



ISSN 2455-7544  
www.daathvoyagejournal.com

# Daath Voyage : An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English

A UGC Refereed Open Access Journal

Vol. 3 No.4, December 2018

Editor : Saikat Banerjee

**Editor:** Dr. Saikat Banerjee  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
St. Theresa International College, Thailand.



: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

## **Partition, fractured Nation-State and the Muslim: Exploring the Muslim marginality in Garam Hawa**

**Mukesh Kumar**  
Research Scholar,  
Department of Sociology,  
University of Hyderabad,  
E-Mail: letterstomukesh@gmail.com)

*Submitted 27 November 2018*  
*Revised 12 December 2018*  
*Accepted 27 December 2018*

**Abstract:** Present study attempts to examine the representation of pain, agony, exclusion and marginalization of muslim community who stayed back in India in the post-partition period. I seek to explore the way hindi cinema mediates the question of religious minority and the associated social and economic discrimination by the secular state in the context of Partition. The movie being examined here is *Garam Hawa* (1973) which narrates the everyday experience of growing marginalization of the Muslim minority who stayed in India in the aftermath of Partition. I contextualize the movie in the socio-political questions about the issue of migration, national belonging, minority as refugee, othering of the minority etc emerging after 1971 Indo-Pak war which finds resonance in the movie made during the period forcing us to come to terms with the memories of partition. My efforts would be to argue that Partition left the legacy of profound significance for the muslim minority where the muslims were turned into an alien other vis a vis the Hindus who were considered as the natural citizen of the country and muslims had to suffer the burden of displaying loyalty to the nation in order to make a claim to the citizenship in the secular state. Further, an individual's multiple sources of identities were dismantled giving way to a single identity with a clear cut marker and maintenance of hindu-muslim binary and hence paving the way for further exclusion and victimization of the muslim minority. I argue that *Garam Hawa*, as a cultural text provides a crucial site of representation of the sense of beleaguered minoritarian



muslim identity along those above lines by portraying the ambivalent place of muslims in the discourse of Indian nationhood and citizenship in the context of partition. The paper ends with highlighting some of the ways the movie gets constrained in its effort to represent the marginalization of muslim community which consists mainly of production of affirming the binary of 'good Indian secular-nationalist Muslim' versus the 'bad Pakistani and communal Muslim' through its protagonists and the affirmation of Nehruvian secular nationalism towards the end of the movie and hence subsuming the discourse of muslim marginality.

**Keywords:** Partition, Hindi Cinema, Muslim, Identity.

## **Introduction**

India's march to freedom from the colonial rule was marked by one of the most shattering event of Partition of the Indian subcontinent along the religious line. The birth of the new nation came at the cost of large scale communal violence affecting various communities and the enter-ethnic relations resulting in the mass killing, brutal rape of women and disappearance of many women and children belonging to various community. While the official figures put the number of migrated and the killed as Ten million and 1,80,000 respectively, the unofficial accounts of partition estimate that at least sixteen million people on both sides of the boarder which included hindus, muslims and Sikhs were forced to leave their home and become refugees as a result of partition (Daiya 6, 217). The gendered nature of violence was exemplified through the large scale abduction, brutal rape and conversion of women belonging to different religions and the official estimates informs us that 50,000 muslim women in India and 33 Hindu and Sikh women in Pakistan were abducted during the violence that accompanied the partition (Menon 30). The nationalist historiography has considered the mass violence accompanying partition as an 'aberration' or a particular moment of insanity in by and large peaceful narrative of freedom struggle and the historically peaceful co-existence of different communities in the country. The mass slaughter of people belonging to different communities and the forceful migration of a large population has often been termed as the cost, price and the sacrifice the nation had to bear to witness the dawn of the new freedom. Such



Daath Voyage

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

nationalist historiography attributed natural quality to the concept of unity of India and hence indulged in an act of 'forgetting' the pain, dislocation and the suffering of the masses of both sides of the border by considering it as a momentary sad event in the formation of the new nation state (Pandey 560).

Violence of Partition also gave way to the redefinition of communities and making of new subjectivities which had profound consequences for the debate surrounding national belonging, citizenship and ethnic nationalism. The event of Partition produced a particular discourse related to the national belonging and identity where Hindus were termed as natural inhabitant of the country and hence its naturalized citizen, and Muslims as an outsider- an ethnic 'other' which was always looked upon with great deal of suspicion and which needed to constantly prove its loyalty to the nation and hence worthy of national citizenship (Pandey 608-629). This also paved the way for a new political discourse in the country where the category of majority and minority were defined predominantly along religious lines thereby relegating other basis of identity formations such as region, language, caste etc to the margin. Hence partition as a foundational event in the biography of the nation still continues to define and impact the inter-ethnic (Hindu-Muslim) relationship as well as the contemporary political and social relationship between two countries. Indeed, it is not so much the events of Partition, but the very existence of Pakistan that continues to be a festering sore in the popular Indian imagination; consequently, Indian Muslims have come to bear the unfair burden of Partition's legacies. Indian Muslims are often demonized and even held accountable for the Pakistani state's policies; indeed Muslims are constantly "obliged to prove and affirm their patriotic credentials in ways quite different from the expectations that cohere around the majoritarian communities." (Kumar 107).

Recent upsurge of hindutva and its majoritarian politics after its resounding victory in the 16<sup>th</sup> Loksabha elections has regenerated the debate on Nationalism and national belonging. Partition is invoked by the hindu nationalists time and again in the political discourse to vilify and demonize the muslims, who according to the hindu nationalists, should either abide by being a second class citizen in the country or migrate to Pakistan, the country of their religious belonging. Each terror attack or insurgency in Kashmir often gets linked to Pakistan and its policies of promoting terrorism





and Indian muslims are asked to prove their patriotic claim after each terror attacks. This serves to alienate and further marginalize the muslim community.

