



SITES OF MATERIAL MEMORY AND THE PARTITION

Sridatta Nirjharinee

Ph. D Scholar

Gangadhar Meher University

Abstract

It is common knowledge that the Partition led to one of history's deadliest upheavals and most horrifying chapters. These impolite behaviours mirrored the patriarchal culture's view of women as objects of honour. Women were positioned as objects of possession and means of communication for retaliation in partition violence between opposing groups of men. While villages were pillaged and set on fire across the border, women were tortured and disfigured, and trains crossing the border were discovered to be filled of dismembered bodies.

The body of a woman has been explored in relation to a greater national concept in the Partition narrative. The idea of "woman as nation" has really become a cliché in Partition research. However, this essay will look at the materials that were carried during the Partition and the significance of those mundane objects. This study will draw on Arjun Appadurai's "The Thing Itself", *The Social Life of Things* and Brown's "Thing Theory" to read short stories like "Khol Do" by Saadat Hassan Manto, "Dear Khatija" by M.G. It will employ the theory of Material Memory and Thing Theory to study the violence against women during the partition.

Key Words:

Material Memory, Partition fiction, Thing Theory, Objects

Introduction:

Materials have the power to carry people into other realms. These memories bind a person to a period of time they have never experienced since they provide information about our history, culture, traditions, way of life, language, etc. The third and fourth generations fall into the category of those who don't bear the weight of experience but instead relive the moment by placing it within the context of a longer past. Even if one is not directly impacted, it is still necessary to remember our history, and one of the most significant events in our history is the Partition. Also, gazing backwards through items is less traumatic than travelling straight down that alley of tragic recollection. An object serves as a trigger for memory and stores information. The refugees' possessions that they transported to the other side of the border had absorbed memories of their home country. These items serve as a reminder of their history and a connection to both pleasant and painful memories.

Material memory is the ability to recall the past using items or things. Several people who crossed the border didn't have much time to pack their stuff, so they brought only what they felt they would need, such as cooking cutlery to survive, jewellery to sell for cash, swords and knives to defend themselves from assaults, etc. These items were not given any attention for a very long period for a various reasons. Possibly because people were so preoccupied with surviving that they forgot that these items could help them return to their happy place, or because they were locked in trunks and cabinets so that no one could steal them because of their monetary value, or because their mundaneness was not given any consideration. Nonetheless, given their longevity and ability to withstand the test of time and place, these items deserve to be honoured. Some items may be centuries old, so these items ought to be preserved and honoured because of the amount of history and memories they contain. Materials can be linked to important places and events, which in turn elevates the significance of the corresponding artefacts. Despite the fact that things are inanimate, memories and tales may give them life. When the thing is seen, handled, or even later remembered, these materials produce the memories and situation that they have absorbed.

Material is the means of getting there if memory is the destination. These items have a personality and voice of their own as a result of the memories they hold. If not entirely, then at least partially, these items enable others to connect with the survivors' recollections. A human can frame an object's past and present existence through interpretation by simply gazing at it. In this way, an object might take out the trauma and briefly transcend the tarnished histories it has come to stand in through narrative interaction.

As a result, while dealing with traumatic historical events, artefacts can act as sites of insight and ethical engagement rather than remaining quiet witnesses. So, it is necessary to be able to see artefacts as more than just things from the past because it is important in circumstances of trauma.

Many people were forced to leave their own countries as a result of partition and move to other countries where they were treated as foreigners. They had a traumatic mental displacement in addition to their physical displacement. The survivors experienced a sense of otherness and had to start everything over since moving from one area to another permanently upsets or alters the identity. Although not everyone survived the Partition, those who did, according to interviewees, were able to start a new life and forge a new identity in a foreign nation that they made their own. Some of these people were forced to remain as refugees in the camps in these other countries after being uprooted from their own countries, sharing lodging and food with other survivors. They had to go to a distant city where they had to start a new life because they had become strangers in the city they formerly called home. They were left without a job, house, money, or a future and had to fight for their lives. They made every effort to provide for their family and stay alive. Many people were forced to abandon their comfortable and affluent lifestyles in order to survive. They were clueless about their new surroundings and their residence. There were other refugee camps, such as Kingsway Camp and Purana Qila, as well as tents in the lines of Edward, Outram, Hudson and Reeds. The survivors' homes for a considerable amount of time were these camps.

