



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**Representing Partition 1947: Orientalist Narratives, Post-Colonial
Memory and Trauma in South Asian Films**

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Representing Partition 1947: Orientalist Narratives, Post-Colonial Memory
and Trauma in South Asian Films

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

The Partition of the Indian Sub-continent in 1947 remains one of the most violent and transformative events in South Asian history, marked by communal violence, mass displacement, and enduring psychological trauma. This thesis examines the cinematic representation of Partition through the intersecting frameworks of Orientalism, postcolonial memory, and trauma. It analyses *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017), while addressing a gap in existing scholarship by demonstrating that representations of Partition in cinema are shaped not only by historical memory, but also by ideological formations rooted in colonial discourse. The study employs qualitative textual film analysis and draws on Edward Said's concept of Orientalism alongside psychoanalytic approaches to trauma and memory in order to examine narrative structure, character positioning, and visual form. The analysis demonstrates that each film constructs Partition through a distinct ideological and aesthetic lens: *Earth* foregrounds psychic fragmentation through a child-centred perspective; *Train to Pakistan* emphasises communal violence and the disintegration of social cohesion; *Partition* explores moral injury and unresolved memory; and *The Viceroy's House* frames Partition through elite political narratives that privilege colonial authority. Across these films, trauma is articulated through cinematic strategies such as fragmentation, repetition, symbolism, and shifting perspective. The thesis argues that representations of the 1947 Partition are shaped by the interaction between trauma and Orientalist discourse, revealing how postcolonial memory is mediated through enduring colonial legacies. By bringing Postcolonial Theory and Trauma Studies into analytical dialogue, the thesis positions cinema as a critical site through which historical violence is interpreted, contested, and ideologically reframed within South Asian cultural discourse.

Keywords: Partition 1947, Orientalism, Postcolonial Memory, Trauma Studies, South Asian Cinema, Film Analysis

***Representasi Partition 1947: Naratif Orientalis, Ingatan Pascakolonial dan Trauma
dalam Filem Asia Selatan***

ABSTRAK

*Peristiwa Pemisahan India pada tahun 1947 merupakan antara peristiwa paling tragik dalam sejarah Asia Selatan serta menjadi titik perubahan penting dalam pembentukan sejarah dan memori kolektif di rantau tersebut. Peristiwa ini bukan sahaja mencetuskan keganasan antara komuniti dan pemindahan penduduk secara besar-besaran, malah meninggalkan trauma psikologi yang berpanjangan. Tesis ini meneliti representasi sinematik peristiwa Pemisahan melalui kerangka Orientalisme, memori pascakolonial, dan trauma. Kajian ini memberikan tumpuan kepada empat filem, iaitu *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999), *Partition* (2007), dan *The Viceroy's House* (2017). Secara khusus, tesis ini mengisi jurang dalam keserjanaan sedia ada dengan menunjukkan bahawa representasi Pemisahan dalam sinema dibentuk bukan sahaja oleh memori sejarah, tetapi juga oleh struktur ideologi yang berakar dalam wacana kolonial. Bagi mencapai tujuan tersebut, kajian ini menggunakan analisis tekstual filem secara kualitatif dengan menggunakan konsep Orientalisme oleh Edward Said serta pendekatan psikoanalitik terhadap trauma dan memori. Analisis ini tertumpu pada struktur naratif, pembinaan watak, dan bentuk visual bagi menjelaskan cara makna sejarah dibentuk, diungkapkan, dan ditafsirkan dalam teks filem. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa setiap filem membentuk representasi Pemisahan melalui lensa ideologi dan estetika yang berbeza. *Earth* menonjolkan keretakan psikologi akibat trauma melalui perspektif kanak-kanak; *Train to Pakistan* menekankan keganasan antara komuniti serta keruntuhan kesepaduan sosial; *Partition* meneliti trauma moral dan memori yang berpanjangan;*

manakala The Viceroy's House membingkaikan Pemisahan melalui naratif politik golongan elit yang cenderung mengutamakan autoriti kolonial. Secara keseluruhan, trauma dalam filem-filem ini diungkapkan melalui strategi sinematik seperti keterpecahan, pengulangan, simbolisme, dan perubahan sudut pandang. Tesis ini menghujahkan bahawa representasi Pemisahan 1947 terbentuk melalui interaksi antara trauma dengan wacana Orientalisme, sekali gus memperlihatkan bahawa memori pascakolonial terus dibentuk oleh legasi kolonial yang berterusan. Dengan menghubungkan Teori Pascakolonial dan Kajian Trauma dalam satu kerangka analisis, tesis ini menegaskan bahawa sinema berfungsi sebagai medium penting untuk mentafsir, mempertikai, dan membingkai semula keganasan sejarah dalam wacana budaya Asia Selatan.

Kata kunci: *Pemisahan India 1947, sinema Asia Selatan, Orientalisme, memori pascakolonial, trauma, representasi filem*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction of the Study

This research examines the cinematic depictions of the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent, the historical region comprising present-day Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh which witnessed one of the most traumatic ruptures of the twentieth century. The 1947 Partition produced mass displacement, communal violence, and cultural fragmentation, themes that continue to shape South Asian historical memory and aesthetic representation. Among the most influential cinematic portrayals of this moment are *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017). Despite their varied production contexts, narrative structures, and ideological orientations, these films collectively depict the suffering, dislocation, and existential crises endured by communities across the Sub-continent.

This study conceptualises these crises as a postcolonial dilemma: a persistent condition shaped by colonial rule and manifested through representational patterns that simultaneously traumatised and exoticised the Sub-continent. The selected films frequently essentialize South Asian identities portraying characters as helpless victims, exoticised women, or violent men, thereby reducing complex social realities into simplified archetypes. These portrayals reflect not only traumatic experiences of violence and displacement but also the residue of colonial discourses embedded in cultural memory. Drawing on Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism*, the study argues that such cinematic constructions reveal how colonial attitudes, paternalism, sarcasm, and racial superiority

continue to frame the Sub-continent as culturally inferior or inherently chaotic. These victimised and exoticised Others internalize trauma in ways that shape their interpersonal relationships, agency, and social positioning.

The analysis further examines how both Western and Eastern gazes operate within Partition cinema itself. In *The Viceroy's House*, for instance, the British colonial gaze constructs the Sub-continent through hierarchies of civility and control, while in *Earth* and *Train to Pakistan*, local gazes reproduce internalised fears, prejudices, and communal anxieties. Likewise, *Partition* (2007) reveals how cross-cultural encounters generate tension between inherited colonial ideologies and indigenous self-perceptions. By analysing these dynamics across the four films, the study exposes the layered contradictions embedded in contemporary portrayals of Partition, contributing to broader scholarly debates on cultural authenticity, power relations, identity formation, trauma, and the global image of the Sub-continent.

Current research reveals a notable gap in Partition film studies. While some scholars argue that Partition cinema often side-lines trauma in favour of national or neoliberal narratives (Mehta, 2023), the others focus largely on post-memory and intergenerational transmission (Ali et al., 2025). Tigga (2025) examines psychological trauma in *Earth* and *Train to Pakistan* but does not incorporate Orientalism into the analysis. This dissertation addresses these gaps by applying content analysis to explore how cinematic narratives essentialize identities within colonial and postcolonial structures.