Present study attempts to examine the representation of pain, agony, exclusion and marginalization of muslim community who stayed back in India in the post-partition period. In this paper I seek to explore the way Hindi cinema mediates the question of religious minority and the associated social and economic discrimination by the secular state in the context of Partition. The movie being examined here is *Garam Hawa* (1973) which narrates the everyday experience and growing marginalization of the Muslim minority who stayed in India in the aftermath of Partition.

The paper will first delineate the hindi cinema's response to partition in terms of its portrayal over a period of time. It will be followed by an appraisal of Hindi cinema's depiction of muslim community in order to understand the systemic exclusion of muslim community in the hindi films. Next, after briefly discussing the plot of the movie *Garam Hawa*, I will contextualize the movie in the socio-political questions about the issue of migration, national belonging, minority as refugee, othering of the minority among others which were being widely discussed after the completion of 25 years of partition and also after another partition of 1971 giving way to creation of new state of Bangladesh.

Drawing on the works of Gyanendra Pandey, efforts will be made to argue that Partition left the legacy of profound significance for the muslim minority where the muslims were turned into an alien other vis a vis the Hindus who were considered as the natural citizen of the country and muslims had to suffer the burden of displaying loyalty to the nation in order to make a claim to the citizenship in the secular state. Further, an individual's multiple sources of identities were dismantled giving way to a singular identity with a clear cut marker and maintenance of hindu-muslim binary and hence paving the way for further exclusion and victimization of the muslim minority. I argue that *Garam Hawa*, as a cultural text provides a crucial site of representation of the sense of beleaguered minoritarian muslim identity along those above lines by portraying the ambivalent place of muslims in the discourse of Indian nationhood and citizenship in the context of partition. The paper ends with highlighting some of the ways the movie gets constrained in its effort to represent the marginalization of muslim community which consists mainly of production of



affirming the binary of ‘good Indian secular-nationalist Muslim’ versus the ‘bad Pakistani and communal Muslim’ through its protagonists and the affirmation of Nehruvian secular nationalism towards the end of the movie which leads to subsuming of the discourse of muslim marginality.

### **Partition and Hindi Cinema**

Indian film industry’s approach towards the issue of partition bears resemblance with the approach of nationalist historiography during the pre-independence as well as initial post-independence period. Indian film industry witnessed excessive form of colonial censorship and financial crunch and lack of technical skills in the pre-independence period under the British rule. Hence, the films critical towards colonial rule were completely banned and Indian producers could only rely on ‘allegory’ such as medieval India’s conflicts etc to show any critique of the colonial rule which itself ended up supporting the communal nature of the colonial account of the Medieval India (Deshpande 95-101).

However, The Partition affected film production and many great performers had to make choices about their location. It affected the Indian film industry by destabilizing two major film centers of undivided India– Bombay (now Mumbai) and Lahore. Legendary film personalities like Noor Jehan, Zia Sarhadi and Ghulam Mohammed left for Pakistan. Similarly, prominent Indian filmmakers such as Gulzar, Govind Nihalani, B R Chopra and Yash Chopra migrated to India from what became Pakistan (Viswanath and Malik 62). Even after independence some of the Muslim actors of the hindi film industry, due to their apprehensiveness of the social acceptance in the newly formed Indian nation, worked in the film industry with a changed hindu name. Ian Talbot cites the example of Dilip Kumar, a leading actor of the film industry, to argue this point as the actor, originally a muslim, changed his name to hindu and also refused to take the role of muslim in initial years of partition, except his role in the classic movie Mughal-E-Azam (Talbot 58).

In fact, the growing communal tension in the country ever since the demand of Muslim League for a separate nation of Pakistan had casted its shadow over the otherwise secular Indian film industry long before the actual Partition took place. K.A.Abbas, famous film journalist, film writer and Producer pointed out the growing communalization of film industry in 1940 while



writing in *FilmIndia* magazine where he lamented the sudden growth of consciousness of one's own religious identity in terms of 'hindus' and 'muslims' and subsequent mobilization and group formation of producers, artists and other members of the industry along the religious and political lines. Critiquing the manner in which some movies produced in recent time serve to produce communal stereotype and create rift in the country, he called for greater responsibility on the part of producers to understand the inherent danger in those 'communalist pictures' which moulds the public opinion in a particular way:

In picture themes or in studio personnel, among artists, technicians, directors or extras, let us resolve that we shall not allow the poisonous influence of communalism to creep in. if once it does get foothold in studios, they would be turned into miniature Muslim League, Hindu Sabhas and Parsi Panchayats. Then goodbye to all our dreams of 'progressive pictures' and of developing the cinema as a means for securing national advancement and social justice. (Film India 33)

As the clamor for Pakistan grew, contrary to the hope and appeal of K.A.Abbas, the Film Industry witnessed increasing split among the producers and directors along religious lines and rumors of Muslim producers of Bombay Studios planning to leave for Lahore to set up their own studios with the help of their Muslim brothers were the common gossips before and after partition (Film India 13, 15). Later, with the migration of various film artists from Lahore to Bombay, the film studio of Lahore which was previously dominated by Hindus and Sikh community lost its charm with time in the absence of state patronage and protection.