Former friends and neighbours turned into Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians and began murdering one another. In the name of religion, people have slaughtered one another. Family who had for generations occupied the same land suddenly discovered themselves on the wrong side of the border. Individuals who had previously dined and rejoiced with people of various religions now found themselves on the outside. These difficult questions were never resolved and will never be resolved. Problems affected both those who migrated and those who stayed behind. Many found it difficult to leave their hometowns and leave the country because those places had been a big part of their identities for so long. The elder generations suffered the most because after living in their original country for half of their life, they were abruptly forced to leave and migrate away from what they regarded their birthplace. Nonetheless, other people remained because they were unable to leave the home they had made for themselves. The same is true for the items that were left behind; they are just as important as those that were carried across.

Due to the nature of memory, we frequently forget things after a prolonged period of time, if not entirely. Then, all that is left are the slivers of those memories. After such a lengthy period since Partition, this is what occurred. Because of their obligations, the stress of survival, and the need to improve circumstances for themselves and their families, these survivors frequently had to set those memories aside. We put our attention on the present and future in these times and ignore the past because we are in a race for survival. And this aids people in getting over the trauma, grief, and memories associated with Partition.

We experience both happiness and grief through memories, and the item itself contains both. Consequently, as these artefacts re-activate their memories, the survivors experience the emotional roller coaster of their past while talking about them and relive all its nuances. The memories associated with the objects give them a life; the objects themselves have no history or existence. Without even realising it, these survivors transport these memories across the border, and by speaking or being interviewed, they pass through the torment of remembering and forgetting. Several people even moved across in the hope that they might one day be able to return to the land they had left behind. The items brought back memories of their lives on the other side, their travels, their survival tales, and everything that had happened both before and after Partition. This demonstrates how even the simplest objects have the power to transport you back in time.

When they had little time or room to do so, it is quite intriguing to observe what people brought with them, as these artefacts link them to the location they left behind. The reasons for choosing that specific item may be various, but the things are even more special and significant than they initially appear to be because of these unknowable reasons. When we relocate, we bring that place with us in the form of traditions we uphold, dietary preferences, ways of living, etc. For those who have crossed borders, the items and memories hold a special significance because they serve as a direct link to their past and the place they once belonged. . Because people did not want the next generation to experience the agony and bitterness of partition, the topic of partition was never discussed openly for a very long period. They constantly work to persuade the younger generation that Partition was normal, despite the fact that it wasn't because of a number of factors, including the need to protect and care for the family.

Objects are democratic places capable of absorbing memory and cross-border relations. It is possible for memories to be selective, making forgetting or ignoring them a necessary component of moving on with life just as crucial to survival. The younger generation has the weakest ties to the partition, and these ties will weaken with time. Thus, it is critical to maintain contact with these memories and build a bridge between generations so that they can continue to be connected to one of the most significant periods in our nation's history.

Memory is not a chronological process, so numerous generations must be involved. To keep them alive, it needs to be continually prodded. These items are an external intervention that prompts memories that were previously pushed back to the surface. These artefacts capture not only the bloodshed of Partition but also life before it, demonstrating how people used to coexist peacefully in the same nation before the riots broke out. Many things, including styles, tastes, traditions, languages, methods of life, and others have changed with the passing of time, but these items transport us back to our true history, and it is always beneficial to be aware of our past.

In terms of memory, remembering and forgetting are significant. In order to live in their new environment, the survivors had to let go of their past and move on. Due to the fact that discussing their Partition experiences brought back the misery they had previously experienced, people were reluctant to discuss it. Therefore, erasing those memories was just as crucial as recalling them. Partition

was the dark side of Independence since it resulted in mass murder, the kidnapping of women, and the migration of millions of people across the border. Since they are the recollections of actual people who experienced Partition, the oral histories of the survivors are just as significant as conventional history. History is replete with information, but it ignores the emotions and suffering of people. These writers have worked hard to preserve it through the interviews because the human memory is brittle and not everything can be remembered. As a result, it will go on forever. We are now a part of their history, even though we haven't personally experienced Partition. They confront these terrible memories in order to move past them since doing so is necessary to begin the process of resolving and later forgetting because it is crucial to accept the traumatic events of the past.

