperative projects that challenge any normative or traditional historical project.

In this, the non-hegemonic histories accommodate the unheard or the invisible voices - something that the colonial state and the national bourgeois chose to forget.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:27)

- Elizabeth F Loftus(1993) - memory is highly malleable and reconstructive and this indeed leads to the validity of memories.
- Caruth - "What the parable of the wound and the voice thus tells us, and what is at the heart of Freud's writing on trauma, both in what it says and in the stories it unwittingly tells, is that trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (4).
- Trauma in general is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena.
- Trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.

So, Elizabeth Loftus says that memory is highly malleable and reconstructive, which, in fact, leads to the validity of memories. Cathy Caruth examines and understands trauma and the survivor of trauma. What is the process of trauma, what is the experience of the survivor?

According to Cathy Caruth, what the parable of the wound and the voice tells us and what is at the heart of Freud's writing on trauma is that trauma seems to be much more than pathology or the simple illness of a wounded psyche. It is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality that is not otherwise available.

Cathy Caruth is talking about how the origin of trauma is not the body. Trauma cannot be merely understood as a bodily symptom or merely a kind of clinical symptom. It is also about the story of a wound, and such a story is commonly repetitive. It comes back in a circular fashion to the person that experiences trauma. So, trauma is a response to something, to a violent event that is unprecedented, that is unexpected and overwhelming.

The person that experiences trauma does not fully grasp when it occurs, but later it may return in the form of flashbacks, nightmares and other repetitive phenomena. So, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of a sudden catastrophic event. And the response to trauma is many a times delayed.

So, in the phase of trauma, the survivor is not really sure of what happens. There is a kind of lapse in one's cognizance, in one's understanding of the trauma. There is a state of confusion. So the repercussion is delayed, the flashbacks or the shock comes back in a repetitive fashion later on. So, it is a kind of, like Caruth says, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:34)

- “The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life” (7).
- Trauma creates “flashbacks” and amnesia for overwhelming events, accompanied by emotional numbing (Elizabeth 1070).
- The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all (Caruth 17).
- Inherent latency of the traumatic event paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of the Partitions’ historical experience.
- History of trauma can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence.

So, the story of trauma is the narrative of a belated experience, and far from or escape from reality, it attests to its endless impact on life. One cannot outgrow trauma through narrating it. I mean the survivor of trauma may have survived, may have escaped from death. But its impact, the consequence of trauma is almost lifelong.

There are many critics that would argue that there is no such thing as total recovery from trauma. So, trauma creates a kind of amnesia for overwhelming events and there is a kind of emotional numbing, where the person does not consciously or directly remember what happened, but the repercussion keeps happening in indirect forms and the person has to deal with these post-traumatic symptoms, sometimes on a lifelong basis.

The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is experienced first at all. One goes back to the moment

, to the epicentre of the trauma [and realizes] that the person that experiences trauma, knows about it first through forgetting. So, there is a kind of lacuna in knowledge about the trauma and that is how it first registers in the person's mind, in the person's psyche.

So, inherent latency of the traumatic event explains the peculiar temporal structure - the belatedness of the Partition's historical experience. At the moment when atrocity is being witnessed, a violent happening is seeping into a psyche; there is no understanding of the same. It comes back as a historical experience. Or, let us say it remains latent in the survivor only to surface later on through displaced meanings, through displaced symbols.

History of trauma can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:36)