Indian film industry's response towards Partition and the miseries associated with it was largely articulating and negotiating with the stand of official historiography of the nascent nation state where the focus of the newly carved nation was more towards forgetting the painful miseries of the colonial past and instead contributing in the nation-building efforts to take the country towards modernization and industrialization led by Nehruvian model of development. In post colonial India, cinema was expected to play its role in the project of nationhood and it often found itself grappling with the problem in representing the inherent social and economic contradictions



Daath Voyage

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

which the nation and society was witnessing in attempt of its transition from a traditional to modern nation state and the moral anxiety associated with it. Hindi cinema thus took up the issue of social reforms, highlighting the inequality based on caste, class and gender in the post independent India with a clear cut reformist impulse and not a revolutionary transformation in films based on realism as well as social melodrama.

Apart from the hindi cinema's active participation in the project of nation building, two crucial factors which explains the silence of hindi cinema around the issue of partition and its ill consequences are- 1) strong censorship followed by the Nehruvian government with regard to regulation of the cinematic content especially the communal violence and gendered morality and 2) self censorship of the producers to engage with the painful event which has barely passed few years back. As Sumita Chakravarty notes- "Not only did the threat of censorship deter film makers from attempting communal subjects, but perhaps the events were too close in time and therefore too painful to confront" (Chakravarty 197).

Even though most of the movies of early decades after partition did not directly reflected the pain and agony associated with the event, partition entered the films narrative mainly as a point of reference, establishing characters background and coordinates. Bhaskar Sarkar, while tracing the representation of Partition in Hindi and Bengali cinema points out the 'allegorical mode' of expression of partition misery in the cinema during the early years of independence. Thus, the movies based on the theme of home, family, natural disaster, separation, refugee, orphans, mass uprooting due to industrialization etc through their title, songs, or dialogues indirectly referred to the trauma of partition through an 'allegorical mode' of expression which pointed out the dangers of division in the nation, for example by referring to the ill consequences of divide within a family where nation becomes an extension of the family itself (Sarkar 88-124).

Tracing the historical trajectory of partition cinema, Bhaskar Sarkar divides the movies based on partition into three phases and according to him each phase represented the event of partition in a different way. The first phase, as discussed above, was the initial 10-15 years after partition and movies only made occasional reference to partition for helping in setting the plot and background of the movie. However, some of the movies of this era did portray the traumatic





Daath Voyage

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

experience of dislocation, forced migration, chastity of abducted women, illegitimate birth of a child and the need to preserve the communal harmony in the nascent nation state through the allegorical form of expression. Thus, *Dharmaputra* (1961, Dir- Yash Chopra) explores the communal violence of partition while engaging with the selfhood of a child born of a muslim woman but raised by a hindu family. The movie ends with an appeal for communal harmony while calling into question the orthodox conception of religious identity (ibid. 122). Similarly, *Dhool ka Phool* (1959, Dir. Yash Chopra) reflected the strained social order of the country by stressing on the issue of 'illegitimate child' or the orphan to be raised by a muslim man who advocates communal harmony by giving a non-religious identity to the child being raised. By doing this, cinema promoted the communal harmony in its attempt to forget the pain and wound of partition. Another movie *Lahore* (1949, Dir. M.L.Anand) which was released just after two years of partition, attempted to focus on the subjective aspects of dislocation and rehabilitation of women's abduction and their everyday experience of suffering. In doing so the film offers a critique to the social stigmatization of the women abducted during the partition violence with a plea for acceptance of abducted women in the family, community and the nation.

The second phase starts with 1970s and stretches till late 1980s when the initial hope and desire of nation building and the beginning of a new dawn in the biography of the nation state slowly started waning as the nation came to terms with the stark realization of continuation of pre-existing poverty and discrimination based on religion, caste, class and gender. Subsequent failure of the Nehruvian model in dealing with these inherent contradictions of the nation state along with the creation of Bangladesh as an independent new nation-state carved out of Pakistan provided a context for historians, scholars and film makers to revisit the wounds of partition of 1947 and its impact on the lives of people. The partition movies of this period resorted to the portrayal of trauma as well as the communal conflict in a more open and direct way instead of resorting to allegorical form of expression. Some of the leading film makers, actors associated with parallel cinema were Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak, Balraj Sahani, Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihalani, Saeed Akhtar Mirza and others who advocated for the bringing the elements of realism in the film and making movies which could be based on socially relevant theme with an aim to deliver a message



Daath Voyage

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

for a transformative change in the society. Television serial *Tamas* (1989, Dir. Govind Nihalani) and *Garam Hawa* (1977, Dir. M.S.Sathyu) of the hindi film industry brought to light the legacy of partition to the nation in the form of communal riot and the related socio-economic plight of the poor and oppressed sections of both communities. *Tamas*, in particular, while depicting the growing polarization along the religious lines, also depicted how communal riots are manufactured by the vested interests consisting mainly of politicians and ruling class while those common masses dispossessed of power become a pawn in the hands of the politicians for engendering the riots.

Third phase of Partition movies starting in 1990s, was marked by two defining features of the era namely- Globalization and the Rise of Hindutva Politics in the Indian political and cultural discourse and there was some level of congruence between the Globalization and the resurgence of hindutva's religious fundamentalist politics aiming to cast muslim community as oppositional 'other' of the nation. The rise of hindutva politics in the aftermath of Ramjanmbhoomi movement, apart from its militant resolve to construct Ram Temple by destroying the centuries old Babari Mosque at Ayodhya, served to create a larger and intense anti-muslim political discourse defining India as a *Hindu Rashtra* and Muslims as an outsider *other*. In Hindutva's conceptualization of the nation propounded first by their ideologue V.D Savarkar, India was a sacred land only for the hindus and not for the foreign muslims and Christians. According to him, they had no ties to India as their holy places were all in Arabia just as the Christian's holy places were in Palestine (Savarkar 110-14). Such marking of boundary of the nation along the religious lines also necessitates a reordering of nation's history where nearly eight centuries of Islamic rules were termed as age of foreign invasion, iconoclasm and forceful conversion of the hindus to Islam. Partition as an event ensuring a homeland to the Muslims through creation of Pakistan, enters the hindutva political discourse in such context which claims muslim as the foreigner and hence liable to be sent to their original homeland Pakistan. Under this period, the films interrogated the partition and its trauma associated with it by directly confronting it with the clear cut portrayal of communal politics and those responsible for partition. In doing so, the movies attempted to reflect on the current political reality of growing communal tension of 1990s too. Some of the movies like *Pinjar* (2003, Dir- Chandra Prakash Dwivedi), *Mammo* (1994, Dir-Shyam Benegal), *Earth* (1998, Dir.- Deepa Mehta)