Filmic representations of Partition emerged after extensive literary explorations of the 1947 division. The linguistic, political, psychological, and cultural consequences of Partition remain visible across South Asian visual media. Themes of independence,

decolonisation, exploitation, and trauma frequently recur in these portrayals (Sengupta, 2020). British colonial rule, first exercised through the East India Company and later under the Crown after 1857, subjected local populations to systemic humiliation, racial hierarchies, and entrenched feelings of inferiority. As Said (1978, 2014) argues, Orientalism legitimised colonial domination by depicting colonised societies as irrational, despotic, or backward. These patterns of representation are relevant not only to colonial archives but also to contemporary films that revisit Partition.

Banerjee-Dube claims (2015) that the East India Company's control depended heavily on categorising and codifying "Oriental" subjects, a framework still useful for analysing cinematic representations. In this dissertation, Orientalism is therefore used to identify how British colonial attitudes are reproduced or challenged within the selected films, whether through dismissive remarks, unequal power relations, or the portrayal of colonised populations as inherently vulnerable.

The enduring influence of these colonial legacies persisted long after independence. Scholars such as Ohemeng (2022) and Wu (2024) argue that newly independent states inherited administrative structures, bureaucratic hierarchies, and cultural norms rooted in colonial governance. Although some infrastructural developments were introduced under colonialism, the psychological costs were profound. Trauma emerged as a central consequence. Herman (2022), Van der Kolk (2021) and Williams (2023) describe trauma as the imprint of overwhelming experiences that disrupt identity, memory, and emotional regulation. In Partition, trauma manifested through war-related violence, communal conflict, forced migration, sexual assault, child maltreatment, and domestic fragmentation.

Women suffered disproportionately. More than 75,000 women were abducted, raped, or forcibly converted (Talbot & Singh, 2009), making gendered trauma a defining element of Partition's historical impact. Elm et al. (2014) argue that film preserves both collective and individual trauma, while Butalia (1998) highlights the fragmented and often silenced memories of survivors. Yet despite this centrality, cinematic trauma remains significantly under examined in academic scholarship (Sarkar & Mukherjee, 2020).

This dissertation therefore explores trauma across both pre-Partition and post-Partition contexts. Colonial trauma existed long before 1947, embedded in racialised hierarchies and everyday humiliations. This research uses Said's Orientalism to interpret these power dynamics, postcolonial theory to analyze continuing colonial legacies, and Freud's psychoanalytic framework to understand psychological trauma created by violence and displacement. Across *Train to Pakistan*, *Earth*, *Partition*, and *The Viceroy's House*, the films depict family dissolution, migration, loss, and intergenerational psychological scars, demonstrating the long-term effects of colonialism and Partition. Seventy-five years after independence, these traumatic and colonial legacies remain deeply embedded in South Asian consciousness. By drawing on Said and Freud, the study examines how Western colonial narratives continue to shape distorted images of the "Orient," and how trauma persists across generations. Produced by South Asian, British, Canadian, and American filmmakers, the selected films provide diverse yet interconnected portrayals of identity, memory, and historical rupture.

1.2 Background of the Study

The Partition of the Indian Sub-continent in 1947 remains one of the most consequential and traumatic events of the twentieth century. The division of British India

into two independent nation-states, India and Pakistan, resulted in one of the largest forced migrations in human history, accompanied by communal violence, mass displacement, and profound psychological and social disruption. Scholars estimate that nearly fifteen million people were uprooted, over one million lost their lives, and tens of thousands of women were abducted or subjected to sexual violence (Jha, 2018; Butalia; 1998). The effects of Partition extend far beyond its immediate historical moment, continuing to shape political relations, cultural identities, and collective memory across South Asia.

Extensive historical and literary scholarship has examined Partition as a political, social, and humanitarian catastrophe. Historians such as Jalal, Talbot, and Wolpert have analysed its causes, consequences, and long-term implications for nation formation and communal relations. Literary scholars have explored Partition narratives in fiction, memoirs, and oral histories, foregrounding themes of loss, displacement, silence, and trauma. More recently, interdisciplinary research has turned attention to the psychological dimensions of Partition, highlighting how trauma has been transmitted across generations through memory, silence, and cultural narratives (Hirsch, 2019). Despite this rich body of work, visual and cinematic representations of Partition have received comparatively less sustained theoretical engagement, particularly from an integrated postcolonial and trauma-based perspective.

Cinema occupies a crucial position in shaping public memory and historical consciousness. As a mass medium, film possesses a unique capacity to translate historical events into emotionally resonant narratives, thereby influencing how societies remember and interpret the past. South Asian cinema especially Bollywood has produced a substantial corpus of films engaging with Partition, including *Train to Pakistan* (1998),

Earth (1999), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017). Existing film scholarship has often focused on narrative structure, historical accuracy, or nationalist themes in these films. However, fewer studies have critically examined how such films reproduce, negotiate, or challenge colonial representational frameworks, particularly Orientalist narratives inherited from British imperial discourse.

The persistence of colonial legacies provides an essential context for understanding cinematic representations of Partition. British colonial rule in the Indian Sub-continent, which formally ended in 1947, left behind deeply embedded political, administrative, and cultural structures that continue to influence postcolonial societies. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism (1978) offers a valuable lens for analysing how colonial power operated through representation, constructing the "Orient" as inferior, irrational, and culturally static. Scholars have demonstrated that Orientalist discourse did not disappear with decolonisation but continues to shape postcolonial cultural production, including film, through stereotypical depictions of colonised subjects, gendered hierarchies, and narratives of civilisational deficiency (Said, 2014). Yet, the specific ways in which Partition films engage with Orientalist narratives either by reproducing them or attempting to subvert those remains underexplored.

Alongside postcolonial representation, trauma theory has emerged as a key framework for analysing the psychological and cultural aftermath of historical violence. Drawing on Freudian psychoanalysis and later developments in trauma studies, scholars conceptualise trauma as an experience that overwhelms an individual's capacity to process memory and emotion, often resurfacing through repetition, silence, and fragmented narratives (Herman, 2022; Hirschberger, 2018). Partition generated multiple and

intersecting forms of trauma, including psychological distress, communal violence, war-related suffering, sexual assault, child maltreatment, domestic violence, and forced displacement. Feminist historians have particularly emphasised the gendered nature of Partition trauma, highlighting how women's suffering has often been marginalised or symbolically manipulated in nationalist narratives (Mubarki, 2017).

Recent scholarship on post-memory further underscores the continuing relevance of Partition in contemporary South Asian culture. Hirsch's (2019) concept of post-memory explains how traumatic experiences are transmitted to subsequent generations through cultural narratives, images, and affective inheritances rather than direct experience. Cinema plays a vital role in this process by repeatedly visualising Partition trauma, thereby shaping collective memory and emotional engagement among audiences who did not witness the events of 1947. Despite this, existing studies rarely examine how post-memory operates within Partition cinema in conjunction with Orientalist representation and colonial legacies.

This study emerges at the intersection of these scholarly debates. While historical, literary, and psychological studies have extensively addressed Partition trauma, there remains a notable gap in film studies concerning how South Asian cinema represents Partition through Orientalist narratives while simultaneously constructing postcolonial memory and trauma. The research problem, therefore, lies in understanding how selected films mediate colonial power relations, cultural identity, and psychological rupture through cinematic form. By analysing *Train to Pakistan*, *Earth*, *Partition*, and *The Viceroy's House*, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how Partition cinema reflects, distorts, and rearticulates the legacies of empire and the enduring wounds of 1947.