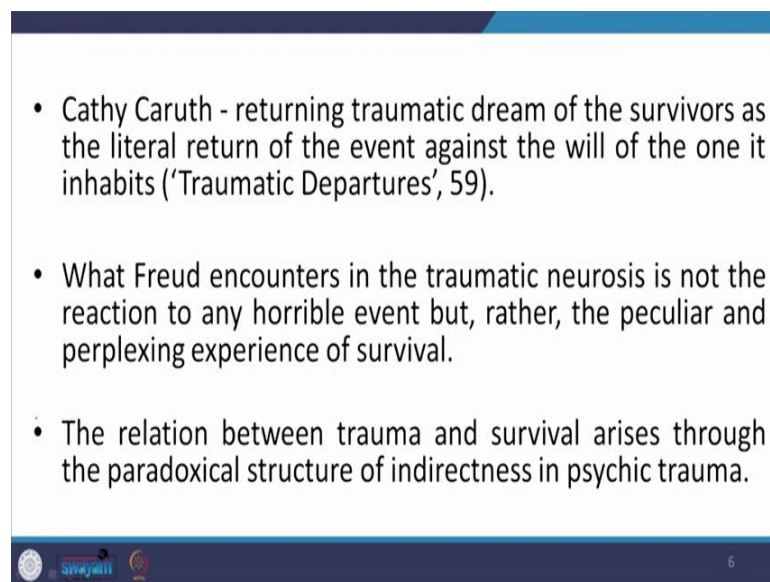
- Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, which describes an overwhelming experience of sudden catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder reflects the direct imposition of the unavoidable reality of horrific events on the mind, the taking over of the mind by an event that it cannot control.
- PTSD seems to provide the most direct link between the psyche and external violence.
- A paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival recognizes the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience (Caruth 58)

Thinkers that talk about trauma also talk about the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD. It describes an overwhelming experience of a sudden catastrophic or violent event, where the response to the event occurs often in an uncontrolled manner, and the hallucinations in the form of certain symbols, repeated nightmares or certain repeated moments keep coming back in the survivor's mind.

Post-traumatic stress disorder reflects the direct imposition of the unavoidable reality. So, the mind is actually taken over by a certain incident of violence, which it cannot face up to or control. So, PTSD provides direct link between the psyche and external violence. The paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival recognizes the legacy of incomprehensibility.

Just like I was trying to say, how in the immediacy of the experience, there is no question of comprehensibility. There is no language available to the person experiencing that can translate the meaning of the violence. So, essentially the survivor is registering the moment of trauma through a kind of vacuum, through a kind of nothingness, which is later on filled up by certain repetitive symbols and hallucinations.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:52)



- Cathy Caruth - returning traumatic dream of the survivors as the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits ('Traumatic Departures', 59).
- What Freud encounters in the traumatic neurosis is not the reaction to any horrible event but, rather, the peculiar and perplexing experience of survival.
- The relation between trauma and survival arises through the paradoxical structure of indirectness in psychic trauma.

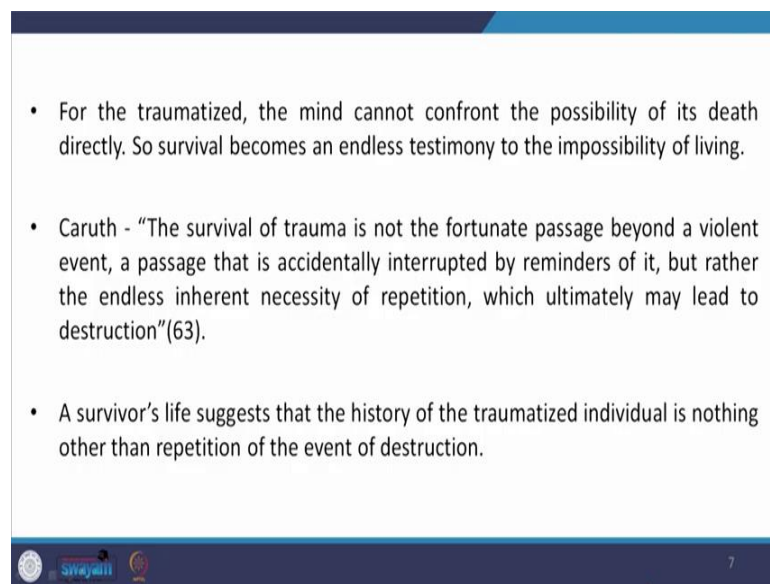
So, Caruth would also says that returning traumatic dream of the survivor as the literal return of the event is something against the will of the person that inhabits it. The returning of the traumatic dream happens against the will or regardless of the will of the

survivor. So, traumatic neurosis is not really a reaction to any horrible event, but it is a kind of an experience of survival.

Here, what we are trying to understand or what we are trying to say is that there is no way of escaping from trauma through narrating it. Escaping death and thereby surviving is not a very positive thing for a traumatized person because such survival is actually pregnant with a sense of complicated living. A sense of perplexity and survival itself becomes a lifelong struggle.

