

Representing the Unrepresentable: The Bollywood Partition Film

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Abstract

This thesis project is an analysis of films about the Partition of India, and how they challenge conventional representations of the event. The broader context of this issue is the public/private memory paradox, and the way in which communal memory challenges and changes national history. Partition gives us the key metaphors of post-colonial Indian identity: separation, rupture, fragmentation, wounding, etc. While there is a growing body of literature on the Indian Partition film, most of the work remains concerned with determining bias or objectivity, and does not give due consideration to the significant and unique challenges of representing Partition in Bollywood cinema. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the representational challenges of Partition cinema, how filmmakers have dealt with them considering the changing socio-political climate, and accordingly draw conclusions and form predictions for the future of Partition cinema.

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Introduction: Collective Trauma and the Cinematic Representation of History

*“At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps,
India will awake to life and freedom (Nehru 94)”.*

On August 15th, 2007, India celebrated sixty years of independence from colonial rule. *India Today* published a special Independence Day issue, with the cover posing the following question: What Unites India? ‘History’, said one contributor. ‘Tolerance’, suggested another. Others offered a range of possibilities that included ‘Power’, ‘Democracy’, the watershed date of ‘1947’, ‘Nationalism’, ‘Cinema’, and ‘Counterview’¹. While the aforementioned elements are posed by their respective champions as having a uniting effect on the Indian people, one could easily argue that it is these same elements that are the cause of long-standing, traditionally volatile ruptures in the national fabric.

What this journalistic exercise uncovered was the fact that India’s historical narratives are a highly contested subject to this day. 1947 was not just the year of India’s Independence from Britain, but also the year in which it was brutally partitioned into two countries. The vivisectioning of India and Pakistan was violent, messy, and stalemated territorial disputes remain a cause of significant concern. The effectiveness of Indian democracy is frequently called into question. And, given the strong resurgence of sub-nationalisms in recent years, and the unprecedented power wielded by various nationalist groups, counterview is often a dangerous approach for many – especially in Indian cinema. Although Indian society is characterized by its complete lack of consensus, I would argue that the Indian political and media apparatuses have failed to provide a

¹ I define ‘counterview’ as contrast, and, in the specific context of the Indian case study, a lack of consensus.

forum for dissenting views and, in fact, often aggressively suppress them in favour of unified or homogeneous stories of nation.

Yet, the August 2007 issue of *India Today* is a telling example of the tendency to reach for some semblance of unity, however superficial, rather than focus squarely on what divides India. Instead of viewing these differences as a potentially strengthening influence on a society divided along the multiple and diverse lines of geography, ethnicity, religion, and language, Indian media and power institutions have traditionally displayed a desire to create narratives of unity and homogeneity. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Bollywood film. For ongoing political reasons, the history of India's Partition remains a taboo subject in the public sphere. The Hindu-Muslim paradigm that surrounds the event threatens to erupt into fresh bouts of violence and anger. As a result, Bollywood films about Partition are relatively scarce, and those that do exist traditionally lack the critical, challenging stance of other national cinemas which have come to retrospectively address their national traumas. Yet, such Partition films do exist and the problems that they pose for an officially censored and repressed past remain fascinating for students of both cinema and history.

In what follows, I propose to examine the problems facing cinematic representations of Partition in Bollywood cinema, and to explore the various ways in which these problems reflect a broader sense of post-traumatic repression in the nation, with the accompanying discourses on memory and history. I will examine three films, each of which approaches the issue of contested or repressed memory through the lens of India's partition, as they each explore a particular issue that is taboo, both in the context of Partition as well as contemporary Indian society.

When two hundred years of British colonial rule in India ended on August 15th, 1947, the ensuing partitioning of India and Pakistan resulted in widespread civilian violence, displacement, and upheaval for millions. Cultural theorist Gyanendra Pandey sees Partition as a moment of rupture (Pandey 2002, 1), an historic moment that brought forth a set of antagonistic paradigms that have characterized relations between India's religious and ethnic communities in the six decades since. In keeping with this rhetoric of duality and paradox, author Urvashi Butalia refers to Partition as India's 'dark other' (Butalia 52), the traumatic memory forced into silence immediately following the event, that has fought its way to the surface over and over again ever since. The memory of Partition and its immediate aftermath has long been considered unrepresentable in cultural texts, relegating all memory to the official state institutions, which portray the event as the country's moment of independence rather than as a collective trauma. Such homogenous narratives lack a more comprehensive, more inclusive context for reading Partition history. They have resulted in a silencing, or erasure, of a multiplicity of private memories on a significant scale. Patrick French, for instance, observes that, following Partition, it was necessary to find a secular basis for defining the new Indian identity, as well as create a common sense of national purpose (French 26-7). Partition scholarship has traditionally been limited to official politics, academic and statistical histories, and memoirs of key political and military figures. Private histories only feature in fiction literature and, much later, in cinema. Here, public history is told as private history. This weaving together is common enough for fictional retellings of history, wherein private histories are coded with public history's narratives of national duty and loyalty. Prevalent Partition discourses privilege forgetting as a form of healing, thereby adding to

the silencing of Partition memory, and entrenching the socio-cultural taboo against overt representations or interrogations of the event and its memory. This taboo is so deeply entrenched in the national imaginary that survivors of the event still argue, “What is the point of telling today’s children about these things? ... All that has nothing to do with their lives and their problems” (Pandey 2002, 16). By denying the influence of Partition on present-day politics and society, and by divorcing Partition from contemporary relevance, the more heterogeneous, non-institutionalized narratives and memories are at risk of disappearing. To avoid these narratives from being lost completely, there has been a recent growth of literature and scholarship that attempts to document the various private, local/individual memories of Partition that have nothing to do with high-level decolonization, nation-building, statecraft, or military conflict. Instead, these studies focus on hitherto taboo subjects such as the complicity of the government, military, and law enforcement authorities in Partition violence, and the unique violence inflicted upon women during Partition.

Until relatively recently, literature was the only cultural site to effectively conduct this interrogation of Partition memory, and there is a small yet significant body of Partition literature that engages with the Partition memory at the level of private history. Turning away from state-based, grand narrative histories, these texts concern themselves with individuals caught up in the senseless brutality of Partition². Without detracting from the importance of Partition literature, I would argue that Indian cinema, specifically

² Examples include Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* with its weaving together of public and private history, as well as Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* and Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Cracking India* for their use of Partition iconography.

Bollywood cinema³, is a far more pervasive and powerful cultural text, if only because of the scale of its mass audience. Indeed, some critics have gone so far as to argue that, "...cinema remains the cultural dominant of India, its sole model of national unity (Mishra 3)", and is therefore potentially an optimal site for staging Partition memory. My study focuses on Bollywood cinema, as opposed to the various regional language cinemas of India or Indian independent, arthouse cinema, mainly because it is the Indian commercial cinema with the largest audience, and serves as a primary model for the smaller regional cinemas. Bollywood effectively transcends social and linguistic barriers by emphasizing the myths on which Indian society is sustained. It is in Bollywood cinema that the coding of public socio-political values is woven into private narratives of family or romantic love.

Historically, there has been a dearth of direct representation of Partition in Bollywood films. Nor has there been any serious interrogative engagement with the traumatic memory of Partition. Such attempts are usually bogged down by controversy, and accusations of offending one group or another, before the film is even released. What makes them fascinating as cultural texts is the attempt to both articulate and disguise a taboo subject. The small corpus of Partition films, which I posit as forming a counter-genre to the Indian patriotic or nationalist film, has taken on the formidable task of giving a voice to that which has been forced into silence, of articulating collective trauma and its memory, and of challenging the inherited memory and history of the India-Pakistan conflict. In examining these films, I seek to illustrate the various ways in which Bollywood has mobilized the Partition memory, and to what purpose.

³ I use the term 'Bollywood' to refer to popular, Hindi-language cinema.

There is an immediate correlation between the Partition film and Partition memory, as both are characterized by an effort to circumnavigate official state histories. The state has traditionally used Partition memory as a mobilizing force to garner support for its political agenda, by enforcing the India-Pakistan/Hindu-Muslim dichotomy and ideology. However, I identify a point of departure in Bollywood representations of partition brought on by the fiftieth anniversary of Partition in 1997. At a point in time where the country's political infrastructure had veered sharply to the right with the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, there came a renewed interest in a sort of collective stocktaking. Films began to emerge from Bollywood that not only broke the taboo of directly representing the violence of Partition, but also shifted focus to the *negative* legacies of Partition (Hasan 265), and began to challenge the official, inherited memory and old self-other⁴ dichotomies that had been held for decades. These new films are increasingly engaged in a sort of collective truth-seeking in terms of addressing the Partition trauma by making public history out of private history, privileging literature and testimonials over state-constructed histories, and unsettling the traditional monolithic, patriarchal Partition narratives (Didur 7).

Since my study crosses a number of disciplinary frameworks, I would like to establish those discourses that focused my research and delivered working definitions for some of my key terms. For 'partition', I lean on Jonathan Greenberg's definition:

“Partition, the political division of formerly integrated territory in these cases refers to a set of inter-related historical events that remain fraught with intense emotional significance for millions who lived through them, and their children and

⁴ Wherein the Indian citizen/nation constitutes the self, while Pakistan/Pakistanis occupy the space of the other.

grandchildren. In this context, it is useful to understand 'partition' as a code word evoking layers of psychologically heightened, politically resonant meaning (Greenberg 90)".

At the centre of my research lie the issues of memory and history, and the key problematics concerning the relationship between the two. Pierre Nora's work on *lieux de mémoire* provides a helpful framework for my analysis, and I propose to expand on his key concept in terms of finding alternative modes of memorializing in what Nora refers to as an 'era of commemoration' (Nora 610). Indeed, the films I use as case studies each demonstrate a different way of commemorating Partition history and memory. Nora sees *lieux de mémoire* as material sites in the nation, but also cultural sites such as books and visual art, where memory is not necessarily delivered as a chronological, causal record of past events. This idea lends itself very effectively to my study. In India, there is a total absence of material memorializing of Partition. There are many monuments dedicated to 'Independence' and its heroes, but only one in memory of the victims of Partition violence (Khan 201). I would argue that there is perhaps no more telling example of India's emphasis on 'history' and simultaneous obscuring of 'memory'. The statist official narratives of Partition are entirely linear and causal. The films I use as case studies stress the breakdown of linear causality to prioritize the issue of plural memory. Ultimately, my own arguments fall in accordance with Nora's notion of the antagonistic relationship between memory and history. The idea that the aim of history is to silence or rewrite memory is certainly applicable to the Indian case study. Questions arise as to who claims ownership of history, and how this affects our claim to memory as individuals and as a collective. Nora's framework provides the ideal starting point for

my study, as it presents what I consider to be the most effective way of theorizing how nations are constituted at memorial sites.

In the following chapters, I will attempt to illustrate how the Partition film, as a cultural text, is essentially breaking the silence that has surrounded the memory of Partition and its legacy. By tracing the trajectory of the Partition film from its origins in a climate of traumatic repression and heavy censorship to the present day interrogation and refiguring of memory, I will look at how the concerns and representations in these films have evolved, and continue to evolve, in ways directly parallel to the changing socio-political climate. Indeed, it is important to think of them as being a part of that climate, functioning both as representations as well as discursive interventions. Beyond simply reflecting a changing reality, they are a part of that reality, and constitutive of culture.

Chapter One provides a more extensive contextual foundation for the history of Partition, and lays much of the theoretical network for my ideas on trauma, memory, and history, and how they relate specifically to the Indian case study. I will look at issues surrounding the process of decolonization, partition, and independence, with a focus on common historiographical approaches to Partition. This chapter also briefly examines the pioneering role of Partition literature as the first cultural text to prioritize personal testimony and low-level, private history over state-based grand narratives. The overall aim of the chapter is to lay the contextual groundwork to delve straight into a detailed study of Partition cinema in the following chapter.

Chapter Two narrows the field of focus to Bollywood. Beginning with a short background on Bollywood, and the scale of its industry, the chapter establishes a

historical context for the unique and precarious role Bollywood plays in Indian social and political life, how Partition changed Bollywood, and how Bollywood represents Partition.

Chapter Three focuses on early or traditional Partition cinema, and a case study of Manmohan Desai's *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977). I will examine how Partition is represented allegorically as a mode of contemporary political critique.

In Chapter Four, I will move ahead to what I believe to be the benchmark for the refiguring of Partition cinema; the rise of Hindu nationalism and the renewed Indo-Pak conflict in the 1990s. I will focus my attention on one particular incident that embodies the rise to power of the Hindutva⁵ movement, namely the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992. In this chapter, I will discuss Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* (1995). Although not a film specifically about Partition, I will explore the ways in which Ratnam employs the same discourses, narrative patterns, and iconography commonly associated with Partition in his critique of contemporary Indian politics. The key development in this chapter is the turning point at which representations of Partition cease to be the end goal of the allegorical approach, and Partition itself becomes the allegory for other, more contemporary socio-political issues.

