



RETHINKING ON PARTITION HISTORY THROUGH THE FILM EARTH BY DEEPA MHETA

Dr. Abhijeet Nanasaheb Pawar

Assistant Professor, Department of English, S. G. M. College, Karad.

Corresponding Author - Dr. Abhijeet Nanasaheb Pawar

Email - adr9795@gmail.com

DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.7757268

Abstract:

The British decision to pull out by Aug. 15, 1947, left a country with no orderly way to deal with the rivalries between Hindus and Muslims, and the partition of India and Pakistan along religious lines led to bloodshed, massacres and, as this film calls it, "the largest and most terrible exchange of population in history." "Earth" is a film that sees that tragedy through the eyes of a group of friends in Lahore, then in India, now in Pakistan. The film is based on the novel Cracking India, by Bapsi Sidhwa, it is said to be partly autobiographical novel, that revolves around a few families of diverse religious backgrounds and their struggle through novel and reorganized by film 'Earth.'

Key words: *Earth, Partition, religion, bloodshed, History etc*

Interestingly what Lukacs regards as a realistic representation of history does not amount to a duplication of language or the mode of the thought and feeling of the past. Hence he has scaped Scott's faithfulness consists in the 'authentic reproduction of the real components of historical necessity, which according to Lukacs, refers to:

...the complex interactions of concrete historical circumstances in their process of transformation, in their interaction with their concrete human beings, who have grown up in these circumstances, have been very variously influenced by them, and who act in an individual way

according to their personal passions.(Lukacs 58- 59)

Partition of India was one of the most important historical events of the 20th century. In the ferocious massacres that followed at least one million Hindus and Muslims lost their lives. Hundreds of thousands of children were lost and abandoned; between 75,000 and 1,00,000 women were raped and abducted apart from the families that were torn apart. A body of literature was thus born that gave voice to the traumatic realities of Partition, the disillusionment and the psycho logical trauma. These writers not only reject religion as the cause of the separation; they also highlight the composite culture of united India and invoke the symbols of

unity and humanism observed by the masses even during times of such horrific violence.

The literary reaction that Partition received, from Saadat Hasan Manto to Bapsi Sidhwa, from Rahi Masoom Reza to Kamleshwar, and from Khushwant Singh to Shashi Tharoor during regular intervals in the last millennium, in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, makes it not merely a political upheaval, but a social and psychological one too. They uncover the complicated ways in which the politics of Partition entered into people's consciousness; how the Pakistan movement split families on ideological lines and created fears and uncertainties. These narratives are dominated by nostalgia and feelings of exile felt on both sides of the border; they effectively narrate the Partition-induced issues of refugees and the displacement and anguish of the women abducted. The film based on the partition novel also uncovered the partition turmoil and open secret sides of history in cinematic effect imbibe growing tolerance, nationalism, cultural mixture, problem of unsettlement etc.

Earth is a 1999 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film romance drama film directed by Deepa Mehta. It is reconstructed by Bapsi Sidhwa's novel, *Cracking India* (1991), organized during the 1947 partition of India. Earth is the second installment of Mehta's Elements trilogy, preceded by *Fire* (1996) and

followed by *Water* (2005). The story is set in Lahore (now the capital of Pakistani Punjab) in the time period directly before and during the partition of India in 1947 at the time of Indian independence.

A young girl with polio, Lenny (Maia Sethna), narrates the story through the voice of her adult self (Shabana Azmi). She is from a wealthy Parsi family who hope to remain neutral to the rising tensions between Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims in the area. She is adored and protected by her parents, Bunty (Kitu Gidwani) and Rustom (Arif Zakaria), and cared for by her Ayah, named Shanta (Nandita Das). Both Dil Navaz, the Ice-Candy Man (Aamir Khan), and Hassan, the Masseur (Rahul Khanna) are in love with Shanta. Shanta, Dil, and Hassan are part of a small group of friends from different faiths (some of whom work for Lenny's family) who spend their days together in the park. With partition, however, this once unified group of friends becomes divided and tragedy ensues.