So, narrating away trauma or surviving from death is not necessarily a kind of triumph on the part of the survivor. It could actually mark the beginning of a more difficult journey after escaping death or accident. So, the relation between trauma and survival arises through the paradoxical structure of indirectness in psychic trauma.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:55)



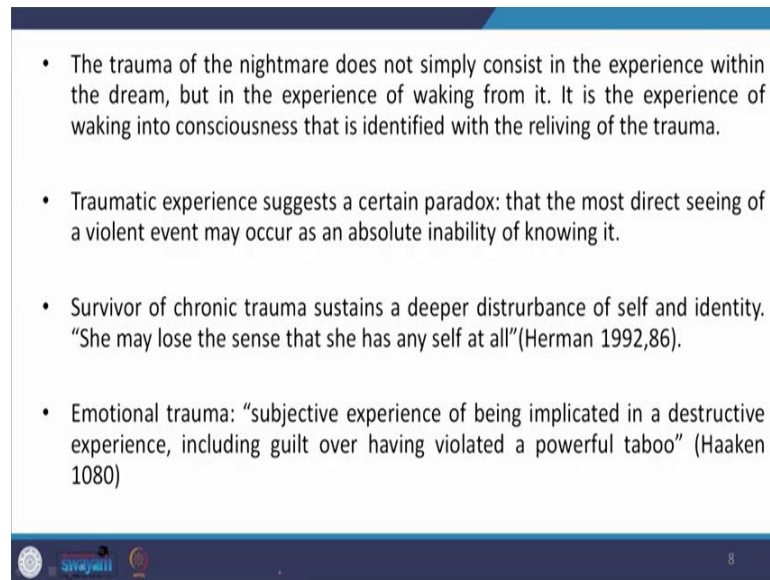
- For the traumatized, the mind cannot confront the possibility of its death directly. So survival becomes an endless testimony to the impossibility of living.
- Caruth - "The survival of trauma is not the fortunate passage beyond a violent event, a passage that is accidentally interrupted by reminders of it, but rather the endless inherent necessity of repetition, which ultimately may lead to destruction"(63).
- A survivor's life suggests that the history of the traumatized individual is nothing other than repetition of the event of destruction.

The traumatic mind cannot confront the possibility of death; rather, what it is dealing with is an endless testimony to the impossibility of living.

In a bid to escape death, the trauma survivor actually lands up into an impossible state of living. So, Caruth would say, "The survival of trauma is not the fortunate passage beyond a violent event, a passage that is accidentally interrupted by reminders of it, but rather the endless inherent necessity of repetition, which ultimately may lead to destruction". For many survivors of trauma, this you know coming back of... the return of

the flashbacks is unbearable and it leads to destruction. It is extremely, you know, self-destructive in a way. So, the survivor's life suggests that the history of the traumatized individual is nothing other than repetition of the event of destruction.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:26)



- The trauma of the nightmare does not simply consist in the experience within the dream, but in the experience of waking from it. It is the experience of waking into consciousness that is identified with the reliving of the trauma.
- Traumatic experience suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability of knowing it.
- Survivor of chronic trauma sustains a deeper disturbance of self and identity. "She may lose the sense that she has any self at all" (Herman 1992,86).
- Emotional trauma: "subjective experience of being implicated in a destructive experience, including guilt over having violated a powerful taboo" (Haaken 1080)

So, the trauma of nightmare does not simply consist in the experience within one's dream, but in the experience of waking from it.

