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Abortion of Amina's Woman Self in the Partition Movie *Garm Hava*

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Abstract: This paper explores the genre of Partition literature on three areas. Firstly, the Partition of India, 1947 as an imposed national identity on the people of Indian sub-continent. Secondly, the emergence of parallel cinema to screen the cultural turmoil resulted due to the partition of Indian sub-continent. Thirdly, it interrogates the abortion of human values in exilic conditions like Partition of India represented in the first parallel Hindi movie *Garm Hava* (1973) directed by M.S.Satyu. The movie records the struggle for survival of a veteran shoe manufacturer of Agra, Salim Mirza, and his family against the suffocating scorching wind of religious nationalism. The paper will examine these areas as a sort of objectives correlative (chain of events) leading Salim's daughter Amina to commit suicide in bridal dress.

Keywords: Partition, National Identity, Parallel Cinema, Cultural Turmoil.

Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 is the gall juxtaposed to the glory churned as the narratives of the freedom movement. It provokes both our resentment and tears. Unlike the colourful diversities of India, tears do not have colour. But they mirror the colours of our lament for the irreplaceable loss of a utopia of undivided India. That utopia was based on the way we used to identify ourselves with the land of our origin. It was punctuated with customs and ideals cherished by sons/ daughters of the soil. Although migrations inside the sub-continent for a better prospect of life or due to some other compulsions were not uncommon. In the same way, settling outside the sub-continent like the indentured labourers in various British colonies around the world also took place on a massive scale during the British rule in India. On the

other hand, it is also a fact that since time immemorial different foreign bloods and their cultures have been assimilating in Indian subcontinents. Hence, people of India used to follow the practice of identifying themselves with their respective birthplaces, communities, religions, languages, and cultures. It is still very much in use to strike a conversation with a stranger in India. These things are very meaningful in Indian Sub-continent. It promotes mutual co-existence of people in multicultural societies evolved throughout the ages. People in their day to day life undermine the difference and identify themselves with the places they live in. They regard it as one's own motherland or *Desh*.

Naturally, people grow very sensitive towards the lanes, streets, fields, temples, mosques, churches, balconies, rooftops and even haunted places. Smells of sweets of sweetshops, tea of teashops, food cabins, and their tastes always stick to their tongues with untameable wishes for more. Nature is also present in her own rights in this memory. People trace their lives in bits and pieces on her lap. The collective memories of the landscape of a place signify portrait of regularities like collecting flowers at dawn, playing the flute, fruits stealing, swimming in ponds, fishing, mores, bus stops, stations, bridges, *ferry ghat*. Incident or accident sites where sidelong exchanges of love glances took place, *chutnified* affairs (scandals) leading to quarrel intertwined with memories of drought, flood, epidemic. Sometimes, the lack of means of communication also serves as reminders of one's own motherland or *Desh*. Every Indian whether living in or settled far away from his/her place of origin like settling in various parts of the sub-continent or in foreign lands is accustomed to observe this bond that defines their identity. Therefore, any token bearing cognizance to the culture of their places of origin or *Desh* such as language, letters (Inland letters, Postcard, Telegram) foods, people, etc refreshes these memories and strengthen this bond. But what happened in the name of Partition of India in 1947 was simply severing this natural bond. People dreaming of freedom from foreign rule were exiled in a foreign land! The prize of independence becomes punishment to Indians. They were herded away from their origins to be flocked into a foreign country. As a result, those age-old values of attachments stated earlier in this paper, all of a sudden lost their currencies.

The former British Indian subjects were forced to adopt citizenship of two new nations viz. India and Pakistan. In practice, Pakistan and Hindustan as if one is a mosque, another is a temple. Lines were drawn

to include followers of one religion and exclude the other. Provisions were made to accommodate the whims and fancies of the *Nawabs* and *Rajahs* to emerge as the men of the people to rule over the subject of the same religion. One glorifies medieval period while the other is obsessed with the ancient glories of the Sub-continent. The making of a nation relies on one language formula also. Accordingly, two sister languages of the Sub-continent, Urdu, and Hindi were communalized. Pakistani Government imposes Urdu while Government of India is still persisting in its objective to start Hindi imperialism. (Nandy) Effects precede the cause. Map preceded surveys. Numbers are preferred to people. As a result, the home became hostile.