The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which integrates postcolonial theory, Orientalism, and trauma studies to examine cinematic representation. By foregrounding film as a critical site of postcolonial memory, the research contributes to broader discussions on how historical violence is remembered and represented in South Asia. Moreover, it offers insights into the role of cinema in shaping cultural understandings of identity, power, and trauma, thereby justifying the need for a focused and theoretically informed analysis of Partition films within contemporary scholarship.

1.3 Problem Statement

Partition cinema has become a key cultural site through which the violence of 1947 is remembered, narrated, and morally interpreted. Yet the cinematic representation of Partition is not a transparent reflection of history; it is shaped by representational conventions narrative, visual, and ideological that organises who is seen as human, whose pain is legible, and how responsibility is distributed. In a significant portion of Partition films, trauma is rendered through familiar narrative positions (the suffering victim, the violated woman, the brutalised or brutal male body, the civilised administrator, the irrational mob), which can reproduce older colonial hierarchies of visibility and value even when the films appear to condemn violence.

While existing scholarship has examined Partition cinema through themes of nationalism, memory, communal violence, gendered victimisation, and historical testimony, it less consistently explains how trauma itself is framed through representational regimes that echo Orientalist logics of difference and hierarchy especially when the film corpus includes both South Asian and Western-directed productions. Studies often treat trauma, memory/post-memory, and Orientalism as separate interpretive tracks; as a

result, we still lack a sustained comparative account of how an Orientalist representational grammar shapes the cinematic legibility of Partition trauma across films that circulate transnationally and speak to global audiences.

This thesis addresses that gap by undertaking a comparative textual analysis of four Partition films *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017) using Edward Said's concept of Orientalism as the central critical lens, while drawing on trauma theory and postcolonial memory to analyze how violence, displacement, and gendered suffering are narrated and visualised. By focusing on how cinematic form and perspective produce specific kinds of trauma meaning, the study clarifies what these films reveal and what they obscure about Partition as a postcolonial wound and as an ongoing struggle over representation.

1.4 Indian Sub-continent: An Introduction and Geography

The Indian Sub-continent today comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and neighbouring states such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives is a culturally and linguistically diverse region historically shaped by shared political structures under British colonial rule. Prior to 1947, British India included directly governed territories as well as princely states, forming a unified administrative and cultural space (Jones, 2011). Despite its vast internal diversity, the Sub-continent has long exhibited cross-regional continuities in language, religion, and social practices, several of which persisted even after Partition.

Culturally, the region has been connected for centuries through trade routes, religious movements, and linguistic interaction. North India and present-day Pakistan share intertwined histories, particularly across Punjab and Bengal regions most dramatically

affected by the 1947 division. These shared histories explain why Partition violence, migration, and trauma reverberated across communities regardless of national borders.

The Partition radically transformed this once-connected region. The mass migrations between India and Pakistan, the violent attacks on refugee caravans and trains, and the widespread psychological devastation constitute the backdrop against which the films analysed in this dissertation are situated. Events such as the attacks on trains moving between Lahore and Amritsar, or the widespread displacement of families, form central visual and narrative motifs in *Train to Pakistan*, *Earth*, *Partition*, and *The Viceroy's House*.

The Sub-continent's film industries also reflect deep historical and cultural linkages. India hosts one of the world's largest cinema traditions, while Pakistan and Bangladesh maintain their own regional industries. Hindi and Urdu dominant cinematic languages in India and Pakistan remain mutually intelligible, shaping similar narrative patterns, genres, and representational practices. English-language films on Partition, though fewer in number, draw heavily on local cultural settings and historical memory.

This dissertation focuses specifically on English-language films that depict the 1947 Partition within the cultural and historical environment of the Sub-continent. By situating these films in their regional context, the study examines how they portray Orientalism, colonial legacies, and trauma, and how they reflect the shared yet fractured histories of the Sub-continent after decolonisation.

1.5 Causes and Effects of Partition 1947: A Trajectory of Trauma

The year 1947 stands out as one of the most momentous periods in human history. India and Pakistan came into existence on August 14-15, 1947, the days on which they achieved freedom from British rule. Historically, India was pre-dominantly a Hindu-majority region, whereas Pakistan emerged as a state grounded in the Islamic faith. Yet, although independence was achieved, the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent proved to be a devastating and harrowing experience for both nations. It was intended to create better living conditions for communities seeking religious autonomy, but it simultaneously unleashed violence, displacement, and suffering on an unprecedented scale.

During the Partition, enormous populations migrated across the newly drawn borders. Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan, while Hindus and Sikhs travelled from Pakistan to India. Driven by religious fanaticism and communal frenzy, the fugitives were overtaken by fear, suspicion, and hatred. The levels of robbery, theft, kidnapping, slaughter, and bloodshed that accompanied this mass movement defy adequate description.

According to estimates, more than two lakh people lost their lives during India's Partition. In *Midnight Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition* (2015), Nisid Hajari explains that although India and Pakistan did not function as two separate nations prior to 1947, their leaders had initially imagined a collaborative future resembling the relationship between the United States and Canada. However, the Sub-continent descended into violence almost immediately after the Partition. Homes were invaded, women were raped, and children were mutilated. Because of this widespread brutality, many scholars regard Partition as one of the most disastrous events in modern human history (Stuenkel, 2016).

The origins of British involvement in India can be traced to 1600, when the East India Company was founded to initiate commercial activity in the region. Under the guise of trade, the Company progressively interfered in the internal affairs of India's numerous princely states and monarchies. Recognising the fragmented political landscape of the Sub-continent, the Company exploited existing rivalries among local rulers to establish and extend its authority. Initially focused on profit and commercial expansion, the Company had little interest in local political conflicts. This changed dramatically after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, where the Company defeated the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah. Approximately 5,000 troops were engaged, and the victory marked the Company's first major triumph under its strategy of divide and rule. Following the battle, the British appropriated five million dollars from the Bengal treasury and expanded their influence across India (Bose & Jalal, 2018).

By the eighteenth century, the British had achieved significant success in subjugating local rulers through systematic political fragmentation. Historical records indicate that Company influence had become firmly established by 1757. The removal of monarchs, subordination of local populations, restructuring of administrative authority, and creation of a formidable army and judiciary all consolidated the Company Raj, which reached its peak by 1857 (Gilmour, 2019). These developments allowed the Company to dominate India for nearly two centuries. As British power grew, local discontent intensified, culminating in the 1857 uprising also known as the Sepoy Mutiny or *Bidroh*. This rebellion partly arose from the recruitment of upper-caste Hindus into the British army, a practice that alienated the other groups. More than eight lakh people died in the revolt, but the insurgents failed to achieve their objective of reclaiming control. Despite the uprising, British dominance continued to strengthen, and the administration deepened

divisions between Hindus and Muslims for political advantage (Dalrymple, 2019). British policies were not designed to promote Hindu–Muslim unity. On April 13, 1919, British forces commanded by General Reginald Dyer opened fire on a peaceful gathering in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, killing nearly 1,500 people. In response, the Swadeshi movement gained significant momentum, and anti-colonial protests spread across the Sub-continent. Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement in 1942, eventually leading to the imprisonment of Gandhi and several nationalist leaders. During this period, leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi came to believe that the British administration was collaborating with certain groups to weaken the independence movement. The British had deliberately supported the Muslim League since 1940, strengthening the political demand for Pakistan. Gandhi emphasised that Hindu–Muslim unity was essential for independence; however, religious fundamentalists resisted cooperation, and demands for a Muslim homeland intensified (Prakash, 2019).