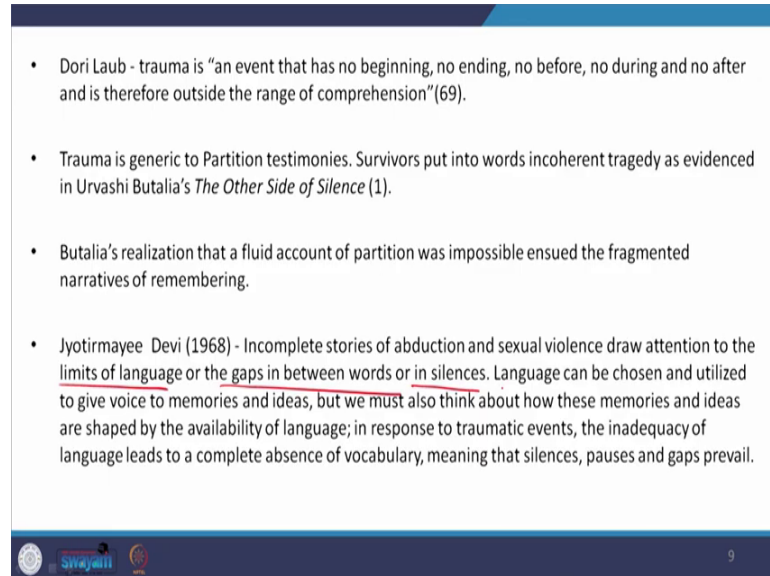
So, the question or the process of reliving of trauma. Survivor of chronic trauma sustains a disturbed meaning of self and identity. Sometimes, trauma survivor could end up having no sense of self at all, like Herman would argue. So, traumatic experience has a certain paradox at the heart of it, which is that the person that experiences a violent event first understands it through an absolute inability of knowing it.

So, there is an incommensurable gap between seeing, knowing, remembering what has been registered and what and how it later comes back to haunt the person. Then when we talk of emotional trauma, it is something fraught with a sense of guilt; a guilt of having violated, having transgressed a powerful taboo. So, this is something that... in the context of Partition, if we think of the rape victims as trauma survivors,



emotional trauma is something that also perturbed the male counterparts, many of whom abetted these incidents of rape, incidents of violation; many of whom, like family members... the male kin of the victim witnessed such a heinous act without being able to

prevent it. So, the onlookers, the ones that abetted the crime at that moment... for them it was a subjective experience, of being implicated in a destructive experience.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:55)



- Dori Laub - trauma is "an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after and is therefore outside the range of comprehension"(69).
- Trauma is generic to Partition testimonies. Survivors put into words incoherent tragedy as evidenced in Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence* (1).
- Butalia's realization that a fluid account of partition was impossible ensued the fragmented narratives of remembering.
- Jyotirmayee Devi (1968) - Incomplete stories of abduction and sexual violence draw attention to the limits of language or the gaps in between words or in silences. Language can be chosen and utilized to give voice to memories and ideas, but we must also think about how these memories and ideas are shaped by the availability of language; in response to traumatic events, the inadequacy of language leads to a complete absence of vocabulary, meaning that silences, pauses and gaps prevail.

 Sri Jayanti 

9

Now, Dori Laub would say that trauma is an event that does not really have a beginning, end, before, during and after and so, it is something outside the range of comprehension altogether. And trauma is generic to Partition testimonies. Survivors put into words the incoherent tragedy, like we can see in the case of Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*.

In the course of talking to the survivors, Butalia realizes that it is impossible to bring together or cohere the fragmented narratives of remembering. The process of remembering, of going back in time and to a time, to a moment... going back to a disturbed past, it does not facilitate smooth remembrance. There are constant slippages and hurdles from within, that the recounting has to deal with.

Jyotirmoyee Devi talks about the incomplete stories of abduction and sexual violence, and she draws our attention to the limits of language and the gaps between words or even, you know...so much actually concentrated, so much that is said through silence. So, language can be chosen and utilized to give voice to memories and ideas, but what Jyotirmoyee Devi urges us to understand is that there should be something called the socially permissible language.

The inadequacy of language, the failure of the vocabulary to hold a meaning actually does not let the trauma survivor express in words or articulate. The trauma survivor cannot articulate what exactly had happened. Inadequacy of language leads to a complete absence of vocabulary. The society has not provided with a kind of familiar expression that the trauma survivor can refer and which can aid the survivor to articulate her experience in exact words.