Hindus and Muslims were transplanted from their locale to the lands of Gods and promises. People of the sub-continent were exiled from the land of their forefathers to the land of their community brothers. The provinces of Bengal and Punjab were partitioned on the basis of religious majority and minority. The idyllic setting of mutual co-existence of Indian sub-continent fell like a pack of cards. Crosscurrents of hapless people trudging along to their new destinations, squealing of the wagon wheels bringing the dusk with them was a common sight. What became uncommon was the usual sight of Indian villages. (The Day India Burns)

“The lowing herd wind slowly o’er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.” (Gray)

This exilic condition was unprecedented. People tried to adapt to those chaotic compulsions simply by reacting to the situations. Therefore, one’s misery became others opportunity. Certainly, those were the days of Scorching Winds.

The movie under discussion *Garm Hava* or *Scorching wind* was directed by M.S Sathyu, It was released in 1973. The story was adapted from the eponymous unpublished short story of Ismat Chughtai, a name remembered along with the likes of Manto, Sidhwa, Kushwant Singh. The movie captures the moaning of an Indian Muslim family handcuffed with exile in the scorching whirlwind of Partition narratives. Before proceeding further about the movie *Garm Hava*, an overview of the nature of Indian Cinema is necessary to contextualize the movie. (Politics and Culture)

Film industries in India predated Partition of India. It hops, skips and jumps to its present position by catering to popular tastes and sometimes changing popular tastes. Former is generally called

Mainstream and the later called Parallel Cinema. In the same vein, commercial movies mean big investment project of Dreamgirl and art movies mean puny investment project of an ordinary girl. One means for commercial success and the other for critical acclaim. But now this broad category is blurring. And on the fence category of Art film with star casting are also coming. (Satyajit Ray memorial 3rd lectures with Konkona Sensharma 2014 Art house Vs Mainstream in Australia India Institute. Youtube).

The film industry in India at its very outset began to thrive in port cities like Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. Port provides these industries with an easy option for equipment shipment. Moreover, import and export facilities felicitate the industry with free flow of funds for producing cinema. Plus, during the British period, those cities became the vessels of the British colonial Empire in Asia. These all had bred a more or less cosmopolitan culture in those areas. This culture steadily spread in their respective hinterlands providing film audiences. During the age of Talkies, Bombay outdid Calcutta studios vying for an all India distribution of Hindi film. These confines production houses like New Theatres and others to confine to film making in Bengali (regional language).

In due course, Indian film industries began to expand basing different regional languages of India. But the production houses across India did not try to cross their entertainment purpose. The picture remains the same rather became worse when star system overwhelmed the outdated studio system. Bombay Hindi film industry began to ape Hollywood style of film making. People began to call its productions Bollywood movies. It set the yardstick because of the big budget for quantitative production to offer to the largest audiences in India. It began to charm people through its hit formulae of stars, romance, songs, dance and later on violence. This type of cinema made the Cineworld glamorous. Thus it became compulsive for other regional movie-makers to adopt this trend. Hence, Tollywood (Tollygunge, Calcutta) Bengali movies, Kollywood (Madras) for Tamil movies also began to make movies like Bollywood.

But in 1950, the film directors the likes of Satyajit Ray, Ritwick Ghatak and Mrinal Sen appear on the scene of Bengali Cinema. They refuse to be ostracized with banter and fun projects of motion pictures. They started experimenting in their movies and the rest is history. The movies like Ray's *Pather Panchali* (1955), Ghatak's *Meghe Dhaka Tara*

(1960) and Sen's *Padatik* (1974) rock the theatres around the world. They used to maintain very sophisticated permutations and combinations of harsh Indian realities and entertainment. This started the journey of Parallel Cinema in India and ushered in the golden era of Indian Cinema.