try to interrogate partition by touching on the emotional aspects and day to day life of the people of different communities during the partition, whereas movies like *Gadar* (2001, Dir- Anil Sharma) foregrounded their stories in anger and revulsion against the opposite 'other' and hence clearly giving communal fodder to the Hindu religious nationalism of the 1990s.

Hence, it is clearly established from the above that movies based on Partition reflect a gradual change over a period in its attempt to reflect on the event. The general portrayal reveals a trend of trying to not to confront the trauma in initial years, to a growing acknowledgement and confronting the tragedy with open acceptance with time in order to bring out the stories of the victims for public consumption and also reflect on the contemporary communal conditions prevailing in the country.

### **Hindi Cinema and the Muslim 'other'**

Indian Film industry has been always considered as a melting pot of different cultures where people from all religions and socio-economic background have contributed in making it one of the most secular institutions in the country. Hindi film industry takes pride in its proclamation of being secular in terms of composition of the industry and also in terms of giving equal respect to all the religion. The Hindi film industry witnesses deep friendship and inter-community romance and marriage, celebration of festivals of all religions together by people across the community (Dwyer 134). But the portrayal of other communities especially Muslim in its films has most of the time been loaded with stereotypical notion by projecting them as a homogenous community, mostly illiterate and backward with deep religious underpinning. As Ravi Vasudevan points out- "we must understand that the Bombay cinema has always tended to reserve a notion of normalcy for hindu hero, the apex figure in the composite nationalism of its fictions. Exaggerations in cultural behavior is attributed to other social groups especially muslims, Christians and Parsis." (Vasudevan 234).

Against this notion of normalcy for the hindus, muslim minorities are made 'visible' in their representation by either exoticizing, marginalizing or demonizing by treating them as 'other' (Chada and Kavoori 131-145). In terms of representational aspect, hindi cinema always produced the visible markers of identity for the muslims where the male muslim protagonists were always wore white cap and kurta whereas burka as an attire was the marker of identity for muslim female



irrespective of difference of class and region. Similarly while dealing with the historical films, hindi cinema creates an stereotypical image of muslims as nawabs and feudal lords engaging in hedonistic pleasure by attending *mujra* and chewing betel nuts which were presented as the chief characteristics of muslim feudal lords. Movies like *Umrao Jaan*, *Pakeezah* and *Mere Huzoor* are some of the examples of this stereotypical portrayal of the muslim.

From 1970s onwards, the emergence of Underworld Dons in Mumbai city and their alleged connections with the bollywood industry provided a thematic material for the films but portrayal of these Underworld Mafias often indicated Muslim as the mafias which projected the muslims in a negative character. Movies like *Ghulam-e-Mustafa* and *Angaar* can be cited as examples.

The 1990s were the crucial moments in this stereotyping as the politically charged climax of Ramjanmbhoomi Movement of the hindu right, Bombay riots in the aftermath of Babari Mosque demolition by the militant Hindutva forces and volatile atmosphere in Kashmir valley served to project the image of Muslim as 'other' within the same country which was successfully cultivated through the movies of the era. The era witnessed an influx of movies based on the theme of *Terrorism* and the subsequent danger it represented to the Indian Territory and its population. In all the films, targeting middle class Indians as the audience, the protagonist 'Hindu secular Indian' was pitted against the 'communal muslim' where the 'communal muslim' along with others such as ULFA, PWG, Khalistanis was set to engage in violent activities to destroy the nation. Maniratnam's *Roja* was perhaps the first film in this genre which perpetuated the binary of 'Secular-Hindu-Patriotic Indian' vs 'Terrorist-Antinational-Muslim' in the public sphere which itself feeds into the agenda of hindutva forces (Niranjana 80). Consequently, this 'Secular-Hindu-Patriotic-Indian' vs 'Terrorist-Antinational-Muslim' finds its expression in most of the movies made around the issue of Terrorism. Many movies reflecting the danger of Islamic terrorism to Indian nation were made during the period of 1990s and 2000s which includes movies like- *Black Friday*, *Maqbool*, *Maa Tujhe Salaam*, *Pukar*, *Sarfarosh*, *Mission Kashmir* etc where almost all depicted the Islamic fundamentalism and its danger to the nation by painting muslims as a potential terrorists who are being misguided and trained by Pakistani ISI or the fidayins of Kashmir for attacking the country. However, some of movies of this period like *Fiza*, *Sarfarosh* and *Fanaa* alter the prevalent



stereotypical discourse of movies based on terrorism by producing the binary of ‘Good-Secular-Nationalist-Muslim’ vs ‘Bad-Terrorist-Antinational-Muslim’ and hence triumph of the former in either reforming the later or destroying them to save the nation from the ruin.