Historians identify several factors that contributed to Partition, including the Indian National Congress, Jinnah’s political vision, the Muslim League, and British colonial rule. By the nineteenth century, India had reached a point of widespread discontent with imperial policies, prompting demands for political rights and self-governance. These developments led to the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 (Mourya & Mittal, 2021). Congress leaders such as Gandhi, Nehru, and Lala Lajpat Rai asserted that British rule and the Muslim League were responsible for the fragmentation that led to Partition. However, many historians argue that Congress failed to integrate the diverse communities of India, particularly Muslims. Vipin Chandra criticises the Congress for internal disagreements and suggests that liberal leaders such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai were unable to incorporate Muslim groups with communal concerns.

Additionally, some critics argue that Congress leadership prioritised Hindu interests, which alienated Muslims and pushed them toward demanding a separate national identity (Gilmour, 2019).

Others believe that Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League played a significant role in advocating for a separate Islamic nation. In the 1920s, Gandhi attempted to unite Hindus and Muslims under a single national movement. Jinnah, however, came to believe that Muslims were marginalised under Congress leadership, which he viewed as increasingly influenced by Hindu nationalist tendencies. Although Gandhi, Nehru, and Jinnah had previously worked together toward independence, Congress's failure to recognize Jinnah's contributions further alienated him. As internal tensions within Congress rose, Jinnah and the Muslim League strengthened their call for a separate state. When Lord Mountbatten arrived in Delhi in March 1947 with the mandate to transfer power, the British government announced its intention to Partition India. British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe was appointed to delineate borders, and on August 14–15, 1947, Pakistan and India emerged as independent nations (Ansari, 2017).

During the mass migrations, robbery, kidnapping, rape, and murder occurred on an unprecedented scale. The atrocities committed against Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims are difficult to describe fully. Trains transporting refugees often arrived filled with corpses, leading historians to refer to them as “blood trains.” Nisid Hajari (2015) recounts how these trains crossed the border silently, with blood dripping from doors and undercarriages. Homes were set ablaze, and the people killed one another with visceral cruelty (Dalrymple, 2015). Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal (1985) describes Partition as a central historical event in twentieth-century South Asia, a moment without clear beginning or end, one that

continues to shape the region's understanding of its past, present, and future. The staggering brutality remains among the darkest chapters in the region's history (Mahn & Murphy, 2019).

Approximately fourteen million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs migrated during Partition. Many did not migrate voluntarily; rather, they were compelled by fear and violence. Scholars such as Aseem Khwaja, Prashant Bharadwaj, and Atif Mian estimate that 14.49 million people or roughly 3% of India's population were accounted for in the 1951 census, with nearly 10% of Indian Muslims choosing to remain. Between fourteen and sixteen million people were displaced or disappeared, and approximately two lakh people died (Talbot & Singh, 2009). Historical records document extensive yet unsuccessful attempts to locate the missing. Bharadwaj and Mian (2008) report that of the 8.3 million missing individuals, 5.4 million originated from Pakistan and 2.9 million from Bangladesh. Approximately 0.84 million Hindus and Sikhs did not reach India, while 1.26 million Muslims never arrived in Pakistan. These groups were later categorised as *illegal immigrants*. Religion was the primary driving force behind the Partition. According to the 1941 Census, Muslims constituted approximately 23% of India's population; after Partition, two-thirds of them relocated to East and West Pakistan. Partition also reshaped financial and material resources. India and Pakistan inherited unequal distributions of agricultural and industrial assets. Pakistan received major agricultural lands producing jute and cotton, whereas India retained key energy resources such as coal, kerosene, wood, and fossil fuels. Structurally, India possessed superior infrastructure in ports, railways, and electricity. Pakistan, in contrast, lagged significantly behind. Its total installed electricity capacity at Partition was 75,000 kilowatts, 15,600 allocated to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and energy shortages persisted until 1954. Pakistan also lacked financial

institutions necessary for industrial development. Banks and insurance companies decreased from 487 prior to Partition to only 69 afterward. Literacy rates were likewise affected: migrants (*muhajirs*) struggled to prioritize education in the face of displacement, resulting in India's literacy rate rising at approximately 1%, compared to Pakistan's 0.82%. Gender-based violence intensified during this period. Government sources estimate that 33,000 to 50,000 Muslim women, along with thousands of Hindu and Sikh women were kidnapped. Efforts by both governments returned some women, but many refused to go back, and in some cases, families killed women and children to preserve perceived honour (Stuenkel, 2016).

Partition also led to the formation of new political parties throughout the region. The main objective of Partition was to create two states defined by their religious identities. Refugees, seeking protection amid widespread violence, formed new political alliances. Hindu and Sikh groups in Punjab established regional political organisations. Groups such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) later developed into the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which maintains political dominance today. Migrants from Sindh who settled in India became known as *Sindhis* and developed distinct socio-religious identities, now recognised as Sindhi Sampradaya (Banik, 2022). Multiple religious, political, and ideological forces contributed to the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent. If the interests of the Indian National Congress, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the British administration had not diverged, Partition might not have occurred. The violence including widespread rape, murder, looting, kidnapping, and religious retaliation posed an existential threat to millions. Fourteen million individuals migrated; more than 8.3 million went missing; and the majority was

never found. Ultimately, the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent was a terrible and excruciating ordeal for both newly formed nations.

1.6 An Outline of Films about the Partition of Indian Sub-continent

After Hollywood, Bollywood is widely regarded as the world's second largest film industry. Over the decades, sustained effort has been made to cinematograph numerous films about the 1947 Partition of the Indian Sub-continent. According to Vishwanath and Malik (2012), films play a significant role in representing the diverse stories and lived experiences of individuals belonging to different cultures. The brutality and misery endured by migrant populations during Partition brought tears to all who witnessed or later encountered these narratives. A considerable number of films are based on literary works.

Garam Hawa (1973), directed by M. S. Sathyu, narrates the story of a Muslim family torn between migrating to Pakistan and remaining in India. Ritwik Ghatak's *The Cloud-Capped Star* portrays the struggles of an underprivileged Hindu family whose lives are upended by Partition. In *Komal Gandhar* (1961), also directed by Ghatak, the protagonist endures the anguish of separation and migration. Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1999) based on Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* is an in-depth exploration of a group of friends and acquaintances affected by the events of 1947. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, India's founding figure, is depicted in *Hey Ram* (2000). The riot and massacre scenes in Anil Sharma's *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001), are particularly disturbing, and the film became overwhelmingly successful. Sabiha Sumar's *Khamosh Paani* (Silent Waters, 2005) examines Partition with a blend of seriousness and satirical undertones, depicting the plight of the Mujahedeen in 1979 Pakistan. *Pinjar* (2003), directed by Chandra Prakash Dwivedi and based on Amrita Pritam's novel of the same name, recounts the story of Puro,

an innocent woman kidnapped by a Muslim man named Rashid during the turbulent days of Partition. Vic Sarin's *Partition* (2007) follows a retired Sikh military commander who rescues and eventually falls in love with a young Muslim woman. Bhisham Sahni's Hindi novel inspired *Tamas* (1987), which illustrates the early stages of communal rioting in a small Indian town. Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982) is a landmark film based on the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. *The Sky Below* (2007) is a feature-length documentary that explores historical and contemporary perspectives on both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border (Vishwanath & Malik, 2009). *The Viceroy's House* (2017), set against the backdrop of Partition depicts the life and final days of Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India (Vats, 2017).