Finally, Chapter Five takes a look at the contemporary, post-Ayodhya Partition film. At this point, Partition itself is less of a taboo subject, yet a handful of key sub-topics remain contentious, primarily because they have remained unresolved in official public and public spheres and, as such, have festered in the national consciousness. One such issue I have chosen to focus upon is that of the violence inflicted upon women

⁵ Early 20th-century expression for Hindu nationalism or political Hinduism.

during Partition. In this, the most recent period I identify in the trajectory of the Partition film [and the one in which we presently find ourselves], filmmakers openly address contentious contemporary socio-cultural issues that are a direct consequence of the unresolved issues surrounding Partition history, and emphatically call for a more diverse and heterogeneous archive of Partition memory, to coincide with the resurgence of interest in Partition scholarship and commemoration mentioned previously. My case study in this chapter is Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar*⁶ (2003).

Based on the theoretical models and case studies upon which I have chosen to focus, my overarching goal in examining the origins of Partition cinema and tracing its trajectory to the present day is to end my initial thesis with another, more informed hypothesis as to its potential future role as a cultural text, and as an increasingly legitimate form of memorialization and commemoration of history.

Having laid out the set of problems with which I intend to work, I now move on to unpack the theoretical structure of my argument, within which the analysis of my case studies takes place.

⁶ 'Skeletons'.

Chapter One: Partition and its Crisis of Representation – A Theoretical Framework

The two main bodies in the Indian independence movement were the Congress Party and the Muslim League. Initially united in their desire to rid India of British rule, the two groups eventually split on the issue of a separate homeland for Indian Muslims. The Muslim League, led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's first Prime Minister, began pressing the colonial government to divide India and create Pakistan before bringing colonial rule to an end. The Indian people debated whether or not India should remain united. Some argued that India should fight to remain intact, and that there would be ample opportunity for peaceful and equal relations between Hindus and Muslims once the British left. One such voice was that of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of Congress and India's first Prime Minister. Others, such as Jinnah, argued that Hindus and Muslims were simply too different, in terms of religion and culture, to coexist, and had thus far been incongruously ruled by a single government (Wallbank 13). Mahatma Gandhi, a former empire loyalist, played a large role in the pursuit of a unified national identity. Gandhi believed in the myth of past unity among Indians, viewing Indian Muslims simply as converted Hindus (Brock 92). The 1947 Boundaries Committee, chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe was tasked with forming partition boundaries "...on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims...(Butalia 64)". In the weeks leading up to August 15th and independence, communal violence began to break out across India. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were forced from their homes and ancestral lands as the new border was drawn between India and Pakistan. Upon Partition, the situation worsened. Trains of refugees were attacked going either way across the border, and arrived at their destinations full of corpses. Displaced persons' camps

strained at the seams with the influx of refugees, homes were looted and destroyed, and rape, abduction, and forced conversion were used as tools of intimidation and ethnic cleansing. Migrants on both sides of the new border faced danger from civilian mobs and harassment from police and the military (Aiyar 21). Along with the violence, resentment and bitterness took root in the Indian national consciousness. Aside from four military conflicts, there have been additional socio-cultural tensions and antagonisms between India and Pakistan over the years.

Having summarized the events surrounding Partition, I now seek to make a case for positing Partition as a collective trauma. Cathy Caruth defines psychic trauma as an injury inflicted upon the mind (Caruth 3) that exceeds the ability of the subject to support it. Another key component of trauma theory where my work is concerned is the way in which traumatic memories are marked by belatedness and delay – in this case, due to the interweaving of official censorship and traumatic repression. I would posit the history of Partition as being full of ‘holes’ in memory, where the official, state-based narrative of Independence contains numerous significant gaps where private testimonial history should be. What is at stake here is the question of individual repression of a painful history and the official censorship that prohibits attempts at addressing this history.

Rather than lean too heavily on an overtly clinical mode of thinking about trauma, I find it more useful to view trauma as a form of ‘haunting’ (Caruth 5). This is an important component of my understanding of India’s Partition, as it speaks to the idea that Partition has not, due to lack of engagement with memory and history, been addressed or assimilated into mainstream memory, resulting in a compulsive repetition of

the prejudiced attitudes and violent actions during subsequent outbreaks of communal violence in India.

I view trauma as an event in the history of the subject that is in excess of the subject's ability to assimilate it. As such, trauma, in its inability to be effectively processed by the mind, is widely considered to be unrepresentable, therefore making any kind of truth-seeking from traumatic memory problematic. In this case, where the line between victim and aggressor is collapsed to such an extent, the assignation of responsibility becomes difficult, and it is therefore also more difficult to assimilate the traumatic memory into mainstream history. Trauma theorist Ruth Leys is skeptical of the collapsed distinction between victim and perpetrator (Leys 7), but I would argue that this is exactly the aim of cultural texts such as Partition cinema. The truth-seeking in which these texts are attempting to engage is not directed towards assigning blame to one group or another, but rather to allow into open discourse those private memories and heretofore unheard of histories of Partition that do not feature prominently enough in mainstream historical narratives⁷. To summarize this short discussion regarding definitions of trauma, I seek to clarify that when I refer to Partition as a collective trauma, I am dealing with psychological trauma and the various holes it creates in collective memory and mainstream historical narrative.

⁷ I refer to mainstream historical narratives as being any modes of narrative defined and controlled by the state or other power institutions, including news media, official state documents and reports, educational materials such as textbooks and academic curricula, etc. In contrast, I would define cultural historical texts, such as literature and cinema, as alternative historical narratives, with the caveat that literature and cinema are also at times hegemonic, with dominant discourses that raise their own issues of censorship, which I examine in depth in the analyses of my case studies.

India's Partition scholarship lacks the interrogatory strength of other studies in collective trauma, such as the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide, mainly due to official censorship, which I would tie into the issue of perpetrator's guilt on the part of state institutions, and their encouragement of cathartic forgetting. However, this forgetting is ultimately unsuccessful due to compulsive repetition during subsequent outbreaks of communal violence, and the repeated fictionalization of narratives and memory found in literature and cinema. Indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that many Indian scholars, historians, authors, and artists are committed to the fight *against* forgetting, rejecting its supposed cathartic effects, and choosing instead to focus upon telling and witnessing in an effort to fill in the gaps of Partition history.

The debate over the benefits of forgetting versus remembering is a key component of trauma studies. At the core of the debate lies the issue of the incomprehensibility and unrepresentability of trauma. Put simply, how does one effectively recollect that which is unrepresentable in terms of memory? Trauma is characterized by a breakdown of language and the symbolic order. How, then, to best come up with a vocabulary and symbolic framework that effectively represents the traumatic memory? Furthermore, how do we effectively assimilate the traumatic memory into the more concrete narrative of history? Both speech and silence also indicate the strategies of re-negotiation of community identity, the attempt at restoration of signification to inter-community relations, thereby remaking ethnic fissures (Maryam 192-3)". This underscores a fundamental struggle in terms of Partition narratives: When to speak, and when to stay silent? Equally importantly, *who* speaks, and *who* is made to stay silent, and why? In the analyses of my case studies, I hope to establish quite clearly that the significance of

Partition narratives in cinema lies not only in the story that is told, but also in the stories that remain untold, and the bearers of memory that remain silent.

The most problematic issue in terms of staging a collective trauma is how to represent the unrepresentable. Ruth Leys makes an argument that lends itself quite effectively to my position, claiming that trauma is unrepresentable and therefore cannot be cured, but merely passed on (Leys 269). Leys goes on to argue that in the transmission of trauma across space and time, the individual's trauma is capable of haunting subsequent generations. In terms of groups inheriting the traumatic memories of individuals, "The group is thus imagined as having the same psychology as the individual, so that history itself can be conceptualized in traumatic terms (Leys 284)". Leys' model of understanding trauma is particularly useful to my work, as it effectively draws a parallel between the individual and the collective as traumatized subjects, arguing that a collective or group can indeed be traumatized in the same way as an individual, through transmission. This process of transmission is not without risks and problems, as it leads to questions as to who can lay claim to the traumatic memory, and what form our responsibility as witnesses takes. I will address the ethical problems of witnessing further on in this chapter.

Author Ranavir Samaddar posits Partition as a moment of rupture (Bianchini 92) that marked the collapse of one state and the birth of two others. Samaddar goes further to describe Partition as a series of micropartitions, not just of the state, but also of its neighbourhoods, villages, cities, and families. I would argue that Partition constituted a trauma not only in the sense of the physical violence inflicted upon individuals, but also in the sense that the border between India and Pakistan can be viewed as wound inflicted

upon the land itself. Essentially, the border/wound of the land serves as both the figure and ground for individual as well as collective trauma. Figures or tropes of the body are frequently mobilized to stand in for psychic trauma in my case studies, evidencing the idea that what is at stake beyond addressing historical violence is a literal rupture or tear in the national body. This phenomenon of the nation viewed as a body is a key component of the iconography and vocabulary of Partition, as we shall examine in more detail further on.

The key questions to ask here are: What memories and myths are invoked or reinvented in order to repair the traumatic wound? What memories and myths are therefore silenced in order for the aforementioned reinvention to take place? These questions lead me to the ideas posed by Pierre Nora on *lieux de memoire*, and the relationship between memory and history, which Nora views as unstable. In his study of postwar France, Nora sees history as having conquered memory, in the sense that historical memory is based predominantly on institutionalized sites of memory (Nora 1989, 8). However, Nora identifies the proliferation of microhistories⁸ as the real sites of memory that connote a lost history in need of being recovered. Aside from physical sites of memory such as monuments and memorials, Nora's definition of historical sites includes cultural texts such as literature and oratory. These sites are commonly employed by institutionalized historical mechanisms, and I would argue that multiple memories, or microhistories, serve to counter the erasure that history exercises upon these sites. Gyanendra Pandey counters Nora's take on sites of history by arguing that Nora confines

⁸ I borrow the term from Carlo Ginzburg's emphasis on small units of historical study, e.g. the individual, as opposed to the state or the individual as an extension of the state.

his definition of history to the space of academic production (Pandey 2006, 11). Pandey argues that sites of historical production have greatly expanded, and that private and individual memories and histories now feed into state memory-histories. For example, oral narrative is considered to be an enrichment to history (Butalia 10) that has the potential to offer many different perspectives on an event or history that is conventionally presented as more homogenous, with a fixed set of ideological values and point of closure. While Pandey's observations certainly augment my argument, I see both Pandey and Nora's ideas on historical sites as being complementary. Nora might hold a more pessimistic view on the history/memory connection, but what he envisions as the ideal relationship between the two are precisely what Pandey observes as increasingly becoming the norm. Both Nora's and Butalia's ideas are of particular interest to me because these textual and narrative sites of memory, unlike monuments or physical memorial sites, are not anchored to a specific time and place. Indeed, the films I have chosen as case studies dually reference the past and the present, leading me to propose that Partition memory is actually living memory, rather than a closed narrative of a past event where there is a distinct break with the present.

These ideas attach themselves quite well to the issue of Partition narrative as they speak to the notion that an inclusion of multiple, heterogeneous narratives into mainstream history does not necessarily destabilize or detract from that history, rather, they add to it. And, in terms of the individual or the community, there is the potential for greater identification with that history, rather than the detachment and lack of identification that has long been prevalent among younger generations in India. Indeed, I would argue that there are two histories of 1947; that of Independence, and that of

Partition, Independence's shadowy other. The subject of Partition has long occupied a complex, precarious space in the Indian psyche and historical narrative. While Independence is commemorated with annual fanfare, Partition is still not a subject commonly or openly discussed in Indian society, as communal antagonisms are still reignited at the convenience of the political agenda of various power groups. In short, it is often dangerous to engage in public debate about the struggle between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in 1947 when those same old wounds continue to fester in India's dealings with Pakistan, in the continued struggle over Kashmir, in the ongoing debate over Muslim minority rights in India, and in the Hindu-Muslim tensions that, I would argue, continue to simmer below the surface, especially in certain urban centers, erupting to the surface every few years in fresh bouts of violence that seem to echo the violence of 1947. I deliberately use the term 'echo', as it points towards the palimpsestic layering of Partition narratives onto contemporary political issues that is the focus of my case studies. These films are strong indicators that Partition history refuses to be forgotten, and that like the psychological trauma defined by Caruth and Leys, it falls into a pattern of compulsive repetition, not only in Bollywood cinema, but also in contemporary Indian politics and society.

...