This is not to suggest that cinema in India never addressed the problems of muslim minorities, precariousness of their besieged identity and their vulnerable status in the Indian society. Akbar S. Ahmad notes that the early ‘muslim films’ like *Anarkali*, *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Tajmahal*, *Choudavin ka Chand* etc reflected more socio-cultural issues concerning muslim community than exoticizing their religious elements (Ahmed 312). As discussed above, many of the movies of early era also stressed on a communal harmony between hindus and muslims. But the movies highlighting the besieged muslim identity with adequate space given to the muslim actors were mainly limited in the genre of ‘parallel cinema’ and with time, there was gradual decline of the theme of muslim subjectivities and marginality from the popular hindi cinema. However certain films in the aftermath of hindutva’s assertion were exceptional in dealing with communalism propagated by hindutva and at the same time taking up the issue of muslim marginality. Govind Nihalani’s *Dev* dealt with the fact of majority and minority communalism feeding each other besides portraying the growing alienation among the educated muslim youth against the system under the atmosphere of growing communalism. However, the movie ended with the positive note of transformation of a jihadist terrorist into a secular citizen of the country. Rahul Dhillon’s *Parzania* and Nandita Das’s *Firaaq* evocatively portrayed the ghettoization of muslim community in the aftermath of Gujarat Carnage of 2002 allegedly led by Hindutva forces at the behest of right wing BJP government in the state.

Having discussed the portrayal of partition event and the largely stereotyped representation of muslim minority in the hindi cinema, the next section discusses the representation of pain, agony, exclusion and marginalization of muslim community who stayed back in India in the post-partition period by taking *Garam Hawa* as a case study which narrates the everyday experience of growing marginalization of the Muslim minority who stayed in India after Partition and the associated socio-economic discrimination they had to face from the secular state.





Daath Voyage

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

### ***Garam Hawa and the fate of India's Muslims***

Based on an unpublished short story of Ismat Chughtai and Set against the background of initial years of Partition, *Garam Hawa* (1973, Dir. M.S.Sathyu) tells the story of muslim family of Agra which, like any other muslim family of north India during the turbulent period of partition, was under the dilemma of whether to migrate to newly formed Pakistan or staying back in their ancestral haveli and continuing their prosperous business of shoe making in their very own shoe making factory. The muslim joint family consists of Halim Mirza (Dinanath Zutshi)- the elder Brother and Salim Mirza (Balraj Sahani) who live with their families and their mother in their ancestral haveli with elder brother Halim Mirza (who is also a Muslim League Politician) as the legal owner of the building. Salim Mirza has two sons Bakr and Sikandar with the former being married and having a child too. Amina (Gita Siddharth), daughter of Salim Mirza is in love with her Uncle Halim Mirza's son Kasim and both of them are supposed to be married according to Islamic practice of first cousin marriage until the Partition brings the disruption in the normal life of the family.

At the centre of the film's narrative Salim Mirza emerges as an honest and true patriotic Indian muslim who refused to leave the country and his house unlike his opportunist Muslim League politician brother Halim Mirza who chooses to migrate to Pakistan with his family and hence breaking Amina and his son Kasim's prospect of marriage. Subsequently, the film maps the socio-economic discrimination Salim Mirza and his family face as a muslim minority by the secular Indian state as well as his fellow businessmen.

As migration of muslim families to Pakistan continues, Salim Mirza keeps coming to railway station to send off his other close relatives including his elder son and his family. But his persistent hope of normalcy after the sacrifice of Mahatma Gandhi and his own resolve to not leave the city is kept questioning by his other family members as well as the tangawala who accompanies him each time he comes to station to send his relatives off to Pakistan. However, Salim Mirza's optimism of returning of normalcy and communal harmony starts waning with time as companies start canceling their order of shoes from him and money lenders and banks refuse to give him loan for his business citing reason that he too, like his other family members may leave to Pakistan some



**Daath Voyage**

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
*Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018*

[www.daathvoyagejournal.com](http://www.daathvoyagejournal.com)

day without returning back the money. The Indian Secular state, after the departure of his elder brother Halim Mirza to Pakistan, declares the ancestral haveli as the 'evacuee property' and hence serves him the order to vacate the haveli. The devastated Mirza family after being evicted of home, finds it difficult to get new house on rent and finally settles for small house by paying extra rent and advance.

Indian state's coercive assertion of power towards the muslim minority gets reflected in another instance when Halim Mirza's son Kazim lands in India without reporting to the to the local Police station with an intension to marry Amina. Kazim finds himself as an stranger 'other' in, which was his own homeland just a few months back as the government deports him back to Pakistan and hence clearly defining the boundaries of the nation and citizenship.

Salim Mirza's younger son Sikandar who represents modern youth taking interest in politics and searching for employment, faces the endless discrimination in interview on account of him being a muslim and hence not able to get a job in spite of being a good student at college whereas Salim Mirza faces the charge of espionage by the Indian state as the map of his house is recovered from him by the authorities. His personal harassment on the charge of espionage and subsequent suicide of her daughter Amina after failing to get married to his second love Shamsad, leaves him completely devastated. Although he is acquitted by the court on the charges of espionage, he still faces the boycott and humiliation from the people shakes his secular nationalist belief and compels him to make a decision to migrate to Pakistan. However, on the way to the railway station in his tanga, he is met by a communist rally of people waving red flags and demanding for end of poverty and employment to all. Sikandar, his younger son and an active member of the party joins the procession at this juncture Salim Mirza too decides to join them with a resolve to stay back in the country and fight against injustice of all sorts instead of running away from it.

The climax scene thus reaffirms the possibility of a socialist politics of struggle for social transformation by uniting all the dispossessed within the nation. In doing so, it also allows for a possibility of secular politics of communal harmony and peaceful co-existence by uniting the people across the communities.