This research focuses on four films, two from the twentieth century and two from the twenty-first each produced in the English language by both local and foreign filmmakers. Significantly, the writers, producers, directors, or their family members were themselves eyewitnesses to the 1947 Partition. *Train to Pakistan* (1998) and *Earth* (1999) belong to the last decade of the twentieth century, while *Partition* (2007) and *The Viceroy's House* (2017) represent the first and second decades of the twenty-first century, respectively.

The Viceroy's House (2017), a British-Indian historical drama directed by Gurinder Chadha and written by Paul Mayeda Berges, Moira Buffini, and Chadha, is the first film selected for this study. Chadha based elements of the film on her grandmother's personal story: during migration from Pakistan to India, her grandmother lost her daughter to famine. She spent eighteen months in a refugee camp before eventually being reunited with her family after her husband located her (Chadha, 2017). These personal histories

profoundly shape the film's emotional landscape, as genuine narratives of survivors resonate through its storytelling.

The historical drama film *The Viceroy's House* is set in 1947 during the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent. It is produced by Chadha, Deepak Nayar, and Paul Ritchie, the film was co-financed by BBC Films. Principal photography took place in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. It was released in the United Kingdom on March 3, 2017, the film's Hindi dubbed version *Partition: 1947* was released on August 18, 2017. The music, composed by A. R. Rahman, features a soundtrack with a total duration of 44:43 minutes. The cast includes Hugh Bonneville as Lord Louis Mountbatten, Gillian Anderson as Lady Edwina Mountbatten, Manish Dayal as Jeet Kumar, Huma Qureshi as Aalia Noor, Michael Hayman as Ewart, Om Puri as Ali Rahim Noor, Simon Callow as Cyril Radcliffe, Denzil Smith as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Neeraj Kabi as Mahatma Gandhi, and Tanveer Ghani as Jawaharlal Nehru. A. R. Rahman received the Public Choice Award for Best Composer at the 2017 World Soundtrack Awards in recognition of his music for this film (Beaster-Jones & Sarrazin, 2016).

Earth (1999), directed by Deepa Mehta, is the second film selected. Based on Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1992), the story unfolds in Lahore before and during the 1947 Partition. The narrative draws from Sidhwa's own childhood memories. As a member of the Parsi community neutral in the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh conflict, she witnessed the horrors of Partition first hand. Her experiences deeply influenced both the novel and the film, colouring the narrative with psychological trauma and emotional authenticity (Mehta, 1999). The romance-drama film *Earth* was co-directed by Alastair Fothergill and Mark Linfield. It was co-produced by the BBC Natural History Unit and Greenlight Media, with

Discovery providing partial funding. The film is based on Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India*, published in the United States in 1991 and in India in 1992, while its United Kingdom edition appeared in 1988 under the title *Ice Candy Man*. The cast includes Aamir Khan as Dil Nawaz, Rahul Khanna as Hassan, Nandita Das as Shanta, Maia Sethna as Lenny, Shabana Azmi as older Lenny, Kitu Gidwani as Bunty Sethna, Arif Zakaria as Rustom Sethna, and Kulbhushan Kharbanda as Imam Din. The music of the film was composed by A. R. Rahman, with lyrics written by Javed Akhtar. *Earth* received the Best Film Award at the Asian Film Festival, and Rahul Khanna portraying Hassan won the Filmfare Best Male Debut Award. In 1999, *Earth* was selected as India's official entry for the 71st Academy Awards in the Best Foreign Language Film category (Neog & Sagoo, 2020).

Partition (2007), directed by Vic Sarin, is the third film considered in this research. The story revolves around a young Muslim girl separated from her family while migrating from India to Pakistan. Gian Singh, a former British Indian soldier who fought in Burma alongside Andrew and Avtar Singh, returns to his village after retiring from service. He discovers Naseem alone in the woods and shelters her in his home. Over time, they marry and have a son named Vijay. Later, when Naseem travels to Pakistan to reunite with her family, they detain her upon learning that she married a Sikh. Gian attempts to rescue her, but Naseem's brother kills him. She subsequently flees to England with her son (Sarin, 2007). *Partition* (2007), is written by Patricia Finn and Vic Sarin, the film is set in 1947 against the backdrop of the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent. It was partially filmed in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada, and is a co-production involving Canada, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. *Partition* premiered in Canadian theatres on February 2, 2007, followed by a Region One (U.S. and Canada) DVD release on June 26, 2007. The

cast includes Jimi Mistry as Gian Singh, Kristin Kreuk as Naseem Khan, Neve Campbell as Margaret Stilwell, Jesse Moss as Andrew Stilwell, John Light as Walter Hankins, Irrfan Khan as Avtar Singh, Madhur Jaffrey as Shanti Singh, and Arya Babbar as Akbar Khan, along with several minor characters. The film received multiple award nominations, including the Genie Award for Best Achievement in Cinematography (2008), the Leo Award for Best Cinematography in a Feature Length Drama (2007), the Leo Award for Best Direction in a Feature Length Drama (2007), and the Leo Award for Best Screenwriting in a Feature Length Drama (2007) (Gauhar, 2017).

Train to Pakistan (1998), the fourth film explored in this study, is an adaptation of Khushwant Singh's 1956 novel. Directed by Pamela Rooks, the film draws heavily on Singh's personal experiences as an eyewitness to the events surrounding Partition. Many films depict the 1947 division, but the rationale for selecting these films lies in the authenticity of their narratives: they are grounded in true events or in stories recounted by authors, filmmakers, or family members who directly witnessed the upheaval. *Train to Pakistan* stems from Singh's first-hand experience. The film *Train to Pakistan* is produced by Channel Four Films and the National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC), the film's production company was Kaleidoscope Entertainment. Shooting commenced nearly fifty years after the actual Partition of India in 1947 and was completed in July 1997. Post-production work took place in Mumbai. The principal cast includes Mohan Agashe as Hukam Chand, Nirmal Pandey as Jaggat Singh or Jagga, Rajit Kapoor as Iqbal, Smriti Mishra as Nooran, Divya Dutta as Haseena, and Mangal Dhillon as the Sub-Inspector. Originally, the film was scheduled to premiere on the Star Plus channel on August 15, 1997, to mark India's Independence Day, but it encountered difficulties with the Indian Censor Board. Its television release ultimately occurred on Star Plus in 1998

following its theatrical release. The film was later screened in the United States, Sri Lanka, and on Channel Four in the United Kingdom. It was featured in numerous international film festivals, including the Zanzibar International Film Festival (1998), South Festival Denmark (1998), Beirut International Film Festival (1998), Fimiale International Film Festival in Köln, Germany (1998), Soria Mora Film Festival in Oslo (1998), and the Indian Film Week in Hong Kong (2000). Additionally, it was nominated for Best Film at the 1999 Cinequest Film Festival (Sharma, 2020).