It's 1947 and the borderlines between India and Pakistan are being drawn. A young girl witness's tragedy as her ayah (nanny) is caught between the love of two men and the rising tide of political and religious violence. The movie opens in Lahore of 1947 before India and Pakistan became independent. It is a cosmopolitan city, depicted by the coterie of working class friends who are from different religions. The rest of the movie

chronicles the fate of this group and the maddening religious that sweeps even this city as the partition of the two countries is decided and Lahore is given to Pakistan. England, having colonized India at its leisure, granted it independence with unseemly haste. Even its most outspoken nationalists were taken aback when Lord Mountbatten, the British viceroy, unexpectedly announced that the date for independence was a few months, not a few years, and in the future. The British decision to pull out by Aug. 15, 1947, left a country with no orderly way to deal with the rivalries between Hindus and Muslims, and the partition of India and Pakistan along religious lines led to bloodshed, massacres and, as this film calls it, "the largest and most terrible exchange of population in history". "Earth" is a film that sees that tragedy through the eyes of a group of friends in Lahore, then in India, now in Pakistan. There are Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsees, even a Christian or two. They have lived side-by-side since time immemorial, and the more idealistic think that situation can continue. But as India has proved, along with Northern Ireland, the Middle East and Yugoslavia, many members of all faiths consider it no sin to murder a non-believer. The movie is about a young, brace legged, eight year old Parsee girl named Lenny, whose beautiful nanny, Shanta is admired by all the men in a circle of friends. She slowly comes to love Hasan, a masseur, who is Muslim.

She likes, but does not love, Dil, known as "Ice Candy Man".

Her life is pleasant in a wealthy Parsee household ruled by Lenny's kind mother and officious father. When a train of Muslims arrives at the local depot and all the passengers are found murdered, the various sects turn against each other, and the city is soon aflame. For Lenny, the trouble first appears in her Lahore home when a quarrel erupts between Mr. Singh, a Sikh neighbor and Mr. Rogers, a British Inspector General of Police, who have come to dine with her parents. Bitter words metamorphose into slogan shouting mobs and arson. Angry Hindus storm through Lahore one day, and angry Muslims the next. Still, it is all far enough away from Lenny's uneasy but untouched home where her mother, Bunty, teaches her to waltz and Ayah's crew of admirers continue to meet in the park as before. The once charming Ice Candy Man turns into a near madman, one of the many roaming the streets of Lahore with vengeance and murder on their minds. The Muslim Masseur, Hasan, the only voice of reason amongst Shanta's admirers, implores the group of friends to "stand by each other". A love affair between him and Shanta, blossoms amidst the carnage and Lenny is privy to this fragile relationship between a Muslim and a Hindu. A film which gracefully establishes the beauty of peace and crudely depicts the tragic loss of it, Earth concludes that the most painful kind

of betrayal is that which occurs within the family.

This story revolves around a few families of diverse religious backgrounds, namely, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Parsi, located in Lahore, British India. While the Parsi families, a known minority in present day India, are prosperous, the rest of the families are shown as struggling to make a livelihood. Things change for the worse during 1947, the time the British decide to grant independence to India, and that's when law and order break down, and chaos, anarchy, and destruction take over, resulting in millions of deaths, and millions more rendered homeless and destitute. In this particular instance, Shanta is a Hindu maid with the Sethna (Parsi) family, who is in love with Hassan, a Muslim, while Dil Navaz loves Shanta, and wants her to be his wife, she prefers Hassan over him. This decision will have disastrous effects on everyone concerned, including the ones involved in smuggling Hindus across the border into India.

The year 1947, Earth is shown from the perspective and memories of an eight year old Parsee girl Lenny. In the film it is said by one of the main characters: "Hindu, Mussalman or Sikh, we're all bastards. All beasts. Like that caged lion which scares Lenny baby lying in wait for the cage to open." A cage, whose opening frees the evils of murder, loot and kidnappings. In the film the

opening of the cage is depicted with the Britishers leaving India and therewith causing tensions between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Between these religious groups stands a Parsi family, who has to see how their friends are either fleeing or being killed. In all this hatred the tragedy of the Hindu servant Shanta is embedded, who is equally loved by Dilnawaz and Hasan. These three characters provide a reflection of a maddening society, where friends become enemies and are even prepared to kill each other.

References:

1. Chindhade, Shirish. Partition Literature. Ed. Mehta Book Sellers, Kolhapur, 2019
2. Lukacs, George. "The Historical Novel." trans. Hannah and Stanly Mitchell, London: Merlin Press, 1962
3. Naik, M. K. History of English Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2010 Sidhwa, Bapsi. Cracking India, Milkweed Editions 1991, U.S., 1992, India;
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z2-EXkFfEY>
5. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_\(1998_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_(1998_film))
6. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0150433>
7. <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/earth-1999>