So, trauma as an experience is actually competing with certain gaps, certain aporia and certain blind spots, and constantly trying to overcome them, and in turn is being engulfed by these aporias, by these moments of pauses and silences. So, one also needs to understand

(Refer Slide Time: 22:30)

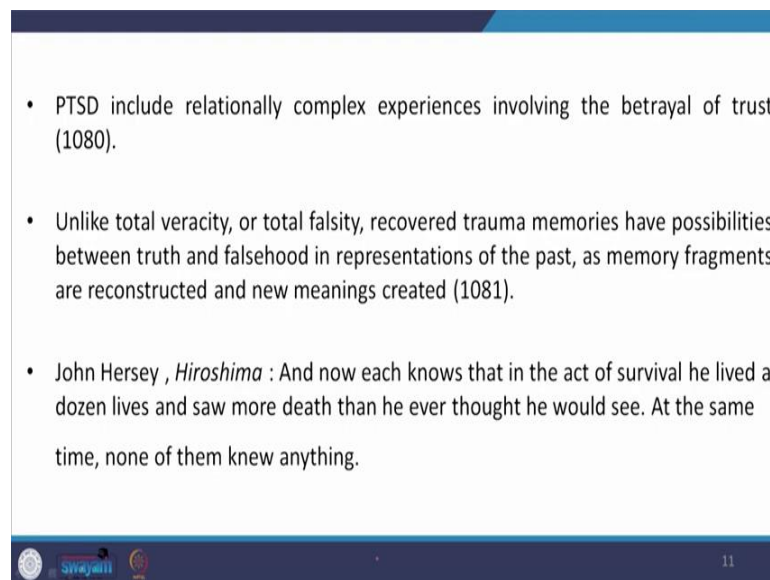
- In the rush to produce women's recollection as authentic, their faculty of imagination is undermined as this faculty is vital in resisting patriarchal control and imagining a world beyond it (1071).
- The healing and unilinear journey of victims can be illusory and provide a self-help and formulaic answers...and become a quasi-religious quest for the single origin of women's problems, disentangled from the broader confluence of life experiences, both past and present (1073).

[that the] faculty of imagination is vital in revisiting patriarchal control and in imagining a world that is beyond it. So, what I am trying to say here is that when the scholars are trying to recollect the authentic version of a trauma experience of the females and in the process undermining the faculty of imagination of these survivors, they are expecting the narrative to be told using the yardsticks, using the meanings, standards and symbols [that subscribe to] the larger patriarchal system.

So, imagination by the survivor... it is a way of conjuring a world beyond these symbols, beyond these standards set up by patriarchy and so, it is a way of escaping the patriarchal control. The question of a unilinear journey of victim and its quest for a single origin of women's problems is also mythical, almost a kind of quasi-religious quest. And when we try to look at that singular or that unified women's crisis, origin of women's problems,

we are not looking at the ramifications; we are disentangling the entire problem from the broader confluence of more layered meanings that are existent both in the past and in the present.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:22)

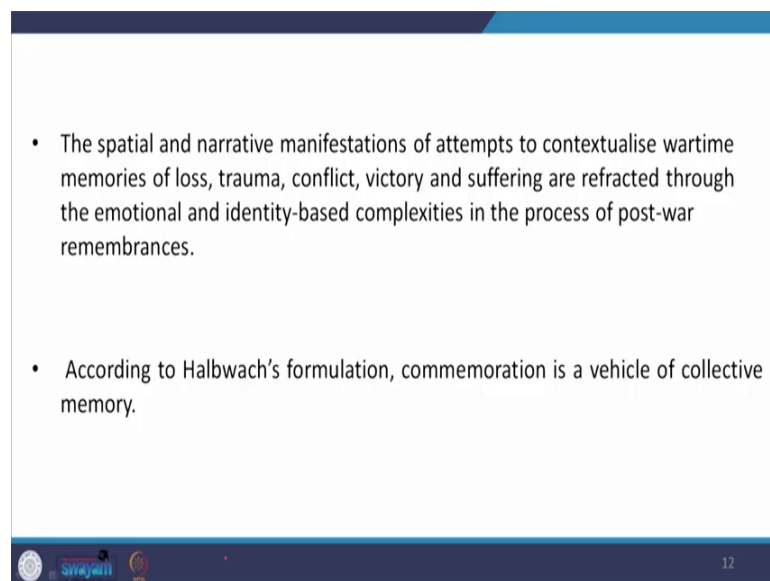


- PTSD include relationally complex experiences involving the betrayal of trust (1080).
- Unlike total veracity, or total falsity, recovered trauma memories have possibilities between truth and falsehood in representations of the past, as memory fragments are reconstructed and new meanings created (1081).
- John Hersey , *Hiroshima* : And now each knows that in the act of survival he lived a dozen lives and saw more death than he ever thought he would see. At the same time, none of them knew anything.