### **Contextualizing *Garam Hawa***

Any evaluation of *Garam Hawa* as a crucial site of representation of marginalization of muslim identity must take into account the context of *Garam Hawa*'s production and reception. Bhaskar Sarkar, while tracing the context of production of the movie, points out the larger socio-economic and political conditions prevailing in the country at the time of its release. *Garam Hawa* was released in the year 1973, immediately after the commemoration of 25 years of Partition as well as the independence of the nation. Such an occasion, coupled with the fact of emergence of Bangladesh after 1971 war through another partition of Pakistan revived the memories of partition of 1947 among the people which provided the immediate context for recollecting the partition trauma with a view to evaluate the cost and benefit of partition for a new nation (Sarkar 188). The long period of 25 years of partition and the subsequent failure of the nation state led by Nehruvian model of development and modernization in delivering the promised fruits of independence led to a serious questioning of whether independence received after much bloodbath was worth fought for? The crisis of the state in tackling the problem of abject poverty and deep rooted social evils of caste, gender and religion based violence called into question the initial belief of the people in contributing to nation building led by the state and beaurocracy and hence there was emergence of Naxalite movement which further questioned the state and its discriminatory policies. Hence under the transformed atmosphere of 1970s, the people's fear of avoiding discussing the event of the past has waned to a large extent. The issue of partition could be discussed under present circumstances more openly than ever as the fear of communal flare up was no more there after so many years. Under these circumstances a large number of literature in the form of personal biography of the partition survivors, oral histories of women survivors of partition (thanks to growing women's movement around the time) were published which helped to recollect the wounds and collective trauma of partition.

*Garam Hawa* was the result of coming together of people associated with Marxist cultural and literary movements under the banner of IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association) and PWA (Progressive Writers Association) which aimed to promote a secular nationalist ideology with socialist underpinning. The artists associated with the movie like- Ismat Chughtai, Balraj Sahani,



Shama Zaidi, Kaifi Azami etc were one or the other time associated with either IPTA or PWA who, through their works, tried to portray the Indian reality and various forms of discriminatory practices prevailing in the society. The movie also remains an early example of 'low budget' art film genre also known as 'New Indian Cinema' or the 'Parallel Cinema'. The New Indian Cinema or the Parallel cinema referred to a genre of those state sponsored cinema which originated in 1950s and 1960s in West Bengal with Mrinal Sen's *Bhuvan Shome* (1969), or Manish Kaul's *Uski Roti* (1969) or movies of Ritwik Ghatak and Satyajit Ray. In thematic concerns, it emerged as an alternative to mainstream commercial cinema and tried engage with serious content, bringing realism in movies as opposed to melodrama. It also seeks to reflect on the contemporary socio-political context of the country with intent to produce movies addressing social issues and concerns.

As like other movies representing the Parallel Cinema, *Garam Hawa* was produced by the state sponsored Film Finance Corporation and hence the thematic concern of the movie was not expected to be of revolutionary transformation questioning the legitimacy and desirability of the state itself. Thus even though the movie initially faced the blocking from the censor board, it was later passed. Given the thematic concern of the movie revolving around the human suffering due to Partition, even the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Information Broadcasting minister I.K.Gujaral, who were themselves the representative of the state supported the movie (Sarkar 189).

Having discussed the socio-political context of production of the film, the next section attempts to underscore some of the thematic of the film which helps one to understand the way *Garam Hawa* represents the impacts of Partition on muslim community in order to portray the social exclusion and victimization of muslim community.

### **Muslims and their spatial dislocation in *Garam Hawa***

*Garam Hawa*, in attempting to portray the plight of muslim minority in the aftermath of Partition constitutes Partition as a foundational event which turns India's muslim into a refugee overnight. The movie constructs spatial dislocation of the muslim as one of central thematic of rootedness, belonging and migration in order to portray the anomalous space muslim occupy in the newly emerged nation . The movie begins with the map of the India confirming the announcement of Freedom and the accompanying celebration with it. The next shot containing seemingly original



**Daath Voyage**

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
*Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018*

[www.daathvoyagejournal.com](http://www.daathvoyagejournal.com)

footage of partition, highlights the people migrating to another country in railway, bullock cart etc with the ruined and leftover homes signaling dislocation of the people and the emotional scenes of pained males and females leaving their homeland. The film opens with Salim Mirza sending off his sister to Pakistan at the railway station and throughout the film, one can witness him sending off his relatives to Pakistan in the Train with growing sense of pain and agony of separation on Salim Mirza's face.

Sumita Chakravarty notes that Train, which otherwise is a signifier of modern life, in this movie it is emblematic of 'distance, separation and irrevocable otherness' (Chakravarty 249). It can be argued that Salim Mirza's repeated act of sending off his family members with each departing train indexes a larger point of further separation of his family members as well as of many of the Muslims departing in those trains where departure in train indicates growing sign of hostility between two communities and further alienation of Muslims from the country.

Spatial dislocation as an index of Muslim marginality is worked out in the film with a careful elaboration of spatial dimension of 'home' where home indicates both as a place of one's habitation as well as one's psychological and emotional feeling of 'affiliation' and belongingness to a familiar world (Sarkar 192). Thus, Salim Mirza's ancestral haveli is depicted as a grand mansion which has a clearly defined space marked for each and everybody with enough space for courtyard where women perform their daily works, space for elders meeting, roof for a child to fly kites and some space for the lovers to meet. In a way, the grandeur of Salim Mirza's haveli reflects a sense of family's prosperity and belonging. In contrast to it, after the forceful eviction of Mirza's family, the dislocation forces them to search for an accommodation on rent and the family had to stay in a small house of three bedrooms with Amina and Sikandar sharing the same room. The small house also contains an iron grill which separates male members from the females and crucial moments of misfortunes and miseries of the Mirza's family are often picturised against the iron grill. Through the depiction of miseries in Salim Mirza's family and their dislocation from the ancestral home, the movie compels us to imagine the plight of Muslims of the country as a whole.