In order to fold the theoretical points in this chapter into the Indian case study, it is perhaps best to rehearse the construction of a distinctly nationalist Indian identity post-Partition, and the formulation of a Partition history and memory that was complementary to that nationalist identity through its use of a self-other dichotomy that played upon communal differences.

India is officially a secular state, but power is held by the ruling Hindu political elite, and has always been strongly contested by Muslim oppositional forces. As such, India has historically focused on constructing its identity in opposition to that of its longtime rival, Pakistan. With the focus thus placed on creating and sustaining an antagonistic self-other dichotomy that inescapably boils down to a Hindu-Muslim dichotomy, the issue of plural histories was marginalized, if not silenced outright. In her book entitled *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, Urvashi Butalia voices the same concerns that have fueled my research and my interest in this project, and I quote her at some length:

“... I began to wonder. About how many people had been torn apart like this by the event we call Partition, by what is known as history. How many had had to live with their silences, how many had been able to talk, and why it was that we, who had studied modern Indian history in school, who knew there was something called the Partition of India that came simultaneously with Independence, had never learnt about this side of it? Why had these stories remained hidden? Was there no place for them in history? (Butalia 32-3)”

Immediately following Partition, in order for the country to pick itself up, as it were, after such a catastrophic arrival into independence, the Indian government saw a need for a certain collective amnesia (Greenberg 94). News of the violence in various parts of the country was quickly drowned out by the celebratory accounts of national leaders, and of prominent personalities in the independence struggle – in this way, the history of 1947 became the history of Nehru, Gandhi, and Bhagat Singh, while the history of mass uprooting and cross-border massacres was forced into the margins of national memory, even as refugee camps near the new border continued to serve as a stark reminder of recent events. As Veena Das notes, Partition history took on two forms: the inner history is one of personal memories of the body and its violation, usually kept private. The outer

history is less disturbing in that it is not so personal or physical, and is more conducive to being recorded, archived, and passed down into popular memory (Das 456). It is my observation that the outer history, in this case, is heavily privileged, while the inner history is marginalized, and the act of making inner history more public has traditionally been discouraged. The problem with official history, or outer history, is that it does not allow the personal to effectively assimilate with the political (Ward 1).

Gradually, the immediate aftermath of Partition ended, quickly leading to a whole new set of problems for the country. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and corruption, a depression, food shortages, and a glaring lack of infrastructure soon became foremost on the Indian government's agenda. With Nehru's wide-scale agricultural socialist experiment underway, the priority of the official institutions and the state's mythmaking apparatus was to find a way to unite the Indian people after their social fabric had been torn to shreds. School curricula, textbooks, news media, popular literature, and cinema were some of the tools utilized in an effort to send out the government's secular message of progress and prosperity through unity and brotherhood. However, increasing economic stagnation and failure led to high levels of social unrest. Nehru's economic centralization and state planning policies had resulted in a country that was largely unable to adequately feed its people or employ them. At the same time, India's relations with Pakistan led to two military conflicts during Nehru's time in office. While the government's stance continued to be secular, it failed to address the public unrest and anti-Muslim sentiment that arose during those times of war and economic hardship, where many believed that the Congress government's pledge for religious

harmony was actually a policy of appeasement towards religious minorities, particularly Muslims.

During Indira Gandhi's time in power from 1966 to 1984, the country went through a period of near-totalitarian rule during the Emergency of 1975, and it was ultimately a conflict with Sikh separatists that led to Gandhi's assassination. All the while, communal antagonisms, while officially discouraged, were forced to the surface by various political factions to serve their own power plays and interests. I would argue that in spite of the lip service paid to religious harmony by the Indian government and state institutions, religious demarcations have always been used by these same institutions for their own benefit, as is evidenced by the presence of religious voting 'blocks', and national parties formed along religious lines that cater specifically to the interests of a particular minority. Gyanendra Pandey goes as far as to characterize the Indian national ideology as built upon intolerance normalized through school curricula, media, and the normalized vocabulary of national politics (Pandey 16). This would certainly appear to be the case today, as regional political groups are increasingly intolerant of minorities. My chapter on the impact of Hindu nationalism on Partition cinema goes into more detail about the contemporary political rhetoric that openly espouses Hindu values as national values.

Contemporary official histories of Partition suffer from the same problems as before; they are often limited to enumerative or tabulative studies of casualties that do not articulate suffering (Maryam 165), and they focus on causes and culpability while writing the violence of Partition off as a one-time aberration. There does not seem to be any effort to connect the nature of Partition violence to that of contemporary communal

violence. Hindu-Muslim clashes continue to occasionally erupt. The Congress government continues with its secular rhetoric of unity and tolerance, but there is no significant effort to address the root causes of these violent outbreaks. Indeed, most perpetrators of communal violence go unpunished, as bringing them to justice risks inflaming religious antagonisms with accusations of appeasement on one side, and intolerance on the other.

The current self-other dichotomy is no longer that of India-Pakistan, but one of a more deeply entrenched Hindu-Muslim antagonism. Nowhere is this more apparent to me than in Bollywood cinema, where a Partition film can be simultaneously accused of being *both* anti-Hindu and anti-Muslim. While Bollywood, like the national government, takes great pains to portray relations between India's religious communities as harmonious and equal in the eyes of the law, the cracks in the social groundwork are readily apparent. In the following chapters, I will pay closer attention to a handful of films I have singled out as making an effort, not towards a more earnest or genuine portrayal of religio-political tolerance, but towards addressing these divisions and their roots in a more critical, interrogatory manner.

The fiftieth anniversary of Partition in 1997 seemed to mark a turning point with regards to how the nation chooses to deal with Partition as a collective trauma. The level of open dialogue has only increased since then, as have the number of documentaries produced about Partition, the number of non-fiction studies that focus on personal, civilian history and testimony, and the number of mainstream commercial films produced on the subject. In an effort to augment official history, these various memory projects deal with the issue of collective trauma by moving away from the traditionally enforced

silence and erasure, seeking primarily to simply record as many of these stories as possible before their bearers are gone forever. While the trauma of Partition has traditionally reasserted itself in subsequent outbreaks of communal violence, it is now being approached in an effort to assimilate its memory into mainstream history, connecting younger Indians with the traumatic past of previous generations without the baggage of blame and culpability.

I began this chapter with a number of questions, the most problematic being that of how we are to represent the unrepresentable. Using the example of Partition cinema, I would argue that it is the forced silence and erasure of Partition memory that has rendered the memory unrepresentable. The films I have chosen to study support the notion that the starting point when dealing with events that provoke a crisis of representation is to simply start telling stories, using various formal and narrative strategies which I will discuss in detail further on. Only by first giving a voice to memories that have traditionally been silenced can we then think to address further issues of subjectivity, contested claims to memory, and the privileging of certain memories over others.

Having established the theoretical parameters within which to conduct my case studies, the next chapter moves on to a more focused look at Bollywood itself, its formal strategies, structures of identification, use of familiar stories and tropes, and issues of audience reception.

Chapter Two: Partition and Bollywood

Having addressed the theoretical framework of collective trauma and its impact on memory and history in Chapter One, I will now connect those ideas to Bollywood cinema, and its relationship with Partition memory.

E. Ann Kaplan writes at length about the relationship between cinema and representations of trauma. According to Kaplan, due to the unspeakability and unrepresentability of trauma, telling stories about it can never actually reproduce or represent the event itself (Kaplan 2005, 37). At best, a retelling of the traumatic event might serve as a cathartic process for the victim. However, with regards to a broader audience, such retelling may also allow a sort of empathetic sharing. And here, I come to a discussion of Kaplan's theory on the ethics of witnessing, which I believe effectively describes the process undertaken by Bollywood Partition cinema.

Kaplan defines witnessing as an appropriate term for those instances, "...when an art work produces a deliberate ethical consciousness, but with greater distance than empathetic sharing (Kaplan 122)". According to this model, the primary stake is the mobilization of the collective consciousness – for our purposes, the nation state. The act of witnessing via an art work creates and fosters a general sense of responsibility for a past injustice, and provides a broader structure for public recognition of atrocities. I believe that this aspect of Kaplan's model lends itself quite well to the Bollywood case study, because it addresses the dilemma of how to effectively form a connection between the Partition generation and subsequent generations of Indians.

My introductory chapter quoted a Partition survivor who questioned the purpose of encouraging greater remembering and discourse of Partition among younger

generations. I would argue that through the process of witnessing through works of art, in Kaplan's sense, the survivor generation and subsequent generations are offered a greater sense of connection and identification with Partition history through the multiplicity of narratives. Yet, this process also operates to further situate marginalized, civilian memory within institutionalized official history. Through witnessing, we are led to "... a broader understanding of the meaning of what has been done to the victims..." (Kaplan 123)".

A further potential benefit of Kaplan's model is that it places the responsibility of constructing a more comprehensive, more inclusive history jointly with the survivor and the listener as the source of emerging truth (*ibid*), rather than exclusively with the state's power institutions. The implications of this model on witness subjectivity involve a responsibility to testify to what has been directly observed or experienced, but which cannot be seen (Kaplan 124). Kaplan supplements her theoretical model with examples from the films of Maya Deren and Tracy Moffat, but I will cite her observations here, as they can be seen to apply to the films I have chosen to study. Kaplan describes the process of witnessing undertaken in and by these films as "...an elusive, disturbing, perhaps haunted way that nevertheless provokes in the viewer a need to take responsibility. Each film explores the structure of injustice and its accompanying rage; in only alluding to a specific 'quiet' or 'family' trauma, each film enables the spectator to generalize to many specific cases (*ibid*)". This statement effectively enables us to visualize the private-public trajectory along which private memory can be incorporated into public history.

Perhaps the most important reason for my focus on Kaplan's theory of witnessing is that it gives what I feel is due priority to the role of the cultural text in the construction of historical narrative. Grassroots testimony and non-academic writings are often considered second-tier to, and are generally used as cursory support for, academic or official historical studies and records. However, I would argue that the demarcation between historical text and cultural text is much more reciprocal.

To support this claim, I will speak briefly about the role of Partition literature⁹ in Partition's historical narrative. While there has traditionally been a firm differentiation in public discourse between Partition history and Partition 'stories', I would argue that, in the absence of a strong archival or memorial tradition, as Urvashi Butalia says, "...stories are all that people have (Butalia 40)". To add to Butalia's statement, I would go further and say that these stories and testimonials are all that stand to link the general public, be they survivors of Partition or their descendents, to the grand-narrative history of 1947, namely the Nehru-Jinnah-Gandhi-Mountbatten history of Independence. Literature allows us to think of memory in non-historical terms (Das 246). I would go one step further and include cinema in that statement. In her study of Partition literature, author Sukeshi Kamra addresses the role played by Partition fiction and testimonials in the greater Partition narrative, as well as Partition memory's erasure in disciplinary history. Kamra states that fiction and testimonials are the first sites of recorded private memory or history of the knowledge of violence, as well as the erasure of that knowledge (Kamra 3). Kamra also situates the literary text as being where traumatic shock and disbelief first register, and maintains that cultural texts are the *only* critical intervention in, and

⁹ In referring to 'Partition Literature', I include civilian memoirs, fiction, and non-fiction novels and anthologies.

interrogation of, the imposed silence on memory. This does not suggest that Kamra completely rejects the legitimacy or ‘truth’ of institutionalized history. Rather, she argues that the silences and erasures articulated by Partition literature are in fact necessary for the writing of the triumphalist grand narrative (Kamra 6). In an analogous comment in the *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Ian Talbot reminds us of the effacement of individual human voices:

“...historical studies have tended to focus on the causes of Partition rather than its impact. Substantiated treatment of its consequence has largely been limited to accounts whose main purpose is to apportion blame for the related massacres. In this great human event, human voices are strangely silent (Talbot 37)”.

In this way, Partition literature and other cultural texts examine the issues that have fallen victim to official erasure. The iconic works of Partition literature do not engage in investigation, denouncement, or accusation. There are no morals to these stories, only an unprecedented insistence on their being told. This is, in itself, a complex topic which comes with its own unique set of problems and theoretical issues; the main points to note are the significance of the pioneering role played by Partition literature in articulating and invoking Partition memory, and the resistance towards granting it its due in official, mainstream history.

I do not view Indian cinema as picking up from where Partition literature leaves off, as Partition literature continues to be popular within Indian literary circles, with some classic texts enjoying renewed interest leading up to the fiftieth anniversary of Independence, amidst the period’s rise in sectarian violence. Instead, I see both literature and cinema as following a parallel trajectory, as the representation of Partition in literature faces many obstacles that are identical to those faced by Partition cinema,

especially in its earlier stages of development. I would further argue that the films within the wider corpus of Partition cinema, like Partition literature, serve as what Sarvar Chand refers to as surrogate documents of the period (Chand 2002). Given the lack of documented testimonial included in the grand-narrative history of Partition, and the lack of proper documentation and archival of survivors' stories, literature and cinema step in not only to articulate the gaps in Partition memory, but also to intervene where official historical narrative has failed.