1.7 Research Questions

- i. How do the selected films construct Partition trauma (individual and collective) through narrative structure, character positioning, and visual perspective?
- ii. How do Orientalist representational patterns (e.g., exoticisation, hierarchy, civilisational framing, and native irrationality) appear, persist, or get contested within these films' depictions of Partition?
- iii. How do the films negotiate postcolonial memory (including silence, testimony, and generational transmission) and what ideological work does that memory perform?
- iv. How is Partition trauma made visible or narratively contained, and what does this reveal about psychological, war-related, and gendered traumas created at the time of Partition?

1.8 Research Objectives

- i. To examine the selected films constructing Partition trauma (individual and collective) through narrative structure, character positioning, and visual perspective.
- ii. To analyze Orientalist representational patterns (e.g., exoticisation, hierarchy, civilisational framing and native irrationality) appearing, persisting, or getting contested within these films' depictions of Partition.
- iii. To explore the films negotiating postcolonial memory (including silence, testimony, and generational transmission) and what ideological work does that memory perform.
- iv. To investigate Partition trauma made visible or narratively contained, and how those reveal psychological, war-related, and gendered traumas created at the time of Partition.

1.9 Scope of the Research

The study is delimited to four South Asian films on the 1947 Partition *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017). It situates these films within the broader context of South Asian cinema, with a particular emphasis on Bollywood's representational politics. The research applies postcolonial theory, Said's concept of Orientalism, and Freud's trauma theory as its primary analytical frameworks. The focus remains on the thematic relevance of these films to historical trauma, Orientalist constructions, and postcolonial memory. Consequently, the study excludes the wider corpus of Partition cinema and the other media forms, concentrating

instead on these four films as key visual texts that illuminate the psychological, cultural, and political dimensions of the 1947 Partition.

Although the Partition has been extensively examined in literary studies such as the memorialisation of trauma in the works of Saadat Hasan Manto (Butalia, 2017) and in historical scholarship, cinematic representations have received comparatively limited critical engagement that integrates postcolonial, Orientalist, and trauma theories in combination. Existing analyses of Partition films often remain descriptive, prioritising the historical backdrop while offering minimal theoretical application or attention to formal cinematic elements. This thesis seeks to address this gap by adopting a content analysis approach that systematically links these theoretical frameworks to the visual narratives presented in the selected films. Through this interdisciplinary method, drawing from film studies, history, psychology, and postcolonial critique, the research offers deeper insights into how cinema represents, negotiates, and reimagines the complexities of historical trauma.

1.10 Limitations of the Research

In conducting this study, the researcher remained attentive to all forms of taboos, religious, social, cultural, and ideological; recognising that what may be considered non-taboo in one part of the world may carry sensitive implications in another. Such taboos, if handled carelessly, can potentially undermine the sovereignty, dignity, or identity of particular ethnic or national groups. Therefore, every sensitive aspect of the research has been approached with deliberate care to preserve harmony and respect for diverse communities. Furthermore, the process of data collection is central to any research endeavour, yet it is invariably time consuming and often challenging. The researcher relied

extensively on online repositories and digital databases. Although many scholarly articles and research papers were not freely accessible, a substantial proportion of the required material was nevertheless successfully obtained. Despite these constraints, the researcher managed to gather the necessary data to support and complete the dissertation with academic rigour and integrity.

1.11 Thesis Structure

This study is situated within the historical, political, and cultural aftermath of British colonial rule in the Indian Sub-continent, culminating in the traumatic Partition of 1947. British colonial governance not only reshaped political and administrative systems but also deeply influenced social hierarchies, cultural identities, and modes of representation. The processes leading to independence were marked by complex negotiations, competing nationalisms, and colonial strategies of division, which ultimately resulted in the Partition of India and Pakistan. This event produced one of the largest forced migrations in human history and unleashed unprecedented communal violence, displacement, and psychological suffering. Partition is not merely a historical event but a continuing site of trauma embedded in collective memory, cultural narratives, and identity formation in South Asia. The psychological, social, and cultural consequences of Partition extend across generations, manifesting in unresolved grief, fractured identities, and communal anxieties. As a historical rupture, Partition represents a convergence of violence, loss, displacement, and identity crisis, making it a crucial subject for interdisciplinary analysis.

Cinema emerges as a powerful cultural medium through which these traumatic histories are narrated, negotiated, and reimagined. Post-Partition films do not simply

recount historical events; they actively participate in shaping public memory and cultural understanding of colonialism and its aftermath. While cinema offers a space for resistance and reinterpretation, it also often reproduces colonial attitudes, power hierarchies, and Orientalist frameworks inherited from imperial discourse. These cinematic representations frequently reflect lingering colonial ideologies that continue to influence postcolonial societies.

The central research problem of this study lies in examining the intersection of colonial domination and postcolonial dislocation as represented in Partition cinema. Despite political independence in 1947, many administrative, ideological, and cultural legacies of colonial rule persisted, shaping narratives of identity, authority, and violence. This research interrogates how such colonial residues operate within cinematic texts and how they intersect with representations of trauma arising from Partition. The study is grounded in a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates postcolonial theory, Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, and theories of colonial legacies with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of trauma. Postcolonial theory provides tools to examine power, representation, and resistance, while Orientalism helps uncover how colonial modes of knowledge and representation continue to structure cinematic narratives. Freud's trauma theory offers a lens to understand the psychological and emotional dimensions of Partition as depicted in film.

The corpus of this study consists of selected Partition-themed films chosen for their historical significance, thematic relevance, and representational diversity. These films provide a critical site for examining how colonial legacies and trauma are visually and narratively constructed. The research is guided by clearly defined research questions and

objectives that aim to analyze the persistence of colonial discourse and the multifaceted representation of trauma in Partition cinema. The chapter also outlines the scope and limitations of the study, clarifying its analytical boundaries and focus.

The second chapter of Literature Review reviews existing scholarship relevant to the study, beginning with classical and contemporary postcolonial theory. Foundational thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Edward Said provide critical insights into colonial power, identity formation, and cultural representation. Contemporary postcolonial scholarship further expands these debates by addressing memory, trauma, and visual culture.

A significant section of the review focuses on Orientalism and cultural representation, examining how colonial discourse has historically constructed the East as inferior, irrational, and static. The persistence of Orientalist imagery and narratives in postcolonial texts and films is critically examined to understand how cinema may unconsciously reproduce imperial ideologies. The chapter also explores the concept of colonial legacies, emphasising the enduring effects of colonial governance on identity, culture, and power relations. These legacies continue to influence postcolonial institutions, social hierarchies, and representational practices. Trauma theory forms another key component of the literature review, addressing both psychological and cultural dimensions of trauma. Freud's trauma theory is discussed in relation to memory, repression, and repetition, highlighting its relevance to cinematic narratives of violence and loss. The chapter then reviews historical and cultural scholarship on the 1947 Partition, followed by critical studies on cinematic portrayals of Partition, particularly in Bollywood and parallel cinema. These studies focus on themes of human suffering, memory, violence, and

displacement. The chapter concludes by identifying a research gap: the lack of an integrated analytical framework that combines postcolonial theory and trauma studies in the examination of Partition cinema. This gap provides the rationale for the present study.

The third chapter covers research methodology. This study adopts a qualitative and exploratory research design, appropriate for an in-depth analysis of cinematic texts. The methodological approach emphasises interpretive analysis rather than quantitative measurement, allowing for a nuanced understanding of meaning, symbolism, and representation. The primary method of analysis is content analysis, focusing on both textual and visual elements of the selected films. This includes narrative structure, dialogue, characterisation, mise-en-scène, cinematography, and symbolism. The selection of films is based on clearly defined criteria, including thematic relevance, historical context, and representational significance. Data collection involves the systematic gathering of film texts and relevant supporting materials such as interviews, critical reviews, and scholarly commentary. The analytical procedure applies postcolonial and trauma theories to interpret how colonial legacies and traumatic experiences are constructed and communicated through cinematic form. The chapter also outlines the delimitations of the study, specifying its focus and methodological constraints.