So, post-traumatic stress disorder include complex experiences involving the betrayal of trust. The question of trauma or the recovery of trauma memories have a kind of liminal presence that is beyond truth and falsehood.

They actually float as memory fragments and they are reconstructed in the form of new meanings. The aftermath of trauma does not really overlap either with total veracity or total falsity. John Hersey in Hiroshima says, "And now each knows that in the act of survival he lived a dozen lives and saw more death than he ever thought he would see. At the same time, none of them knew anything". It is a kind of multiplicity of meanings of that moment of trauma. The moment of trauma comes back in multiple forms, multiple meanings of violence, different significances of death and all these different meanings, newly constructed [and] reconstructed meanings do not really come to terms with one another. So, it is really very complicated

(Refer Slide Time: 26:00)

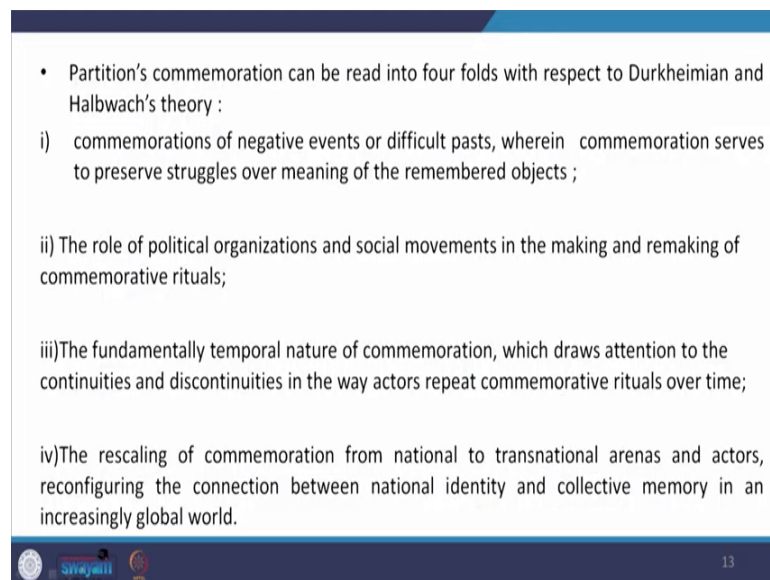


- The spatial and narrative manifestations of attempts to contextualise wartime memories of loss, trauma, conflict, victory and suffering are refracted through the emotional and identity-based complexities in the process of post-war remembrances.
- According to Halbwach's formulation, commemoration is a vehicle of collective memory.

and the spatial and narrative manifestations of attempts to contextualize wartime memories... wartime memories pertaining to certain loss, conflict, suffering are constantly refracted through emotional and identity based difficulties, in the case of postwar mnemonic practices. Maurice Halbwach's formulation says that commemoration is a vehicle of collective memory.

This takes us to the Durkheimian and Halbwach's theory, through which we can have a fourfold reading of Partition's commemoration. In other words, Partition can be commemorated through these four processes.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:03)



- Partition's commemoration can be read into four folds with respect to Durkheimian and Halbwach's theory :
 - i) commemorations of negative events or difficult pasts, wherein commemoration serves to preserve struggles over meaning of the remembered objects ;
 - ii) The role of political organizations and social movements in the making and remaking of commemorative rituals;
 - iii) The fundamentally temporal nature of commemoration, which draws attention to the continuities and discontinuities in the way actors repeat commemorative rituals over time;
 - iv) The rescaling of commemoration from national to transnational arenas and actors, reconfiguring the connection between national identity and collective memory in an increasingly global world.

One is commemorating of negative events or the moments of struggle where struggle becomes larger and it looms over the meanings of the remembered objects.

Next is the role of political organizations and social movements that play a very important role in constructing and reconstructing of commemorative rituals; so the ritualized memory. And the third is the fundamental temporal nature of commemoration, which talks about the continuities and discontinuities in the way the enactors of memory repeat the commemorative rituals over time.

And finally, re-scaling of the process of remembrance from national to a transnational arena, where there is a reconfiguration between national identity and the collective memory in a global or a more globalized platform.

So, I will stop my lecture here today and we will meet again for another round of discussions.

Thank you.