For the purposes of my project, I will only be examining Bollywood fiction films, rather than Partition documentaries, the key difference being their different registers of narrative and theatricality which do not attempt to mime the 'real'. This difference is also the key factor that separates official Partition history from Partition literature. State-based history is ideologically hegemonic. It is a history of statistics, and high politics. Literature and cinema, however, are involved in a different sort of narrativization (Didur 4). For this reason, just as I do not focus upon official Partition history, I will not be looking at Partition documentaries as case studies.

During the 1930s, the rise of the Independence movement coincided with a cinematic movement emphasizing communal harmony, in an effort to garner support for the struggle against the British Raj. This effort to depict social unity continued and intensified into the 1940s (Shah 195). All films focusing on and made immediately after Partition are full of socio-economic despair, but essentially repress the discourse of Partition. In fact, the events of Partition would not be directly addressed on screen, nor discussed at any length, for another twenty years. At the time of Partition, films were being used to create and solidify a new national identity. The goal was to form an identity

that was not defined by Partition. Therefore, the focus shifted to other issues of ideology and socio-politics. At a very basic level, the trauma of Partition was still too recent, and too horrifying to be addressed on film. With communal tensions as high as they were, a film about Partition would likely have led to more rioting and violence. After Partition, films focused on the social and economic transitions of the newly independent nation (Vasudev 5). The focus on rural India shifted to the cities, where the suffering in the slums of Bombay and Calcutta became the dominant narrative issue. It may be inferred that Indian audiences needed some respite from nationalism, having seen its uglier side first-hand. Any films made during this period that did address Partition were mostly about Kashmir. They were not very in-depth, and had little or no social impact.

Partition effectively severed the Indian film industry. While audiences grew as the industries from Karachi and Lahore moved to Bombay, many prominent cinematic personalities left the country for Pakistan. Because of widespread curfews during the period of violence, audiences could not go to the theatres, and as it was, many theatres were no longer in commission. Some had been destroyed, and others were being used as shelters for refugees and displaced people. Building new cinemas could not be justified when the country was facing acute housing shortages in many cities. The crisis had a destabilizing effect on the market, which meant that there was little funding available for film projects. Overall, the industry did not get back on its feet until 1949, after which films were more heavily geared towards spectacle, with heightened romance and glamour offering some respite from the pain and tragedy of the recent past.

Along with new borders and a new government, independent India had a new cinematic audience, and a new film industry. Essentially, the ruling elite had a clean slate

on which to compose its ideal narrative of national identity. Given high levels of illiteracy and the inability to access the entire population with a message at a more personal level, film was the medium with the largest reach of the population. The government became involved in the film industry in an unprecedented way, aimed at regulating cinematic output to ensure that the ideological message being dispersed was one conducive to its agenda. It is evident that upon Partition, nationalism in India simply moved from being based on opposition from one enemy other [Britain] to another [Pakistan]. However, in the years following Partition, Indian nationalism grew to include a more inward-focused discourse on what it meant to be an Indian in independent India. One solution to the communal tensions was the creation of a secular self. On film, secularism was presented in the form of inter-religious romances and friendships, which led to the questioning of traditional religio-nationalist wisdoms, and the celebration of religious and ethnic harmony. The rhetoric moved away from classifying an Indian as Hindu versus Muslim, and towards a discussion of a more secular, political Indianness. Naturally, much of this discourse played out on the screen, as the country's mythmaking apparatus worked tirelessly to propagate a national identity focusing on India's uniqueness in relation to other nations. In Raj Kapoor's *Shri 420* (1955), the protagonist is seen walking down a street, singing what is now one of the most iconic songs in Indian cinema:

*My shoes are Japanese/
My trousers are English/
On my head, a hat made in Russia/
But my heart is still Indian.*

The proliferation of such patriotic sentiments may well have been part of an effort to move the country away from defining itself according to the horrors of Partition, and

towards an identity built upon modernization and a unique yet active role in the international community.

Immediately following Partition, mainstream Hindi cinema foregrounded optimistic, Gandhian/Nehruvian ideals such as '*Naya zamana, naya roshni*'¹⁰, and a vision of the transition to statehood centering specifically on the ideal of India's rural and farming communities fuelling the new nation's growth and prosperity.

However, even in these efforts towards secular unity, we already see the beginnings of a predominantly Hindu-coded narrative tradition. *Satyagraha, shanti, dharma*, and '*bharat mata*' (Civil resistance, peace, duty, 'Mother India') all feature prominently in narrative and formal structure. All of these are Hindu in ontology and etymology. The language is formal Sanskrit, and completely devoid of any reference to the Urdu language, which comes with its own, Muslim-coded vocabulary of valour and honour.

The ideals of Nehruvian socialism¹¹ were played out in films made in the decade following Partition, with their foregrounding of the labour movement, and dignity of the agrarian classes. However, towards the mid 1960s, Bollywood cinema had become overly formulaic, characterized by ageing stars playing love-struck teenagers, tired narratives, and forced idealism. The reality of increasingly widespread poverty, economic stagnation, corruption, and injustice only accentuated just how irrelevant Bollywood cinema had become, now serving solely as paint-by-numbers escapism. Film

¹⁰ 'New world, new light'.

¹¹ The post-Partition economic and industrial model. Its main characteristics were government centralization of industry and agriculture. The model was highly protectionist, and critics say that it kept India isolated and disenfranchised from the global economic community.

historian Akbar Ahmed draws a parallel between Bollywood's stagnation of the period and the decline of Nehruvian socialism (Ahmed 295). By this time, India had fared poorly in wars against China and Pakistan, and national morale was at an all-time low.

1971 was a turning point for the country, with new leadership under Indira Gandhi, and an unprecedented push towards militarization with the launch of India's nuclear program. I believe that 1971 was also a benchmark year for Bollywood. Along with the new leadership came a new moral ideology, and with it, new propaganda. Indira Gandhi's government conducted a thorough censorship campaign that attacked all forms of public expression and exhibition, and cinema did not escape unscathed.

The All India League of Censorship had been in operation since 1937. Its efforts were aimed at ridding Bollywood of Muslim and Parsi 'contamination' (Mishra 217)¹². The role of the organization intensified around the time of Partition, and the Muslim was effectively erased from a considerable portion of India's cinematic history (ibid). Aruna Vasudev paints a clear picture of the censor board's role during the independence movement:

“Confusion ensued with the changeover from white to brown democracy. The censorship code, if anything, became more rigid, reactionary and rigorous. What did not suit the whimsy of a particular new ‘nabob’ was unceremoniously suppressed in theories of national need, in claims of religious inviolability or in pleas for the preservation of our moral and spiritual heritage. Much chicanery was perpetrated under the bogus claims of cultural revival. Fossilized traditions, obsolete ideas and medieval habits were given a shot in the arm. As self-appointed custodians of traditional culture, the censors crankily employed the ‘culture’ stick to frighten the

¹² Muslims and Parsis were pioneers of early Indian cinema (production, exhibition, etc.). While Muslims have held onto their position, the Parsi presence in Bollywood was all but eradicated after Partition, and has never recovered.

non-conformist, to choke new thought and destroy dissent (Vasudev 76)".

Various post-Partition reforms included an on-screen Prohibition, wherein no drinking scenes were permitted unless they adopted a condemnatory tone, and a ban on expressing negative views about the nation's leaders or government. To this day, it is illegal for a film to include any dialogue or imagery that defames the Nehru or Gandhi family.

The rules of film censorship became even more rigid when Indira Gandhi declared a national Emergency in 1975. With a complete ban on any form of political dissent, extending to film publicity materials such as journals and posters, the film industry began to see the emergence of what I call the New Indian Cinema, both in Bollywood and in the more marginal art-house cinema. I use the term New Indian Cinema in reference to other reactionary national cinemas of that period, such as the New German Cinema, that emerged in direct protest to high levels of film censorship as well as increasing political authoritarianism. Notable changes emerged in Bollywood films; a new hero, dark, violent, and brimming with machismo, deadlier villains, and narrative themes of anger and frustration as opposed to the stoic, silent suffering of the previous decade. Unable to express their political opinions and grievances outright, filmmakers resorted to allegorical, coded critiques of the Emergency and the government. It may be argued that any such critiques were superficial at best, and did not go far enough in terms of a more robust critique of the contemporary political establishment. I would counter that the New Indian Cinema successfully navigated the minefields of politics and censorship through the use of allegory as a sort of Trojan horse, wherein the film cloaked its socio-political message behind romantic, comedic, or melodramatic plots, and

revealed only after receiving the blessing of the censors. Aruna Vasudev effectively describes the balancing act performed by the New Indian Cinema:

“To outsiders, the protest may at times seem understated or muted. The tone could well be the result of a society attuned to subdued speaking. The guidelines on film censorship with the duty to protect the many susceptibilities of a multi-religious and secular society could perhaps moderate the extremists comment. To many Indians, the authentic dissent is the voice of conscience. Its New Cinema reflects the country’s democracy on one hand and its constraints on the other (Vasudev 1986, pp. 11)”.

There was, however, significant damage done to the cultural fabric of Bollywood cinema during this period. The increased militarization by the Indian government led to renewed hostilities with Pakistan, and the marginalization of the Muslim in Indian cultural space re-emerged with renewed vigour.

With the end of the Emergency and the decline of Indira Gandhi’s government in the early 1980s, Bollywood went through yet another transition. From allegorically critiquing the Emergency and the government, narratives shifted towards an outright rejection of both Nehruvian and Gandhian socialism, along with their secular ideals. Bollywood cinema suddenly became hyper-masculine, unprecedentedly violent, and this proved to be fertile ground for the germination and flourishing of the Hindu-centric narrative themes and ideologies that would suffocate any attempts at critical filmmaking and the representation of plural memory or narrative in Bollywood for roughly the next twenty years. I would argue that this new hypermasculinity was inextricably linked to the emergence of a new, more violent strain of Hindu fundamentalism, one that forced the redefinition of Indian identity in religious terms, with Muslim identity placed squarely in the realm of the alien outsider (Mishra 218).

In 1998, the Indian government recognized film as a legitimate industry, which made the industry eligible for unprecedented infrastructural and credit support (Mehta 136). I would argue that while economically beneficial to the film industry, these measures might well have made it beholden to the state, and I actually see the extension of financial support and privileges to the film industry by the state as a form of control that is arguably subtler than textual censorship. During this period, 'family films' were seen as the main articulations of culture (Mehta 42), with hours-long, elaborate musicals plotted around a wedding or other such occasions that bring the extended family together. Such films were wildly popular and profitable at the box office. All of them focused on Hindu tradition and ritual, reinforcing Sanskrit-centric notions of duty and morality. Vijay Mishra adds that the foregrounding of conservative politics, manipulation of stars, and the glorification of a martial race theory in the Indo-Pak context further led to what he calls the Hinduization of the Indian body politic, and were all inserted into filmic texts for the same purpose (Mishra 43).

The current political climate in India is complex. Relations with Pakistan are fragile. However, internally, the rise of Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism has led to sporadic, violent clashes which continue to cause a rift in the national identity. As a result, the Partition film questions the origins and shaping forces behind Indian national identity. As this identity is taken apart and examined piece-by-piece, archaic and overtly aggressive myths of the past are being discarded to make room for newer, more pacifist, secular, and inclusive ideologies that still manage to challenge and critique conventional myths and histories. The Partition film espouses a form of cultural identity that speaks of multiple points of connection as well as difference, and that both are a part of a more

inclusive and, in a way, cohesive national identity. It seeks to narratively and stylistically emphasize points of common ground between the Indian self and the perceived enemy other in order to challenge the exclusionary state mythmaking apparatus.