One of the most significant items that people crossed borders with were photographs, which served as a nice reminder of the past for the survivors. When it comes to photography, images are likewise items that can be gathered and kept for years. Since images are accessible replicas of reality, they imbue experiences into them just like other objects do. Photographs are records of previously existing and lived moments. Since photographs reflect reality, they have a closer relationship to observable reality. People draped Pashmina shawls and Baghs which they carried while leaving their home behind. Just like Sakina's dupatta, these pieces of fabrics can be considered as epitome of memory. When people left their homes behind, the only things they carried with them were the objects which took them back to the memory space which reminded them off the lost land and home.

Jewellery in Indian culture has a symbolic meaning. They have significant ethnic and religious implications, particularly at weddings. Jewellery worn by the bride is a symbol that she will marry into her husband's family. They are a part of the ritual purification before she joins the large family of her future husband. In "Dear Khatija", the letters play a very important role in invoking memory of Laxmi. Through the letters, we got to know about the bond between Laxmi and Khatija who were friend before the Partition, but were separated and displaced due to that.

"today's gift is tomorrow's commodity. Yesterday's commodity is tomorrow's found art object. Today's art object is tomorrow's junk. And yesterday's junk is tomorrow's heirloom." (15)

Anything and everything is capable of moving from a commodity to the singularity and back, according to Arjun Appadurai. Slaves who were formerly bought and sold as property can eventually become humanised, personified, and reenchanting by being infused with humanity. But in the Lajwanti, women have fully embraced the idea that they are nothing more than objects to be owned. Imagine the agony of being abducted, taken to a foreign country, and repeatedly raped over a period of months or possibly years. These women eventually succeed in getting home, but when they do, they are considered as mere embarrassments because they couldn't defend their honour or commit suicide. Humanity, whose defining characteristic is each person's capacity to logically choose and pursue her own goals, is defied by the treatment of women's bodies as objects. A being endowed with humanity is capable of making moral decisions and coming up with plans to recognise and advance its value. People are special because of their humanity. It distinguishes them from both animals and non-living things. Humans have a sense of dignity that is lacking in things and animals since they are different from other species in this way.

Manto's writings portray the traumas and violence endured by the typical man during the Partition of the subcontinent, but not via a sovereign head of state, but rather through individuals who wield some semblance of authority and influence over others. Men who benefit from the patriarchal framework of society, which gives them dominance and authority over women, and who thus have an edge over women. The turmoil and savagery that the regular people had to endure during the division are represented by the character Khol Do. This is the story of Sakina, a young girl who was abducted, then sexually molested by both her abductors and her rescuers. Finally, her father discovers her in a traumatised state at a hospital. There is also a hint of the historiographer's suppression of the voices of women in this passage. Through her gestures, Sakina gives voice to the numerous women who suffered as a result of the atrocities carried out during this uprising. Sakina's gesture provides voice to these women, who were now bearing the brunt of the division's pandemonium, who, if they had not done so, would have been hushed and therefore lost to history. Sakina's "dupatta" was just an inanimate object, but it made him think of her, and that was all that was left of her before she disappeared. Several types of repressive power are utilised against Sakina, and they all have the same goal: to harm her. She is first and foremost an oppressed victim of the men who raped her. "Khol Do" also looks at the treatment of women who immigrated to their "respective" countries, both by their adversaries and by those who were supposed to be on their side. Sakina, a Muslim girl, is portrayed in the story as being repeatedly assaulted by men of her own race and religion in addition to Hindu and Sikh men. It is necessary to look at this skewed nationalism, where the defender turns into the predator and where everyone is struck by the collective crazy. Manto explains how the guys who were viewed as the protectors of national pride and honour were the ones who succumbed to bestiality and insanity.

The writers of the collection *The Social Life of Things* look into the social and cultural settings in which products are purchased and sold in both the present and the past. The essays focus on culturally defined trade components and socially regulated processes of circulation to show how people value goods and how things add value to social ties. By presenting things as though they have social lives, the authors provide a novel viewpoint on how value is externalised and sought after. They examine an extensive range of goods, from human relics to oriental carpets, to demonstrate that the logic underpinning everyday economic life is not as dissimilar from that which explains the trade in exotic goods and that the distinction between modern economics and simpler, more distant ones is less clear than previously thought. The editor argues in his prologue that beneath the seeming infinity of human aspirations and the seeming diversity of material forms are intricate but specific social and political structures that regulate trade, desire, and taste. While the women's bodies during Partition were handled with the highest lust, inhumanity, and no regard as if they were merely non-living objects, we see that in these essays, the objects are treated as being of societal value.

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