The fourth chapter is about the analysis, focusing on orientalism, colonial legacies and the traumas in the films about the Partition 1947. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of Orientalist discourses in Partition cinema, particularly representations of British authority, hierarchy, and presumed superiority. It examines how selected films portray colonial power structures and how these representations reflect or challenge imperial narratives. The analysis focuses on four films *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999),

Partition (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017) to explore the persistence of colonial legacies. Visual and symbolic markers such as language, institutions, uniforms, architectural spaces, and iconography are examined to reveal how colonial power is encoded in cinematic imagery.

The chapter also analyses how imperial narratives are both reproduced and contested within these films. A major section is devoted to the representation of trauma, encompassing psychological trauma (including guilt, fear, memory, and identity crises), community and communal violence trauma, war-related trauma such as refugee displacement, terrorism, and combat experiences, child maltreatment trauma, sexual assault trauma, and domestic violence trauma. A comparative analysis highlights similarities and differences in how trauma is represented across the selected films.

The last concluding chapter summarises the key findings of the study, emphasising the persistence of colonial legacies and Orientalist structures in Partition cinema alongside complex, multi-layered representations of trauma. It argues that cinema functions as a vital postcolonial memory site, mediating historical violence and collective suffering. The chapter highlights the theoretical contribution of the study by demonstrating the value of integrating postcolonial theory with trauma studies in film analysis. Finally, it outlines implications for future research, suggesting directions for further interdisciplinary studies on Partition, trauma, and cinema.

1.12 Summary of the Chapter

This dissertation investigates the trauma generated by the 1947 Partition of the Indian Sub-continent, with particular attention to its psychological, social, and cultural

consequences as represented in cinema. Drawing on postcolonial theory, the study employs Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, the notion of colonial legacies, and Freud's psychoanalytic theory of trauma to examine how Partition era suffering is constructed, narrated, and visualised in selected films. Through this interdisciplinary framework, the research interrogates the intersections of colonial power, cultural representation, and psychological rupture in cinematic portrayals of Partition.

This introductory chapter establishes the conceptual and historical foundations of the study by situating Partition within the broader trajectory of British colonial rule in the Indian Sub-continent. From early colonial intervention to political domination, independence, and eventual division, the chapter outlines the ideological structures and power relations that shaped colonial governance and continued to influence post-Partition societies. These historical conditions form the basis for understanding how colonial attitudes and hierarchies persist in cultural production, particularly in cinema. Building on this context, the chapter formulates the central research problem by positioning the 1947 Partition at the intersection of colonial domination and postcolonial dislocation. It highlights how colonial legacies administrative, cultural, and ideological survived independence and contributed to enduring social fragmentation and identity crises. Particular emphasis is placed on the multiple forms of trauma produced by Partition, including psychological distress, communal violence, displacement, and loss, all of which profoundly disrupted individual lives and collective memory and later became embedded in cinematic narratives.

The chapter further introduces the selected films depicting Partition, clarifying the scope and rationale of the corpus. It examines how these films engage with colonial

attitudes marked by superiority, contempt, and paternalism toward colonised populations, and assesses whether such Orientalist discourses are reproduced, challenged, or reconfigured. In doing so, the study analyses the representation of both colonial legacies and post-Partition trauma, revealing how cinema functions as a site where historical violence, memory, and identity are negotiated. Finally, the chapter outlines the research questions, objectives, scope, and limitations of the study, providing a clear analytical framework for the chapters that follow. Together, these elements establish a focused and coherent foundation for examining how Partition cinema reflects, distorts, and rearticulates colonial power relations and traumatic experience.

The next chapter consists of the literature review, synthesising scholarly work relevant to the selected topic and sample. This chapter explains how various films and discourses have previously been examined from similar perspectives while also highlighting divergent approaches within existing research. Finally, the literature review demonstrates how the researcher's ontological disposition differs from earlier studies, thereby identifying the gap that this dissertation seeks to address.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the dissertation's topic. It establishes an essential basis for grasping the dynamics of postcolonial trauma and the various dilemmas that culminated in the 1947 Partition. Within this study, the chosen films serve as the principal sources; they are examined comprehensively and subsequently discussed through interpretive generalisations drawn from the findings. Postcolonial trauma and the postcolonial dilemma form the central points of investigation in this study. The review therefore moves from broader postcolonial and historical debates to more focused discussions of trauma theory, memory studies and cinematic representation in order to situate the films under analysis within a clearly defined intellectual landscape. The division of the Indian Sub-continent, together with the wider decolonisation process, generated a series of interconnected crises across once-colonised territories. Rather than entering the anticipated era of liberation following colonial withdrawal, these regions faced obstacles that proved even more daunting than earlier hardships. The lingering impacts of colonialism still rooted in governance systems, cultural practices, and communal relations created profound instability both preceding and following Partition. Once the decolonisation process was formalised, the Indian Sub-continent was divided into two separate nations: Pakistan and India, as previously discussed. Both sides of the newly drawn border experienced numerous postcolonial traumas. These historical and political conditions form the background against which the selected films are produced and interpreted in this study. Colonial rule imparted a multitude of deep and wide-ranging influences upon the societal

and cultural fabric of the Indian Sub-continent. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2013) argue that historians adopted expressions like postcolonial state and post-colonialism in the post-Second World War era to signify the phase that followed national independence. These concepts also bear temporal and ideological significance, indicating that the post-independence period continued to be vulnerable to various forms of manipulation and misrepresentation, frequently reinforcing the negative image historically imposed upon the so-called Orient (Ashcroft et al., 2013). Furthermore, Leonard argues that during decolonisation, national policies often sought either to expand or preserve one state's influence over the others, effectively sustaining older patterns of control under newly emerging political arrangements (Mukherjee, 2022). Together, these accounts underscore that Partition cannot be read as a clean rupture from colonial rule; rather, it must be understood as part of an ongoing, uneven transition in which colonial discourses and power structures persist.