While plurality is expressed in terms of religion by characters of different faiths, narratives of unity and harmony, etc., the Hindu tradition remains the dominant cinematic influence. As a result, films with patriotic or nationalistic themes or subjects invariably adopt a strongly pro-Hindu stance, either vilifying Muslims or Pakistanis, or portraying Hinduism as the pacifist voice of reason and harmony. With Hindu fundamentalism dominating India's recent social and political forums, the secular nature of Indian culture is increasingly under threat. The Bollywood patriotic film draws on public nostalgia for its lost past, laying the foundation for a system of cinematic representation through symbolism. It is a common misconception that patriotic Bollywood films cut across religious, regional, linguistic, and economic divides. Using the iconography and themes of Indian [Hindu] nationalism, these films simply propagate the state-based historical narratives perpetuated since Partition. There is no truth-seeking or deconstructive element at work; the only purpose of such films is to serve as a form of propaganda. The popularity of patriotic Bollywood films ebbs and flows according to the political climate at any given time, especially with regards to Indo-Pak relations. When tensions between the two countries flare up, audiences can expect a spate of Bollywood films about the military, Kashmir, Pakistan. Previous works center around military skirmishes along the border, such as the Kargil battle of 1999. After 9/11, Bollywood has generated a proliferation of patriotic films on the subject of Pakistani terrorism. Yet, as I shall suggest, the themes and iconography are engineered to strike a chord with all Indians

regardless of religious or ethnic background in order to generate a universal response. I will explain this concept in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Having familiarized ourselves with the history of India's political trajectory and the characteristics and contexts of Bollywood cinema, I now focus entirely on the Partition film. Let us first establish the characteristics of the Indian patriotic or nationalist film (Dwyer 39) versus the Partition film. The nationalist film is often based on the foregrounding of maleness, often focusing the narrative of the male pacifist or action hero. The armed forces are showcased throughout the film. Music is an integral part of the patriotic film, and special care is given to compose and compile a soundtrack of memorable, inspiring anthems and songs designed to invoke feelings of compassion, nostalgia, and pride.

The Partition film adheres to these characteristics and formulae to a certain extent. It, too, makes use of music to elicit audience sentimentality and national pride. However, the other characteristics are either subverted to take on a different meaning, or reversed altogether. The Partition film often includes and emphasizes female narrative agency. The armed forces are also a prominent presence, but while the nationalist film showcases them as a source of pride, discipline and honour, the Partition film portrays the military as invasive and destructive. The Partition film contains a few key recurring themes. The most important of these is the idea of forced separation. The nationalist film is all about unity. The partition film underscores the painful separations that occur as a result of nationalist mythmaking and the aggressive pursuit of a unified and cohesive identity. Also very common is the language of breakage and arbitrary borders. In many of the films I include in my project, characters talk of the Partition border in terms of a man-

made line; a wound still festering that has yet to heal. The discourse of breakage is posited in the Partition film through the collapse or breaking of the symbolic order. This collapse is both narrative and visual, as order and linearity in the plot and formal elements give way to anarchy and chaos. Partition films commonly make use of indexical devices to provide the viewer with contextual information. These include voice-over narration or title cards, mostly at the film's opening and closing scenes, as well as documentary source materials such as photographs, newsreel footage, and maps, all of which can be said to operate under the sign of history and the 'real'.

Any study of national cinema and its impact of and links to national identity is broken down in terms of its modes of representation. A major aspect of this is the semiotic system used to construct the desired cinematic representation. The Partition film subverts the elements of the generic patriotic film and uses them to destabilize the homogenous myths of Indian and Hindu nationalism, or Hindutva. The Partition film and patriotic film share many of the same visual signifiers. However, in the patriotic film, these signifiers are used to uphold the dominant ideological narrative to audiences. The partition film subverts them so that the audience is conscious of their presence and their meaning. From here, the film can either respect the popular meaning of the signifier, or can reinterpret it to mean something different. In Indian cinema, some common signifiers used to represent the nation and its identity are *dharti*, *mitti*, *bharat mata* *khoon*, *pasina*, *hul*, *bandook*, *tiranga jhanda*, (Earth, soil, Mother India, blood, sweat, plough, gun, tricolour flag) etc. These signifiers do not only contain meaning when considered each by itself, but also form a semiotic chain invoking powerful patriotic sentiments. For example, the earth is cultivated by the plough and the labourer's sweat. The labourer in

turn is protected by the gun, which is held by the soldier willing to shed blood for the nation and its flag (Vridi 38). Another example, and in my mind the most effective in terms of the semiotic chain, is in the narrative of *Mother India* [Mehboob Khan, 1957]. The title character is a farm labourer with two sons. For much of the film, she is seen toiling exhaustively at her plough, cultivating the land that nourishes and nurtures her sons, one of whom she ends up killing to uphold the honour of the nation. In *Mother India*, the link between mother, soil, nation, and duty dominates the narrative, and is supported by the various formal elements, the most significant of which is the film's soundtrack, replete with agrarian paeans to land/nation/god. In one particular song, *O Janewaaalon* [O, Departing Ones] the mother pleads with the rest of her fellow villagers not to leave their drought-ridden land, singing of their duty to the land/mother, and asks if they can hear 'her' crying out to them. While *Mother India* has nothing to do with Partition, and will not be discussed any further, the film is a textbook example of how meaning is created in Bollywood cinema. Visual signifiers establish a link to notions of duty and nationalism. They are bolstered by musical signifiers that appeal to the oral/musical tradition prevalent in Indian culture¹³. I would argue that the use of common signifiers and utilization of musical traditions increases the popularity of a film, thereby making it easier to disseminate its message. Partition films deal with subject matter that is still very much taboo in India. However, they employ the same semiotic strategies as the more generic Bollywood patriotic film, which makes the films more palatable to mainstream audiences, at least on the surface.

¹³ Indian mythology and folklore is still largely disseminated through an oral tradition. Many myths and fables are also set to music, with the result that music and singing are distinctly ritualistic, with traditionally prescribed songs and dances that correspond to specific occasions [weddings, births, etc.]. Bollywood feeds directly off these musical traditions.

Along with visual signifiers, the Partition film has a language all its own, that adds to the semiotic chain created by visual signifiers. The language of Partition is one of breakage and rupture. In the opening scene of Deepa Mehta's *Earth* [1997], the protagonist, a little girl named Lenny, smashes a china dish with an air of detachment, then asks her mother, "Can one break a country?". There, in a nutshell, is the embodiment of Partition trauma; the inability to comprehend or come to terms with the physical act of partitioning the country in two. In the absence of an actual, tangible breaking apart of the nation, with only political declarations and arbitrary borders that meant little to the people living in the partitioned areas, the trauma of that rupture is expressed in Partition cinema through dialogue and visual signifiers. Characters speak of breakage and rupture in the context of their families and communities, and of a more internal rupturing of the psyche [allusions to 'heartbreak', etc.]. In terms of formal elements, the Partition language of rupture and breakage is broadly depicted through the gradual breakdown of order and linearity. The mise-en-scène at the opening of Partition films presents an atmosphere of orderly, idyllic quiet. With the first stirrings of unrest, the formal elements begin to emphasize a break from linear order, leading to a complete descent into chaos.

In this chapter, I have discussed the space occupied by Partition cinema in Bollywood, as well as the key components that I consider crucial in any analysis of a Partition film: narrative and formal strategies, censorship, and the strategies that characterize the Partition film in contrast to the Bollywood patriotic film. I will now move on to my case studies, each of which pick up at least one of these threads of analysis, in an effort to trace the trajectory and development of Partition cinema from its

earliest incarnation to the present day. The following chapter examines the early use of Partition themes and iconography as allegory in its critique of contemporary socio-politics.

Chapter Three: The Partition Film – Origins and Allegory

In the previous chapter, I discussed the role of Bollywood in Indian socio-political culture, and the challenges faced by Partition cinema due to censorship. I also developed my ideas on the difference between the Bollywood patriotic film and the Partition film, establishing the main tropes and iconography of Partition discourse, and how Partition cinema applies these in terms of narrative as well as formal and stylistic elements. In this chapter, I present my first case study, an example of early Partition cinema and its use of allegorical strategies.

On the surface, Manmohan Desai's *Amar Akbar Anthony* has nothing to do with Partition. Indeed, it is set twenty years after Partition. However, I would argue that the film's narrative is an allegory for Partition which, in turn, is an allegorical critique of contemporary socio-politics. The film was made during the Emergency of the mid-1970s, a time when, as we have seen, neither government nor its policies could be overtly criticized. Although the film is, on the surface, a family melodrama/slapstick comedy/musical, these lighthearted elements disguise an acute frustration with the national malaise in the face of rampant corruption and socio-economic stagnancy, as well as the disturbing religious cleavages that became entrenched after Partition. There are enough narrative and formal signifiers in the film to link it to those I discussed earlier as being characteristic of the Partition film. And so, I have decided to include it in my canon of Partition cinema.

Amar Akbar Anthony is one of the best-loved comedies in Indian cinema. The film tells the story of three brothers separated as children. Each boy is adopted and raised

in a different religion; Amar [Vinod Khanna] as a Hindu, Akbar [Rishi Kapoor] as a Muslim, and Anthony [Aamitabh Bachchan] as a Christian. The main plot revolves around the way in which the brothers discover their true identities and their relationship to each other, come together with their respective love interests, and exact their revenge on the villain responsible for the breaking apart of their family. The themes of collapse, breakage, and forced separation are central to the Partition narrative. The prologue of the film focuses on how the family is forced apart. The boys' father, pursued by the villain's henchmen, abandons his children in a park to keep them out of harm's way. The boys wander off to play and look for food, and end up losing their way back to each other. At first glance, this may seem to have absolutely nothing to do with Partition. However, it is soon revealed via title card that the separation occurs on August 15th, 1955 – Independence Day. At the park, the father abandons his sons at the foot of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi, a pivotal figure in the independence movement. By placing the boys in the time and metaphoric space of Partition, Desai sets them up for the re-positing and transformation of their identities, a key characteristic of the Partition trauma. Here, I am reminded of Nora's ideas on the contention between memory and history, wherein we have a physical site of memorialization, intended to invoke a very specific historical narrative of pride and patriotism. However, by using the site as the physical space where the narrative breakage occurs, the same site invokes a completely different memory of violence and rupture.

Bollywood scholar Rachel Dwyer's reading of the film casts it as superficial with a distinct Hindu bias, stating, "The Hindu's romance is sincere and reforming, whereas the Muslim man is an exhibitionist... the Christian is a drunk and a smalltime crook..."

(Dwyer 144)”. However, I believe that while the film does engage with the stereotypes surrounding the characterization of the three protagonists, there is a deeper, quite significant allusion to the cultural history and folklore of their religious traditions, in a way that can be seen as both critical and affirming. Amar’s relationship with reformed con artist, Laxmi [Shabana Azmi], is coded with the traditional Sanskrit mythological narratives of the fallen woman, as well as the notions of duty and devotion to the husband. Akbar’s romance with Salma [Neetu Singh] invokes the Urdu tradition of grand romantic literature, poetry, and music. Akbar is not an exhibitionist, as Dwyer claims, but an Urdu cultural archetype of the romantic suitor, examples of which are found across traditional Urdu literature, poetry, and music.

It should be noted that the Muslim characters are given a far more prominent, positive space in the film than was normal in Bollywood cinema at the time. Instead of being relegated to the periphery, Akbar and Salma’s community is shown in various aspects of their lives; Muslim family life, work, recreation, and romance all feature prominently in the film. It is important to note that Salma, a doctor, is the only one of the three leading ladies to have a career. Desai’s representation has a normalizing effect on the characterization of the Muslims in the film. The attention paid to the Muslim space serves to establish a critique of communal cleavages. Going one step further than decrying the obscuring of the Muslim figure, the film recreates the Muslim space to both contrast as well as complement the exclusively Hindu-coded mainstream representations of Indian society in Bollywood cinema.

Additionally, the Muslim space is where Gandhian ideology becomes significant to the film’s plot. As previously mentioned, the three boys are abandoned at the foot of a

statue of Gandhi. The inscription at the base reads, '*Ahimsa paramo dharma*' [nonviolence is the highest duty]. Of the three protagonists, it is Akbar who later expresses a strict adherence to Gandhi's teachings. I interpret this as Desai's way of reclaiming Gandhian ideology from political forces that claimed him as a Hindu hero after his death. In his quest to win Salma's hand, Akbar must deal with her disapproving father, Taiyyab Ali. In an attempt to end Akbar's pursuit of his daughter, Taiyyab Ali arranges for Akbar to be badly beaten. When Anthony threatens Taiyyab Ali with retaliation, Akbar stops him and reminds him of Gandhi's teachings of nonviolence as the only way to achieve one's goals. Humbled, Taiyyab Ali gives in to Akbar at this point.

Finally, while Anthony may be a drunk and a crook, one cannot ignore Desai's deliberate use of the Christian protagonist to articulate the frustration and disillusionment prevalent during the Emergency. When cautioned about his bootlegging enterprise, Anthony justifies his illegal activities by criticizing the climate of economic stagnation and unemployment, perhaps rendering these critiques far less contentious than if they were expressed by the Hindu or Muslim characters. Desai's critique of the Emergency is seen in the illegal economic activities undertaken by some of the characters. The film depicts various types of lawlessness such as racketeering, smuggling, prostitution, and extortion, as characters seek to profit from the misfortune of others. Not only were these common practices of the Partition era, but they experienced a significant surge during the Emergency, as there were fewer legitimate earning opportunities available to the lower and working classes.