### **Dismantling of Multiple identity of a Muslim & growing Victimization by the state**

Writing on the event of Partition and the the meaning of Partition for the muslims who chose to stay back in India, eminent historian Gyanendra Pandey highlights the demands made by different agencies including the state to the muslims to prove their loyalty to the nation (Pandey 618-620). Some of the way muslim was supposed to prove his/her loyalty to the nation included the oath taking on the constitution and the hoisting of national flag, others demanded them to fight against Pakistan if the war takes place against the nation. It is to be noted that Hindus were considered as the natural citizen of the country in the post partition period and hence no such demands were made to the hindus. However, in spite of muslims giving their oath of loyalty to the nation, they always remained under constant surveillance of the state as well as on the radar of media. Any unusual item found in the house of a muslim meant an attempt of conspiring a war against the nation with tacit support of the Muslim League of Pakistan rendering the individual an anti-national.

Along with the persistent demand for muslims to show the proof of their loyalty to the nation and the assisted surveillance, it was also expected of the muslims to forgo the assertion of their specific muslimness or perspective. These acts of victimization of the muslims by the state find their apt expression in *Garam Hawa* when Salim Mirza is arrested by the state authorities charging him with an attempt to espionage after a map of his house is recovered from him. Even though Salim Mirza is letter acquitted of the charges by the court, his image of a nationalist muslim suffers persistent questioning by the public as he still remains an anti-national in the eye of the masses who resort to his boycott in public sphere. Thus, these instances of state repression of the muslims in the wake of partition questions the official historiographic narrative of supposed impartiality of the secular Indian state and serves to highlight the growing exclusion of muslim minority.

Partition of India was also a moment of congealing of new identities while the dismantling of old ones. The growing hostilities between two communities and the continued attempts of polarization of the masses by the politicians resulted in expansion of communalism and the emergence of religious identity of an individual emerging as an individual's primary source of Identity. Giving primacy to the religious identity of an individual helped the communalism to grow



further as larger solidarities were easily possible to make. All of these made muslim as more vulnerable to communal attack by the majoritarian communalism. As Gyanendra Pandey writes-

“Few people now cared to differentiate carefully among the muslims of India. The regional, caste and occupational markers by which generations of muslim had been known- and privileged, denigrated or even declared to be only ‘half muslims’- seemed to loose much of their significance. Muslims were now more and more- in official documents, in journalism; in common conversation- simply “Muslims” and all of them were suspect as open or closet Pakistani” (Pandey 614-15)

Thus, partition did not only mean the separation or demarcation of two territories, but it also meant division in the mind of people-

There was no knowing in 1947, nor for sometime afterwards, who would belong where when things ‘finally’ settled down. There was the redesignation of the local caste and community: those who had long adhered somewhat loosely to the label of Muslims, Hindu or Sikh were now categorically named as one or the other. The Meos of Mewat, the Momins of UP and Bihar, Mapillas of Malabar- all became simply ‘Muslims’ and for a while, nothing else. There was, as we have noted, confusion about the meaning of Pakistan: was it to be a Muslim nation or secular nation? What were the minorities to do there?.....whether people would be free to come and go between Karachi and Bombay, Dacca and Calcutta and Hyderabad, as they had so long done, and continued to do for years after the official partition. (Pandey 626)

Of course, for the Hindus there was no confusion regarding their status in this side of the border but this reduction of multiple sources of one’s identity to a single one of his religious belonging further put the Muslim community to the margins through a series of discrimination. Salim Mirza in *Garam Hawa* faces this predicament of being reduced to his single identity of Muslim when his well known and regular money lenders refuse to offer him the loan for his factory as muslims were no more to be trusted. It is important to note that his earlier occupational ties with those hindu



Daath Voyage

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

money lenders no more is given due acknowledgement during those volatile days. Salim Mirza also suffers the exclusion due to his muslim religious identity when in his own familiar street where he travelled always, he was subjected to attack and his factory is burnt down bringing financial devastation to him and his entire family. His younger son too suffers the discrimination when he is not identified due to his educational qualifications but only as a muslim and hence, is advised to find suitable job in Pakistan only. These instances of the movies are indicative of the form of sociality and inter-ethnic belonging disrupted by Partition which resulted in the discrimination and perpetual exclusion of the muslim minority during those years.

#### **Affirming the Secular Nationalism in *Garam Hawa***

In *Garam Hawa*, the figure of Salim Mirza serves to represent both a beleaguered minority muslim as well as a secular nationalist muslim who refuses to leave the nation and stay here as any other citizen despite facing all the economic, social and political exclusions and discrimination. Thus, as a patriotic nationalist figure, he is a hero who performs all the requirements of a muslim to show their solidarity and loyalty to the nation as demanded by the state. As Pandey reminds us, in a speech delivered by Govind Ballabh Pant, the then Congress Chief minister of UP, he reminds the muslims to prove their loyalty to the nation declaring “Indian muslims should realize clearly what loyalty to the nation would mean if Pakistan invaded India” he declared “every muslim in India would be required to shed his blood fighting the Pakistani hordes and each one should search his hearts now and decide whether he should migrate to Pakistan or not” (617).