Although, Raj Kapoor's Hindi film *Awara* (1951) was also praised abroad. But Hindi filmmakers of Bollywood were quite slow to react to these International acclaims. They stick to their pattern of entertaining people and earn Box office success. Censor board during the British Period and very interestingly after independence, time and again plays moral police and complicates the situation. Hence, it took 1973-74 to Hindi filmmakers to produce their first worth reckoning parallel cinema in *Garm Hava*.

Recently, the film *Garm Hava* is digitally restored for shows. The celebrities of Cineworld of Bollywood flocked in to make it houseful! (Complete Bollywood). Plus, Double Reviews also pronounces it as classic (Double Bill Reviews). The movie starts with a narrator announcing India's independence. Then an array of freeze shots depicts India's degeneration to disintegration with a dirge. The background music plays duets with the shots. Finally, the narrator parts with a claim of the sufferings of bewildered people across the borders.

The first moving shot was a train to Pakistan. A man is seen waving to his departing near ones. His appearance and dress tell us that he is a well off Muslim patriarch. As we know that indications are prime movers of plots in movies. In this case, it clearly indicates about the post-partition predicaments of Muslims in India (Hindustan). The movie seems to be a sort of companion to Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. The film is set on the city of Agra and orbits around the character Salim Mirza. Salim Mirza (played by legendary actor Balraj Sahni) is a shoe manufacturer of Agra. He is a representative figure of the age-old leather business mostly run by the Muslims. Coming out from the railway station Salim Mirza took the *tanga* (horse-drawn carriage) waiting for him. The film then began to gallop on the horse beat of *Tanga*. We learn from the conversation between the *Tangawala* (coachman) and the passenger Salim Mirza that he has been frequenting the Agra railway station to see off his relatives parting to Pakistan. The conversation on Partition and its effects took its turns with the *Tanga* taking turns in the bustling narrow lanes of Agra.

This conversation reflects the talk of the city or the country at large. This movie shows this dilemma among people whether to acknowledge Partition as reality; the new definition of the nation or to face hostilities in their own place. The *Tanga* talk strikes a kind of dialogue between the past and the present. Salim Mirza ignores *Garam Hava* of communalism as seasonal but the *tangawala*, a ferryman of Partition insists it as climatic changes. The dormant communal nationalism is invoked. Its narratives exploding in slogans of religious fanaticism eroded the long-standing humanism.

This scorching wind killed Gandhiji. It replaces his nationalist whirlwind of humanism with its religious frenzy. This new narrative began to transpire among people and was affecting all walks of life. The Exodus of Muslims from its cultural capital of Agra was steadily turning the place into a mausoleum of memories. In this restive period, our central character Salim Mirza donning the garb of Gandhiji does not admit the change and is waiting for the return of the good old days. However, Salim's elder brother Halim Mirza and his family, sister and sister-in-law even his eldest son and his family were not slow to react to this change. They all choose Pakistan and its promises.

Salim's incorrigible idea that this *Garm Hava* (scorching wind) would not affect business, led him to bury his head like an ostrich in the sands when a sandstorm is blowing. *Garm Hava* ruined his business, ruined employment chances of his youngest son Sikandar (played by debutant actor Farooq Sheikh). He sold his family mansion to clear his debts. His friend Azmani (played by A.K Hungal) took this opportunity and tactfully won the bid. This forced Mirza family to leave their mansion of their ancestor to a house on rent. This house also did not get without much hardship in the turbid communal atmosphere. But above all, his dissent to acknowledge communalism treats him as a man without community. His undaunted effort to strive and not to yield cost him to lose his mother and then his dear daughter Amina. He heaves a last sigh when he found that Amina committed suicide in her bridal dress with an unfulfilled longing to live a happy married life.