At the end of the film's prologue, the boys, now grown men, all coincidentally end up donating blood to the blind victim of a hit-and-run. Unbeknownst to them, the

woman is their biological mother, Bharati¹⁴ [Nirupa Roy]. The mother is presented as the common link between the boys. The final image of the prologue is a freeze frame of the mother receiving blood from her sons. Her bed is in the foreground of the frame. The intravenous tube in her arm splits into three branches that the camera tracks to each of her sons, lying on beds in the background. The extra-diagetic song lyrics accompanying the credits sing, “Blood is thicker than water”. Here, we immediately identify two important signifiers of the Partition film; blood, and the mother. The freeze-frame image also invokes the Partition narrative of trauma/violence done to the body [and thereby the unity and sanctity] of the mother/nation. The mother as the link between three men of different religions reflects the idea of the motherland as home and life-giver, and that the blood of every Indian is equally invested in the land, regardless of religious affiliation. This surface reading is commonplace in many patriotic Bollywood films. However, being a Partition film, *Amar Akbar Anthony* goes one step further. I interpret this image as emphasizing the shared origins of the three men, as well as hinting at the idea that each of their religious affiliations are somehow superficial, an artificial construct, a narrative obstacle to overcome by the film’s end.

It is important to note that Desai makes a conscious attempt to portray each character with the same positive traits. In spite of growing up in different religious and social backgrounds, Amar, Akbar, and Anthony are all pious, decent, and honourable men. Equally important is the fact that once the confusion is resolved, there is no talk of reverting back to their original family unit. In his study of Bollywood cinema, Vijay Mishra writes, “The secular can be acceptable provided that the participants finally return

¹⁴ Her name actually means ‘India’.

to their true genealogy (Mishra 177)”. However, in *Amar Akbar Anthony*, this requirement is only partially fulfilled. Although they are reunited with their birth parents and each other, each brother retains their adopted name and religion, which is Desai’s way of affirming that just as a family can grow to incorporate and embrace differences among its members, there is enough room in the national identity for the corporation of multiple faiths, experiences, and histories.

The commitment to secularism espoused in *Amar Akbar Anthony* deteriorated after the fall of Congress, for a number of reasons. With the rise of Islamist movements in India after the Iranian revolution, and the rise of the Hindutva movement in response to the mujahideen movement, violent fundamentalism in India exploded after being relatively sublimated for so long. In addition, cultural globalization rekindled the push for homogeneity, however artificial and forced a construct it may be.

In this chapter, we have seen how Bollywood first addressed Partition trauma and memory. Simply put, the film’s surface plot is an allegory for Partition, which, in turn, serves as a palimpsest for Desai’s critique of the Emergency. My next chapter jumps ahead nearly twenty years. The reason for the large gap is that I do not believe there to have been any significant representation of Partition in Bollywood cinema throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Partition and its tropes were not taken up or addressed again by Bollywood until the early 90s. The specific event to which I credit this reemergence amidst the broader climate of fundamentalism and censorship is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Turning Point – The Ayodhya Film

Since the mid-1980s, the Indian people have been embroiled in an ideological dispute over the national identity, indeed, over the very issue of belonging to the country. The Hindutva movement and fundamentalist Islamic groups have engaged in a series of culture wars, many escalating into violence and destruction. These episodes of communal violence and tension are reminiscent of the attitudes, narratives, and themes surrounding the Partition of India in 1947. Partition was the nation's collective originary trauma, and the erasure and repression of any truly critical or interrogative discourse about the Partition trauma continues to be a matter of great concern, particularly in regards to the nation's cultural texts. Partition literature has been the vanguard in giving a voice to the Partition memory. Indian cinema has hesitantly followed suit, with Partition themes and issues slowly making their way from marginal and middle cinemas to mainstream Bollywood cinema. The most significant leap forward for the Partition film into the mainstream occurred during the mid- to late 1990s. I identify a sequence of events in the early 1990s that I believe had more to do with the strengthening and broadened scope of the Partition film than any other, by influencing advances in the onscreen representation of Partition. These events include the struggle for ownership of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, its demolition in 1992, and the subsequent riots in major cities such as Bombay in early 1993. I refer to these events as the Ayodhya conflict.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the linkages between representations, narratives, and discourses of the Ayodhya conflict and Partition, both in public memory and onscreen. I intend to look at how the conflict developed, who the key actors were, what was at stake for each of them, their contesting claims and source myths and

narratives, and finally, what it all meant for Bollywood and the Partition film. While it took approximately twenty-five years for Partition to be directly addressed onscreen, the Ayodhya conflict became a cinematic topic as early as 1995. The film I use as a case study addresses the issues surrounding the Ayodhya conflict. The 'Ayodhya film' is unprecedentedly vocal and critical, interrogating the myths and propaganda surrounding the conflict. The post-Ayodhya period is significant for the Partition film because the unprecedentedly open representation of the conflict has encouraged the application of the same treatment to the representation of Partition. It is crucial to my study to look into how the Ayodhya film navigates the problems of representing collective trauma, and what this means not only for the representation of Partition, but of remembering and staging national trauma. Urvashi Butalia identifies common discursive, practical, and cognitive codes between Partition and subsequent outbreaks of communal violence (Butalia 276). Although films about the Ayodhya conflict deal with their own issues of representation, I believe that they also serve as a vehicle to address the memory of Partition, wherein critiques "...offer a lapse of time, when the act of transgression has passed into history (Bianchini 5). I will therefore explore the ways in which the themes and narratives of Partition have been palimpsestically mapped onto the Ayodhya conflict, through the use of shared iconography and tropes, the same criticism [although to different degrees] of state institutions and their representatives, and the same traumatic lack of comprehension or cohesion as to the reasons for the conflict.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid, an obscure, ancient mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, and the ensuing riots have the distinction of being remembered as the worst violence in India since Partition, with 1700 dead, and over 5500 injured. In Hindu

mythology, Ayodhya is the birthplace of the god Ram. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Hindu fundamentalists have claimed that the mosque was built on the exact spot where Ram was born. In 1991, a group of historians [Hindu and Muslim] submitted a report to the provincial Bharatiya Janata Party¹⁵ government which stated that there was a lack of any conclusive historical or archaeological evidence of the existence of a spot in Ayodhya hailed as Ram's birthplace anytime before the eighteenth century (Thakur 654). In spite of their findings, on December 2nd, 1992, the mosque was destroyed by a mob of BJP, Vishwa Hindu Parishad¹⁶, and the Shiv Sena¹⁷ supporters. The demolition sparked over three months of rioting in major cities like Bombay and New Delhi. Images and narratives of the violence almost echo those of Partition in 1947, with stories and footage of mobs brandishing weapons and chanting religious slogans, of burning neighbourhoods, of women and children being raped and killed, of Muslims crowding the train stations in a desperate attempt to flee the city, and of government and law enforcement officials fruitlessly pleading for restraint. Leaders of federal and provincial opposition parties, including L.K Advani, President of the BJP, and Bal Thackeray, leader of the Shiv Sena, were directly implicated in the destruction of the mosque and in the Bombay riots. In 1998, the BJP won the federal election and formed a coalition government under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpaye.

Pierre Nora defines history as the way in which modern society organizes the past through the conquest or eradication of memory. Nora states, "If we were able to live within memory, we would not have to consecrate *les lieux de mémoire* in its name (Nora

¹⁵ The Indian People's Party (BJP)

¹⁶ The World Hindu Council, or VHP. Broad-based Hindu nationalist umbrella organization.

¹⁷ The Army of Shiva, a Hindu nationalist group based in Maharashtra.

8)”. He further argues that memory and history are in fundamental opposition, and that the aim of history is “...to suppress and destroy history... not to exalt but to annihilate what has already taken place (Nora 9)”. In order to rewrite and harness history towards its own ends by eradicating pluralistic strands of memory, BJP organizations blocked the release of certain cultural texts [books, films, etc.] about 1947 and the Partition movement, in an effort to wipe out all records of the fact that the movement against the British was a broad-based, secular movement. Rewriting Indian history in communal terms was part of the Hindutva movement’s more overarching goal of ‘Hindu-izing’ all aspects of Indian politics and culture. This struggle to redefine Indian identity involved revising history by categorizing all contradictory facts and narratives as ‘distortions’ or ‘un-Indian’. Historian Sumit Sarkar sums up the case against the Hindutva movement with the following statement:

“...what these people want to bring back... are old-fashioned discredited notions of what history is all about, that is, Indian history is divided neatly into Hindu and Muslim periods, defining periods by the religions of the rulers. So far they have been using history in order to stigmatize Muslims. Now communalism has entered a new phase in which aggressive steps are on to define India as a Hindu nation. As part of this project, they have developed this concept of cultural nationalism, which is based on a reinterpretation of the past... all secular voices have to be marginalized or suppressed (Phillips 3)”.

In terms of the Ayodhya conflict, there are plenty of ruined mosques and temples in Ayodhya, and the Moghul practice of razing temples and replacing them with mosques was fairly common. Yet the Babri Masjid is the only site that has been the source of such intense conflict. Given the significance of the characterization of the god Ram as a Hindu warrior and crusader, I therefore argue that the importance and value of the site does not lie in its religious significance for India’s Hindus and Muslims respectively, but

in its symbolic value for the movement to reclaim Indian national identity as Hindu identity.

Turning to Indian cultural texts and their representations of communal conflict, specifically Partition and the Ayodhya conflict, Gyanendra Pandey observes:

“The Indian writings on Partition were clearly influenced by the public spectacle of arson, murder, rape, and looting that took place on the streets of Delhi, Bombay, and other Indian cities in 1984, 1992-3, and on other occasions during this period: ‘the worst riots since Partition’, as they were described time and time again, in the press and in common conversation (Pandey 5)”.

In films made about both conflicts, we see the mobilization of the same narrative and iconic tropes. One reason for this is that both Partition and the Ayodhya conflict represent the same thing: a threat to India’s secular national identity. The following case study traces a symbiotic relationship between the Partition film and the Ayodhya conflict film. I seek to establish the ways in which the Partition film has benefited from the advances made by the Ayodhya conflict film, as well as identify some of the problems shared by the two types of film, and how these are being addressed. The narrative and visual representation of the demolition and riots bear inherent similarities to the representations of Partition violence. Images in the riot sequences include mobs distinguished by their religious garb, brandishing swords and flaming torches, chanting religious slogans before they descend violently upon crowds of helpless people. Stagings of Partition riots can be found in films like *Gadar* (Anil Sharma, 2001), and *Pinjar*. The release dates of these films are all post-Ayodhya, suggesting that the taboo of depicting Partition violence was somehow mitigated by the resurgence of communal violence in 1992, essentially bringing the nation’s traumatic past headlong into the present.

The first film to directly address the Ayodhya conflict and Bombay riots was *Bombay* (Mani Ratnam, 1995). The first half of the film is a basic ‘Romeo and Juliet’ narrative. Sekhar [Arvind Swamy] and Shaila [Manisha Koirala], a Hindu and a Muslim, fall in love and run away to Bombay and elope. They soon have twin boys, Kamal and Kabir, whom they raise in both the Hindu and the Muslim faiths. The latter half of the film revolves around the outbreak of violence in Bombay following the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The family gets caught in the midst of the violence, and through their eyes, we see the loss of civil order and the descent into chaos.

At the beginning of the film, life in Malanpur and Bombay is notably secular, as the members of different religious communities live peacefully side by side. Signs of communal tension slowly start to creep into the narrative long before the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The Muslims in Malanpur express the fear of losing their homes and status to the Hindu majority given the slightest provocation. When Sekhar’s father goes to confront Shaila’s father over their children’s romance, they end up attacking each other. Shaila’s Muslim neighbours struggle to hold her father back and beg him, “Please don’t anger them... our situation is shaky as it is, don’t give them reason to kick us out of the village”.

The most striking parallel drawn between Bombay and Partition cinema is the common landscape of ruin (Gopalan 58). Both typically begin with a landscape of order and serenity, gradually descending, both narratively and formally, into chaos and disorder. Iconography centers around the theme of rupture and breakage. Dialogue and music [both diegetic and non-diegetic] employ the same rhetoric and metaphor of

breakage, separation, and a lack of comprehension indicative of the psychic break resulting from collective trauma.