The only point at which Salim Mirza’s secular nationalist character comes under threat is when he decides to leave for Pakistan after his daughter Amina commits suicide and he was accused of espionage. However, the final scene of the movie renders this possibility to a closure when seeing the crowd of communist rally asking for employment and resolving to fight against poverty, at first his son and then he himself joins the rally saying- he is tired of living the life of isolation. As the movie comes towards closure, the sound of a poem in the background metaphorically appealing to the muslims to join the masses in fighting the discrimination and poverty-

---

*“Jo door se karte hain Toofan ka nazara, unke liye toofaan yahan hai hai, wahan bhi,*



*Mil jaaoge dhara mein to ban jaaoge dhara, yeh waqt ka aelaan wahan bhi hai yahan bhi.”*

The poem, by invoking the call for all the streams to join the river metaphorically appeals for forgetting one's own misery and join the larger cause of nation building although on the foundation of fighting for the larger issue of poverty and social justice. Hence, it invokes a possibility of counter-politics of formation of larger secular alliance to fight the economic and social discrimination in favour of a socialist ideal affirming the Nehruvian ideal of brotherhood of working class and the muslim. The secular and socialist possibility of a larger struggle is portrayed as the possible alternative solution to the question of larger muslim minoritarian identity, thus it subsume the larger issue of everyday suffering and exclusion of muslim by merely treating it primarily an economic problem which needed the wider struggle against the state government alone for its solution.

In *Garam Hawa*, figure of secular nationalist Salim Mirza is pitted against his elder brother Halim Mirza, a member of Muslim League where the later is shown as an opportunist who secretly leaves for Pakistan with his whole family. The film often highlights his theatrical behavior either through his speech to uphold his resolve to fight for muslim by staying back in the country, or in his conversation with his wife boasting about his politics to her. His departure from India at the crucial stance when the muslim needed him, is projected as the betrayal of muslim cause, exposing the real colour of the leaders of Muslim League and hence an example of 'Bad Muslim'. Hence, the movie, even though successfully depicts the trauma and discrimination which the muslim community suffers in partition, it ends up affirming the binary of 'Good Secular Nationalist Indian' vs 'Bad Communal Pakistani' Muslim.

### **Concluding Discussion**

The event of Partition and the associated communal carnage on both sides of the border had profound consequences for the Muslims who stayed back in India. While the nationalist historiography considered the pain, agony and misery suffered by the Muslims in the country as a traumatic past and an aberration, which was worth forgetting, partition still continues to define the identity of a muslim in its present. Hindi cinema, as a crucial site to reflect on the historical reality, made limited attempts to portray the trauma of partition in successive years, the movie *Garam*



*Hawa* till date remains one of the most remarkable cinematic attempt to interrogate partition by keeping the muslims at the centre of its narrative. The movie, made in the context of attempt to revisit the Partition trauma after completion of 25 years of partition, depicts the socio-economic discrimination, social exclusion and the process of othering of the muslim community under the circumstances of extreme hatred. Even though the movie portrays the marginalization of the muslim community through the spatial dislocation of the protagonist Salim Mirza's family and subsequent discrimination of the state through their continuous persecution by raising question of his loyalty to the nation, the film ends up affirming the secular nationalism by looking calling for a secular alliance across communities for a solution to the discrimination of the muslim through the structural reform in the realm of economy led by state. Hence, it fails to allow any radical possibility of muslim assertion of identity politics against the perpetual discrimination it went through during partition and which still continues to undergo till today.

---

**Acknowledgement:** The Author is thankful to Dr. Aditya Ranjan Kapoor (Dept. of Sociology, Central University of Punjab) for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

#### Works cited

- Ahmed, Akbar S. "Bombay Films: Cinema as Metaphor for Indian Society." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 26, no.2, 1992. pp. 289-320.
- Chada, Kalyani and Anandam P. Kavoori "Exoticized, Marginalised and Demonized: The Muslim 'Other' in Indian Cinema", *Global Bollywood* Edited by Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar, New York University Press, 2008. pp. 131-145
- Chakravarty, Sumita S. *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema*, Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Daiya, Kavita. *Violent Belongings- Partition, Gender and National Culture in Postcolonial India*, Temple University Press, 2008





Daath Voyage

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English  
A UGC Refereed e- Journal no 45349

ISSN 2455-7544  
Vol.3, No.4, December, 2018

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

- Deshpande, Anirudh. "Indian Cinema and the Bourgeois Nation State." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 42, no. 50, 2007. pp. 95-101
- Dwyer, Rachel. *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*, Routledge Publication, 2006.
- . *Film India*. Vol. 13, No. 7. 1947.
- . *FilmIndia*. Vol. 06, No. 02, 1940.
- Kumar, Priya Haryant. "Ruptured Nations, Collective Memory & Religious Violence: Mapping a Secularist Ethics in Post-Partition South Asian Literature and Film." PhD Dissertation, McGill University, Montreal, 2001
- Menon, Jisha. Rehearsing Partition- Gendered violence in "Aur Kitne Tukde". *Feminist Review*, No. 84, 2006. pp- 29-47
- Niranjana, Tejaswini. "Integrating Whose Nation? Tourists and Terrorists in Roja." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 29, no.3. 1994. pp- 79-82
- Pandey, Gyanendra. "In Defence of the Fragment: Writing About Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today." *Economic and Political weekly*, vol. 26, no.11/12, 1991. pp. 559-572.
- . "Can a Muslim be an Indian." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 1999. pp. 608-629.
- Sarkar, Bhaskar. *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the wake of Partition*, Orient Blackswan Pvt. Ltd, 2010.
- Savarkar, V.D. Editor. *Hindutva- Who is a Hindu*, Bharati Sahitya Sadan, 1989.
- Talbot, Ian. *Inventing the Nation: India and Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Vasudevan, Ravi. *The Melodramatic Public: Film form and spectatorship in Indian Cinema*, Permanent Black Publication, 2010.
- Viswanath, Geeta and Salma Malik. "Revisiting 1947 through Popular Cinema: A Comparative Study of India and Pakistan." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 44 no. 36, 2009. Pp. 61-69.