Amina (played by Gita Siddharth) like any other unmarried (maiden) Muslim woman of those days in the sub-continent, has been whiling in the confinement between the backdoor and portico of her father's mansion. It is suggested that she is educated enough to read and write, waiting to get married. Her family is well aware of her relationship with his cousin Kazim Mirza. Therefore their marriage is left to a matter of

time. She is her father's pet and plays banyan tree¹ to him struck by *Garm Hava* or Scorching wind.

But even a banyan tree is susceptible to the effect of *Garm Hava*. It opens its Pandora box to her and lo! Everybody is looking at each other with an eye of mistrust! Love, politics, and commerce lost their elements in the soup of Partition. She found her cousin and lover Kazim Mirza (played by Jamal Hashmi) overnight transforming into a Pakistani. Kazim's father, Halim Mirza (played by Dinanath Zutshi), a Muslim League frontline held him useless according to the changing situation. But in the labyrinth of Scorching wind, Kazim becomes a prospective bridegroom, a mere pawn to his opportunist father to strengthen his roots in newly form Pakistani aristocracy. It seems that her lover plays a copy cat to Mughal prince Saleem of the love legend Saleem and Anarkali² based in Agra, once the capital city of the Mughals. He comes back to Agra, his home for his cousin, his Anarkali Amina, from his hostland Pakistan without passport! But the newly found nations of India and Pakistan teach his suicidal chivalry a very bitter lesson of Partition. He is inhumanly arrested on the brink of his marriage with Amina for trespassing and is promptly transferred to Pakistan The scorching wind of Partition lift him like a leaf and blow him away from his beloved Amina. Thus, Amina's wishes are buried alive. She decides to remain single for the rest of her days. She becomes more or less indifferent towards life. She gathers the cloud of depressions around herself. She withdraws in her attic feeling mad. But her mother Jamila Begum (played by Shaukat Azmi) came to her rescue. She insisted her daughter-in-law to take Amina to a pilgrimage cum tour along with her brother who has been Amina's longtime admirer. The courtship works on the setting of love monuments of the great Mughals. It is dripping in with the syrup and fragrance of rendition of love quotes of that age dropping from the lover's lips. It breathes life to Amina. On the other hand, *Garm Hava* like malign fate is weaving its usual tapestry. Again the family of the would-be bridegroom goes to Pakistan leaving Amina in waiting. Amina's women self pendulums between hope and despair. fruition and uncertainty. Amina's flickering lamp of hope glows up at the arrival of her aunt, mother of her would-be husband for marriage shopping. Amina is head over the hill with the prospect of the fulfillment of her dream. She took Amina for shopping and began to purchase the bridal dress of her size. But while choosing colour she discloses that it is not for Amina because her son is going to be married to another woman in Pakistan. In

exchange, her daughter will be married to that woman's brother. Amina could not bear such foul play. Hence she dolls up in her bride's dress in her attic and overwhelmed with emotion cut her veins. Violence does not always erupt like a volcano and set ablaze everything which comes in its way. But most of the time it works stealthily through breach of trust, opportunism, and negligence. In the same vein, Amina's suicide raises many questions. Is it a suicide or a murder? She is sacrificed at the altar of Partition of India, 1947. Her woman self has constantly been bruised by neglecting her wishes. She is treated like a doll that can be cuddled and abort at wish. The answer is perhaps revealed in its reception. The film won several accolades. The film won the prestigious Nargis Dutt award, 1974 for being the best feature film on National integration. It was also nominated for Cannes, film festival 1974. Besides, it bagged several national Filmfare awards for its story, , and dialogues.

ENDNOTES

1. Banyan tree is the National tree of India. Its shade is widely regarded as a shelter from adverse weather.
2. Saleem and Anarkali is a love legend of Mughal Prince Salim's escapades with his beautiful maid Anarkali rebelling against his father, the reigning Mughal Emperor Akbar at the risk of losing his claim on the Mughal throne.

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