The narrative of communal violence does not emerge again until the end of the first half of the film. The scene opens with a long shot of the domes of the Babri Masjid at dawn, with an intertitle reading, "December 6, 1992". The shot is superimposed above the front page of the Times of India, which reads 'Kar Sevaks¹⁸ Destroy Babri Masjid'. The front page fades out as the camera pulls back from the mosque's domes to the barbed wire fence surrounding the monument. This shot is superimposed upon a further succession of newspaper photographs and headlines in various regional languages. The same iconic images occur from page to page. The predominant image is one of the Kar Sevaks standing silhouetted at the top of the highest dome, their fists raised high in the air. There are similar types of iconic, reoccurring images that symbolize the Partition trauma, such as refugee columns, crowded, chaotic train stations, etc. The camera then begins a slow, high-angle, spiraling movement downward over the newspaper pages, signifying a loss of control, breakdown of linearity and order, and descent into mayhem, as the soundtrack's drumbeat dissolves into the screams of the mob, the sounds of crumbling rock, and the clanging of metal against stone.

The scene abruptly cuts to Bombay, around a month later. A Muslim man stands alone in the frame, raises his sword and cries, "Ya'Allah!". This is the cue for the commencement of the first riot sequence, where we cut to an establishing shot of a Muslim mob furiously charging into a marketplace. The police arrive, only to come under attack themselves. The sequence is composed entirely of long and extreme long

¹⁸ 'Holy Workers': self-referential term used by the Hindutva movement

shots, which do not allow for any kind of intimate access to the individual face or expression, of the attackers or the victims. The scene is almost identical to depictions of Partition riots found in *Gadar* and *Pinjar*, both of which were made after *Bombay*, and I suggest here that Mani Ratnam sets a precedent in terms of graphic depictions of sectarian violence in a Bollywood film. The long shots used in the riot scenes are meant to represent the faceless nature of the mob, and the lack of individual significance in such a situation.

There are two more riot scenes in *Bombay*, and each one rises in intensity by the camera moving closer and closer to the individual. The final riot sequence is far more intense and brutal than the first. This sequence is seen through the eyes of the children, Kamal and Kabir, as they are separated from their parents, and must evade the mob by themselves. For the first time, we see close-ups and extreme close-ups of individuals attacking and being attacked. During these shots, and those of people desperately begging for help in finding their loved ones, there is an emerging edge of viciousness in their helplessness, as heightened rage makes the line between assailant and victim increasingly unclear. Throughout all the riot sequences in the film, the same extra-diegetic song, *Rukh ja!* ('Stop!'), plays, where the male singer implores the rioters to stop, to lay down their arms, before they go past the point where God will forgive their actions.

The theme of forced separation is repeated as Sekhar and Shaila are separated first from each other, then from their children. During the final riot sequence, the children are also separated from each other. It is important to note that, in the Partition film, the separations are almost always permanent, and irrevocable. In *Bombay*, however, the

separations are only temporary, as Sekhar and Shaila are reunited with their children in the final scene. The emphasis on separation in the Partition film voices the realization that Partition itself is permanent. However, in *Bombay*, the theme of separation is not used to address the split between two nations, but the domestic sectarian split, which, according to secular ideals, is an aberration of Indian identity.

In the final sequence, the people begin to fight back against the attacking mobs, and secular ideology of Indian identity re-asserts itself. A Muslim woman shields a Hindu woman and her son from their attackers, as she lifts the flap of her burqa from her face and glares at the men defiantly. A Hindu man drags his Muslim neighbour from his burning house, pleading with the mob, "For God's sake, leave him alone". An Imam hurries a group of Hindus to safety inside a mosque. As Sekhar blasts the crowd around him for allowing themselves to be used against each other by self-serving politicians, one by one, weapons are discarded, torches are doused in puddles on the street, and the atmosphere of violence dissipates almost immediately. Amidst various close-ups of hands being grasped in reunion and in aid, Kamal and Kabir are reunited with their parents. Here, the similarities with the Partition film seem to come full circle. Both begin in a diegetic space of secular peace, then descend into communal violence. While the Ayodhya conflict film bears fundamental similarity to the conventions of the Partition film, it is evident that these films take unprecedented license in their interrogation and criticism of institutional forces allegedly responsible for the outbreak of violence, something that the Partition film has only begun to do *after* the Ayodhya conflict. Despite their conventional differences, the Ayodhya conflict film and the Partition film

always close on a reaffirmation of secular ideals, and, to varying degrees, redemption of those caught up in the violence.

In addition to my textual analysis of *Bombay*, I feel it is essential to examine the public's reception of the film, and the controversy surrounding its release. Ratnam faced many of the same obstacles in terms of censorship and radical opposition to his film that characterized the post-Partition era of censorship. Author Lalitha Gopalan, in her detailed study of the *Bombay* controversy, states:

“Bombay... had to contend with the extraordinary powers of the Hindu right in what can only be characterized as a slow erosion of civil society, most evident in the dismantling of the legitimate process of statecraft, which was superseded either by the military and state police forces or by vigilantes. Hence, it comes as no surprise that it was not enough for producers to be granted *carte blanche* by the Board of Censors and police protection during screenings; they had to contend with the organized underworld as well as receive the tacit support of Bal Thackeray, whose power to incite riots is now legendary (Gopalan 26)”.

Indeed, before the film was released to the public, Ratnam had to screen it for Bal Thackeray and the Shiv Sena leadership [no such courtesy was extended to Muslim clergy or political leaders], resulting in the release date being pushed back. After seeing his onscreen alter-ego repent at the film's end, Thackeray insisted, “This is... totally wrong. I never repented (Gopalan 27)”. It was only after Ratnam made the cuts demanded by Thackeray that he received the leader's assurance that he would allow the release to go forward. While the film proved successful at the box-office throughout India, mobs incited riots and disturbances led the police to barricade many theatres, employ bomb-sniffing dogs, and deploy riot squads to monitor screenings. I mention these riots because of parallels that can be drawn between them and the violence of Partition. The nature of the riots, the vigilantism, and the ex-officio censorship employed

by filmmakers all happened in much the same way. Furthermore, the battle lines were drawn down a Hindu/Muslim cleavage. Both sides had their own complaints about the film. Hindu detractors felt offended by the Babri Masjid demolition scenes, as well as that of a Hindu woman being hit with a stray bullet during a riot sequence. Muslim groups strenuously objected to a shot where Sekhar lifts the burqa from Shaila's face, and another where Shaila, in her haste to run into Sekhar's arms, snags her burqa on a tree, tearing it and abandoning it in her haste. The state authorities and police also took offense to scenes of police firing, unprovoked, into the crowds during riots. It is important to note that none of these groups or individuals denied that the nature of the violence or the events as Ratnam presented them were accurate, but found the attempt to recreate them in a public forum unacceptable.

Finally, what I consider to be the most important critique of the film came from those who felt that while Ratnam's film made significant strides in terms of open representation of political issues, it did not go far enough. While I agree with this opinion, one must take into account that there were many cuts made to the film after each round of pre-release screenings, and it is unknown whether Ratnam did not make certain statements in the film due to a disingenuous attempt to appear even-handed, or if he backed down due to outside pressure.

The destruction of the Babri Masjid and subsequent riots marked a turning point in Indian cinema in terms of its representations and staging of national trauma. As a counter-point to the Hindutva movement's attempts to rewrite Indian history and reformulate Indian national identity as Hindu identity, filmmakers began to challenge and criticize the institutional forces that led the nation into widespread sectarian violence.

Using narrative and iconic tropes from the Partition narrative, and layering them over the present-day conflict in Ayodhya, Bollywood cinema has drawn a parallel between the traumatic past and the traumatic present by mapping discourses and narratives of the past onto the present. In the post-Ayodhya period, the Partition film has grown bolder, more direct in its depictions and criticisms, and more challenging towards state-based history. It is encouraging that, unlike after Partition, filmmakers did not have to wait over two decades to address the Ayodhya conflict onscreen. While films like *Bombay* endured their share of controversy leading up to and following their release, their box-office success and critical acclaim supports the view that, in spite of the strongest efforts of the religious nationalist movements, secularism remains the predominant doctrine in Indian politics and culture, and perhaps for the first time, Indian audiences are seeing a more honest, interrogative representation of their socio-political situations, as well as their traumatic history, being depicted onscreen. This indicates an encouraging move away from erasure and silence in dealing with staging national trauma, one that fosters plural narratives, memories, and histories.

Chapter Five: Women and Partition

In the previous chapter, I stated my case for looking at the Ayodhya conflict as a benchmark event in the trajectory of Partition cinema. Films like *Bombay* played a significant role in bringing Partition narratives and iconography to the cinematic forefront. In employing the same narrative and formal strategies, the Ayodhya film led viewers to form a correlation between the events of 1992 and 1947. A case was made for the need to break from traumatic repetition, as filmmakers like Mani Ratnam conveyed the notion that if Partition memory was not addressed in a more open and inclusive forum, the same demons would continue to manifest themselves in subsequent outbreaks of communal violence; essentially, 'Partition' would happen to India again and again until the Indian people made efforts towards filling the gaps in the collective memory.

The final chapter of my study deals with what I identify as the third and current phase of Partition cinema. In the post-Ayodhya Partition cinema, the events of 1947 are represented openly and critically, and the purpose is twofold: one aim of the Partition film is to openly challenge Partition taboos; the other is to draw parallels between the injustices of 1947 and those suffered in the present day that some see as having taken root during Partition. While there are many contentious topics that would suit my purposes, including the issue of government corruption and inefficiency, and military and police complacency and complicity in communal violence, I have chosen to focus upon the issue of violence against women. I have chosen my case study, Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar*, for its dual-edged critique of the treatment of women both in the past and the present, and for its heavy use of the themes and iconography of rupture and

breakage manifested upon the female body, which I believe to be crucial to the development of Partition narratives.

By 2002, the backlash against Hindu fundamentalism and Hindu nationalist parties had helped the Congress party take the government back from the BJP. The economic boom taking off around the country was suddenly far more important than maintaining and exacerbating religious cleavages. In terms of Bollywood cinema, a number of Partition films were released around this time, in the aftermath of yet another military clash with Pakistan. While it is important to note the existence of these films, I have chosen not to include them as case studies because I view these films, such as Anil Sharma's *Gadar* (2001) to be the antithesis of what I believe the goals of the Partition film to be. While they employ the same iconography and language of rupture, these films are undeniably geared towards religious antagonism. The India/Hindu-good, Pakistan/Muslim-bad dichotomy is used for maximum effect, returning to archaic portrayals of Muslims as wild-eyed, bloodthirsty butchers and warmongers, singularly devoted to the destruction of India and the slaughter of 'true' Indians. These films feature Hindu or Sikh characters brutalized and mistreated by Muslims who are essentially one-dimensional caricatures. While a broader examination of Partition cinema must certainly take this short period into account, I feel that it meanders too far from my point of focus, and therefore I have chosen to skip past these films to a period of Partition cinema that is more topical in focus.

The question to ask at the outset of this chapter is why women are so significant to the Partition narrative and iconography. To address this question, it is essential to understand that women were objects of *and* witnesses to Partition violence (Menon 55).

During Partition, as well as subsequent outbreaks of communal violence, women, as a demographic, sustain higher casualties than men. Without delving into statistical reporting, I will simply say that I expand my definition of the term 'casualty' to include victims of murder, rape, and abduction. The threats of rape and abduction are unique to women, therefore increasing the casualty numbers in their demographic. I therefore suggest that women make for more effective representations of the partitioned subject. The crux of my argument with regards to Partition and violence against women comes down to the issue of patriarchal honour. Violence against women during Partition was significantly coded in terms of male honour, and it is no different today. Honour killings continue to occur at alarmingly high rates, despite legislative and police attempts to prevent and punish such crimes. Just as it was too soon to directly address Partition in its aftermath, there is still a danger in addressing contemporary issues of violence against women, as to do so would entail challenging the current power figures and groups, both at the state level and the non-state socio-cultural groups. The Partition narrative is therefore more like a frame narrative which both returns us to history and enables the staging of an otherwise inadmissible present. Films about women during Partition are key because by focusing on the trauma inflicted upon women's bodies, many other issues such as subjectivity, agency, and the construction of the national imaginary, are brought into play (Barencott 15). Films in this vein express a demand for more heterogeneous Partition narratives in order to navigate through contemporary socio-political issues better informed, with fewer gaps in memory and history. With regards to contemporary socio-politics, the abuse of women by the military and by police during subsequent communal violence is still very much taboo, and it is difficult to engage in a frank discussion about

the abuse of women in Indian society without hitting the religious nerve of one community or the other. Hindutva groups, for example, consistently resist reforms aimed at women in the domestic space [eg. Banning child marriage and widow remarriage] because they challenge the traditional notion of female purity through sacrifice and devotion (Mukherji-Leonard 12).

I believe that the most significant erasure of Partition memory has occurred within the realm of female narrative and experience. In her effort to document the stories of women during Partition, Urvashi Butalia came across a history coded by silence (Butalia 100), where men hardly spoke about the experiences of their women, and women were reluctant to speak about themselves, denying that they had anything to say worth hearing. I will draw fairly heavily from Butalia's book, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, because her work supports my own ideas on Partition violence against women and codes of patriarchal honour.

The best starting point for this chapter is the notion that India, as a nation, is coded as female, as observed by numerous references to the 'motherland', as well as female maternal archetypes in Bollywood who personify the traumatic separation of Partition [as cited in my observations on *Mother India*]. I would go further and say that the figure of the woman, not just in Bollywood cinema, but also in the Indian collective psyche, is a symbol of national honour. I find it useful to refer to Butalia's definition of national honour as "... staked on the body of Mother India and therefore, by extension, on the bodies of all Hindu and Sikh women, mothers and would-be mothers. The loss of these women, to men of the 'other' religion, was also a loss to their 'original' families (Butalia 151)".

The 'loss' refers to the still taboo subject of abduction during Partition. During the riots and disorder of Partition, men from opposing religious communities abducted thousands of Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim women and girls. Many were raped and killed. Others were forced to marry their captors and bear their children. It is these women to whom I pay particular attention, as they represent a major challenge to the national imaginary. I have established that women are a symbol of national honour in India. The abduction, sexual violation, and forced conversion of Hindu and Sikh women were therefore seen as a direct attack upon the Hindu male psyche and patriarchal order, and upon the nation itself. The abductions had other consequences with regards to the treatment of women in their own communities. Honour killings were rampant during this period, with the mass murder [most commonly by poisoning or drowning] of women by their male relatives. Mass suicides by women were also a significant occurrence, and I attribute this to the demands of Hindu patriarchy, which insists that all acts of female subjugation such as widow burning, ascetic widowhood, and other forms of ritual suicide, are voluntary acts of devotion and love (Mukherji-Leonard 13).

It is impossible to talk about the Partition abductions without addressing the efforts made by the Indian and Pakistani governments to find and rescue the abducted women after Partition, bringing us from forced separation to forced repatriation. In India, the Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Ordinance of 1949 set a cutoff date of March 1, 1947. No inter-faith marriages or conversions after this point were recognized (Butalia 114), and repatriation squads of soldiers and social workers were sent out to locate abducted women and restore them to their families and their communities. Problematically, the ordinance did not account for pregnant women or children conceived

before the cutoff date. The repatriation effort was an overwhelming failure. Many women were simply not found, either hidden by their captors, or choosing to hide themselves out of shame. Since the ordinance was too vague with regards to children born as a result of the abductions, many women were told they would not be able to take their children back home with them; in many cases, a woman's family would refuse to take her back if she brought her child with her. Women who were returned to their homes were stigmatized and mistreated by their families and communities based on the assumption of miscegenation. Ultimately, most of the victims of abduction simply chose to remain with their captors, acknowledging the impossibility of a full return to their old lives.

Ian Talbot identifies the four characteristics of Partition history as violence, abduction, migration, and resettlement (Talbot 4). My case study in this chapter, Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar*, effectively addresses all of these issues, and is perhaps the best example of the problems of representation facing both women's issues as well as Partition memory. The film is based on the novel of the same name by Amrita Pritam, a Punjabi woman and one of the best-known names in Partition literature. It tells the story of Puro [Urmila Matondkar], a Sikh girl from a wealthy Punjabi family, who is abducted shortly before Partition by a Muslim man, Rashid [Manoj Bajpai].

The opening sequence begins much like many other Partition films, with an atmosphere of idyllic calm suddenly shattered by the onset of a riot. In this case, we open onto an establishing shot of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab. An intertitle establishes the date as August 1946. The static long shot of the temple is supplemented by ambient sounds of rippling from the river, and the sound of Sikh devotionals, which

the viewer assumes is coming from within the temple. However, we then cut to a shot closer inside the town, which reveals the true source of the singing to be a rally of Sikh militants marching orderly through the marketplace. Just as in *Bombay*, a Muslim man cries, “Allah hu’ Akbar!”, kicking off a brutal riot. The riot scene is much bloodier and more graphic than those in *Bombay*. While Mani Ratnam’s shots are characterized by jerky camera movements and unfocused, diffused images, Dwivedi opts for static, focused shots and a rapid cutting pace, resulting in clearer, more unrelenting images of the carnage taking place. While *Bombay* features non-diegetic music in the soundtrack during riot sequences, *Pinjar* amplifies the sounds of hacking, slicing metal coming from swords, daggers, and spears. The final shot in the sequence is a high-angle shot that tracks slowly over piles of dead bodies, mostly women and children. This is a first, in my recollection of Partition films. While there are children present in such violent sequences, the camera generally stops shy of privileging graphic images of dead children. In *Pinjar*, however, the camera insists on an unrelenting focus upon the mangled, bloodied bodies of children murdered in the riot. With the violent sounds of the riot abated, an extra-diegetic song now plays. The song is a musical arrangement of Amrita Pritam’s famous poem, *Ode to Waris Shah*¹⁹.

While the opening sequence sets the stage for the representation of Partition, it is the only time the film deals with the more large-scale implications of the violence. From this point onwards, the plot focuses solely upon Puro and her family. The first few scenes following the riot sequence shows Puro’s family as closely-knit and very happy,

¹⁹ Waris Shah was an ancient Urdu poet from that particular area of the Punjab. Pritam wrote the poem while on a train crossing the new border during Partition. In it, she implores Waris Shah to rise from his grave and witness the damage done to their shared homeland.

as they prepare for Puro's marriage to a young Sikh poet. Through dialogue and musical numbers, it is established that the family functions under the strict but loving authority of Puro's father. The festive atmosphere surrounding the impending marriage is interrupted by a more melancholy scene that speaks directly to the burden of forced separation placed onto women. On the eve of the wedding festivities, Puro's mother sings a lullaby to her baby boy. The song's lyrics speak of how women helplessly move through their lives as the property of various men, and how a son receives all the love and luxury the family can offer, while a daughter simply gets sent away forever to her husband's home. The song implies that once a girl leaves her parents' home, she is no longer a part of their family, but belongs to someone else. The song also foreshadows what happens next, as Puro is abducted the following day. When the news reaches her parents, her father, though saddened, immediately decides that Puro is dead to her family, justifying his stance by saying, "The one whose daughter is kidnapped loses all dignity and self respect". When Puro escapes and returns home a few nights later, her parents turn her away, begging her to consider the damage her presence will cause to her the reputations of her father and brother, and the difficulty the family would face in arranging marriages for her siblings. Puro has no choice but to return to Rashid and marry him. Upon their marriage, Puro is forcibly separated from her own identity, as Rashid insists that she take a Muslim name, Hamida, which he has tattooed onto her arm. The tattooing is a significant footnote to the issue of abducted women, as explained by Andrew Major:

"...hundreds of them had been tattooed on their hands or chests with slogans like 'Pakistan Zindabad'²⁰, or... their names, the names of their abductors, and the dates of their abduction [the abductor's final insult, perhaps, to the opposite community] (Major 68)".

²⁰ 'Long Live Pakistan'.

Puro's tattoo is also important, as it later saves her life when asked for proof of her Muslim status by a would-be-attacker. In a way, the physical stamp of her transformed identity ends up helping her to finally accept and absorb that new identity, as she swears to the man that she is, indeed, a Muslim.

When Partition finally occurs, Puro's village falls on the Pakistani side of the border, forcing yet another separation and transformation of identity upon her. The threat of separation and rupture rears its head one last time when the repatriation squads arrive. By this time, Puro has settled into her new life, and has come to terms with her marriage to Rashid, and to genuinely care for him. In an attack of conscience, Rashid arranges for Puro to meet her brother at the border to be repatriated. However, in the film's final scene, Puro begs her brother not to force her to return with him, pleading, "I have been separated from my home and my family twice already. Please do not ask me to go through it again". By Puro's choosing to stay in Pakistan with Rashid, the film acknowledges the irrevocable rupture of Partition, as well as the burden upon women to endure and absorb the consequences of the separations forced upon them.

As previously stated, *Pinjar*, while set during the Partition of 1947, still resonates throughout contemporary socio-politics. The making of the film stemmed from a renewed interest in the notable literary works on Partition, which in turn was fuelled by a renewed vigor in the debate over women's rights in the context of male honour, both in India and in Pakistan. This brings the Bollywood Partition film to what I believe is the latest phase in its trajectory. An event that was necessary to disguise in years past is now used to disguise critiques of contemporary issues. I would argue that the benefits are

twofold: on one hand, the memory of Partition itself is being addressed more openly, whether in the graphic depictions of violence, or the portrayal of sexual taboos. On the other hand, Partition provides a vehicle for contemporary socio-political critique that is finally acceptable to Indian audiences. I believe that it is because of the advances made by Partition cinema in previous phases that the narrative and memory have been increasingly normalized in the collective psyche, as evidenced by the renewed debate surrounding various aspects of Partition history, as well as a renewed interest in Partition's literary texts, all of which have resulted in an unprecedented grassroots interest in the 'stories' of Partition, rather than the manufactured history.

Conclusion: The Future of Partition Cinema

The Partition of 1947 is considered the originary moment of India as a nation. The paradox of Partition is that it signifies both the collapse of the state as well as the birth of the state (Bianchini 92). Various key issues surrounding the partitioning of the nation and the accompanying violence and upheaval have never been adequately addressed in the public sphere. The institutionalized narrative of Partition has always favoured the cathartic forgetting of a collective trauma over any critical examination of Partition narratives and memory. Historical studies traditionally focus upon the hotly debated causes of Partition and assigning blame, rather than the impact of Partition and its legacy (Talbot 37). However, with the advent of Partition's fiftieth anniversary and the recent rise in sectarian violence, the conventional silence surrounding Partition is changing, with the Indian people relying less on institutionalized, state-based histories and seeking to fill in the gaps in Partition memory through cultural texts such as literature, biography, and film. Bollywood cinema has long been tethered by the censorship imposed by government institutions, as well as the ex officio censorship forced by grassroots religious and social groups. However, the backlash against a period of the worst communal upheaval since Partition has resulted in a loosening of these restrictions, and Bollywood filmmakers now enjoy unprecedented license to explore previously taboo issues.

My study has traced the trajectory of the Bollywood Partition film and the obstacles it has historically faced, from its earliest allegorical phase through to its current phase as a vehicle for contemporary socio-political critique.

While the Partition film has come a long way, I believe that there is still room for growth. The national and communal issues that were a concern in 1947 were still a concern in the 1970s, the 1990s, and are still of great concern today. There are also still significant gaps in the Partition narrative. I predict that the next phase of Partition cinema will focus upon a return to state-based history and myth to engage in a deconstruction of those narratives. There have already been a handful of recent films that turn the spotlight back onto notable figures in the Independence movement and Partition history, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh, approaching the stories of their lives from more personal angles that explore the individuals behind the legends. I would argue that filmmakers will employ the same strategy of seeking the private within the public in order to create a more complete, fleshed out narrative of Independence, of which Partition is essentially the shadowy twin.

Even though Bollywood cinema has made significant progress with regards to more open, direct addressing of socio-political issues, it continues to face the challenges of censorship and institutionalized silence and erasure. India's communal relations are still tenuous at best, and the additional specter of domestic and international terrorism continues to threaten the progress made by Bollywood, as the industry is still fragile in the face of continued sporadic flare-ups in communal violence. However, the industry has shown these instances to be temporary set-backs, and has proved capable of waiting to address an issue or portray an event until it is considered safe to do so. It took over twenty years for this to happen for the Partition film, fifteen years for the 1993 bombing of the Bombay Stock Exchange, and three years for the Ayodhya crisis. The gap continues to shrink. The Bombay commuter train bombings of 2006 were portrayed in

films such as *Mumbai Meri Jaan*²¹ (Nishikant Kamat) as early as 2008, and there are already films in the pipeline portraying the terrorist attacks of November 2008.

Additionally, I believe that the progress seen in Partition cinema will be reflected in the proliferation of Bollywood films about regional socio-political issues, such as Communist tensions in Northeast India, and domestic problems in Kashmir. These issues are part of the legacy of Partition that have previously been ignored by Bollywood, but are now starting to become of interest with films like *Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi*²² (Sudhir Mishra, 2003). I believe that the next step will be to address these issues using the narrative tropes of Partition.

Ultimately, the advances seen in Partition cinema have resulted in the proliferation of films that I would call more 'relevant' to Indian socio-cultural life. I believe that this will lead towards fortifying Bollywood cinema as a cultural text, not just as an archive of popular culture, but as a legitimate alternative archive of historical memory.

²¹ 'Bombay, My Love'.

²² 'A Thousand Such Desires'.

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