2.2 Gender, Body, and Space in Partition Films

Recent academic work broadens postcolonial and trauma theory into the realm of cinema, analysing how films reshape historical violence to meet modern narrative expectations. Mehta (2023) analyses twenty-first-century Indian films such as *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* and *Begum Jaan*, arguing that Partition trauma is increasingly co-opted as a narrative device underwriting neo-liberal celebratory nationalism, with raw depictions displaced by aestheticised legitimacy, an evolution from earlier jingoistic portrayals (e.g., *Gadar*). Such readings position films like *Train to Pakistan* and *Earth* as transitional texts that blend sincerity with commercial imperatives. Tigga (2025) highlights the psychological wounds, gender-based brutality, and identity fractures portrayed in Hindi

films, aligning broadly with Freudian trauma theory. However, these studies offer limited engagement with the Orientalising and exoticising tendencies present in such films. Ali et al. (2025), while focusing on literature, work with trauma and memory frameworks that intersect with Hirsch's (2008) post-memory and Menon and Bhasin's (1998) analysis of women's bodies as a gendered battleground, both of which meaningfully transfer to cinematic witnessing in *Partition* (2007). Sharma (2024) surveys Partition cinema from 1947 to 2024, highlighting adaptations (*Tamas*, *Pinjar*) and British 'divide and quit' culpability, justifying content analysis for exposing hegemonic silences. Similarly, Tigga (2025) and Sharma (2024) discuss how Partition films break traumatic silences, treating works such as *Earth* and *Tamas* as visual archives of resilience and collective memory. Recent contributions from Malhotra et al. (2025) in trauma and memory studies re-centre non-Western voices, with chapters from Bhardwaj and Muzamil foregrounding untold Partition memories and women's bodies in war-film narratives. Collectively, these works frame Partition as a perpetual condition (Tigga, 2025), yet they insufficiently examine Orientalism in visual narratives, a gap this thesis seeks to fill through an integrated analytic approach that foregrounds both the colonial gaze and gendered embodiment. The trauma endured by millions during the 1947 Partition has been examined pre-dominantly through trauma theory in both Partition literature and film. Because discursive practices often transcend the boundaries of literary and cinematic representation, this study privileges films as primary sources. This section dismantles narratives that overlook grief and dislocation at the heart of Partition by analysing multiple cinematic representations. It also surveys key academic works and films that engage with Partition and trauma. The aim is to explore how trauma is portrayed in discourses such as film, situating these representations within a broader constellation of unofficial histories that record the disastrous

consequences of Partition. Accordingly, the films and discourses discussed here grapple with divisions wrought by the re-drawing of borders and the establishment of three modern nations: India, West Pakistan, and East Pakistan (later Bangladesh). Despite the magnitude of Partition's devastation, Trauma Studies has not accorded it the sustained scholarly attention given to the other historical catastrophes. Partition produced immense suffering and represents a critical failure of the decolonisation process. While postcolonial studies have rigorously analysed forced migration, slavery, racism, political violence, genocide, segregation, and diaspora, they have tended to overlook the gendered brutality inflicted upon the population of the Indian Sub-continent, violence borne disproportionately by women. This dissertation builds on emerging feminist Partition scholarship to foreground how cinematic bodies particularly female bodies become sites of national anxiety, desire, and punishment. This research examines how literary and cinematic discourses represent key issues of Partition through documented events, fictive narratives, and imaginative reconstructions that broaden our understanding of human experience during moments of profound upheaval. Epochal historical events unfold on a vast scale, and while history offers the macro-framework, fiction, narrative, and film reveal how such events impress themselves upon individual lives. Throughout history, political boundaries have been drawn and redrawn, and the Indian Sub-continent has undergone multiple Partitions. Yet the 1947 Partition and the subsequent independence from British rule remain unparalleled in scale and repercussions. Although cinematic and literary engagements began almost immediately, evident in early Bollywood films like *Lahore* (1949), *Nastik* (1954), *Dharmputra* (1961), *Mere Apne* (1971), and *Garam Hawa* (1974), academic study has taken more than three decades to consolidate. Later films such as *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001), *Hey Ram* (2000), *Pinjar* (2003), and *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013) approach

Partition as trauma monopolised through communalised narratives, where the suffering of one community overshadows the trauma of the hostile other. Communal riots, suicides, kidnappings, and conversions inspired literary works and cinematic adaptations (*Pinjar*, *Train to Pakistan*, *Earth*). These portrayals foreground gendered violence, often depicting the predicament of women. Many survivors who watched these films immediately recognised the depicted experiences, as the titles themselves evoked memories of places and lives abandoned across the border. The cinematic archive holds immense potential within this densely populated region. Although only one major scholarly monograph has been devoted specifically to Partition films, numerous articles map the cinematic terrain and explore individual films in depth. Drawing from this literature, this study focuses on issues of guilt, dilemma, trauma, witnessing, and transformation (Jha, 2018). Since Freud, scholars have explored the relationship between dilemma, guilt, and trauma. Freud's claim that mourning restores the ego's freedom informs the distinction between mourning and melancholic sadness (Keogh & Gregory-Roberts, 2018). Guilt becomes the crucial element in Partition narratives manifested not only through human bodies but through cinematic bodies that become visual carriers of embodied guilt. The relationship between spectacle and guilt, though frequently overlooked, remains essential. *Tamas* (1988), directed by Govind Nihalani and based on Bhisham Sahni's 1971 novel, exemplifies this nexus. The film opens in a Punjabi region destined for Pakistan. As communal tensions erupt, Jarnail Singh, an overzealous Congress worker, is killed. Earlier, a butcher, Nathu (Om Puri), is coerced into slaughtering a pig a political act that inflames Hindu-Muslim conflict. Realising he has been manipulated by colonial agents, Nathu is plunged into guilt and homelessness. When he returns home, the camera follows his guilt-ridden body. His pregnant wife anxiously questions him, to which he replies, '*Oh, Mane Kuch Nahi Hua*'

(*Nothing has happened to me*). The sequence visually articulates guilt, trauma, and the dread of uprooting. *Tamas* became a public media event, particularly resonant after the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, which re-opened the wounds of 1947. Progressive intellectuals recognised how the Sikh minority was displaced twice, first in 1947, and again in 1984. Within this climate, the figure of Nathu became a metaphor for silenced victims whose trauma resurfaced. The iconic shot of three pairs of legs, one belonging to an elderly mother carried on Nathu's shoulder, encapsulates the burden of guilt and the weight of the old nation. These overlapping images of exodus anticipate unresolved trauma, forming a subterranean force driving many Partition films. The emergence of the subaltern subject is tied to power hierarchies produced by dominant discourses. Literature is shaped by cultural and social forces rather than solitary authorship; texts are grounded in historical conditions (Alshhre, 2024). New Historicism challenges traditional literary assumptions, viewing literature as an alternative interpretation of history shaped by repressed discourses (Hall, 2023). Drawing from Foucault, New Historicists trace relations between discourse, power, and text. Foucault reframed power not as possession but as a network of relations operating through institutions, schools, prisons, hospitals, bureaucracies that regulate knowledge (Foucault, 1977; Gutting, 2019). He emphasised that power circulates through societal structures and everyday interactions. Power is thus diffused, ubiquitous, and embedded within 'regimes of truth' that shape what societies accept as knowledge (Foucault, 2020). These truth regimes are reinforced by media, education, political and economic ideologies. Consequently, the struggle is not over absolute truth but over the rules that differentiate truth from falsehood (Gutting, 2019). Power not only represses but also produces reality, truths, and subjectivities. Importantly, Foucault acknowledges power's constructive potential: disciplinary power creates self-regulated subjects without coercion. Resistance

exists wherever power operates. Discourse becomes both a site of power and a site of resistance (Foucault, 2020). Gaventa (2003) notes that, Foucauldian critique has been used to examine, development discourses through hegemony and invisible power. These dynamics underscore unequal power structures in South Asia, where authority produces suffering, silences survivors, and marginalises their narratives. Examining language and power therefore offers insight into how trauma is experienced and perpetuated. Violence persists in states where religious minorities and marginalised populations face repression, such as the documented experiences of Kashmiri communities, subjected to state-imposed constraints on identity and self-determination. Cinema participates in this discursive landscape. In Partition films, idealised images of pre-Partition prosperity heighten the contrast between home and homelessness. *Chhalia* (1960) opens with a symbolic bridge and a train dividing the screen, metaphors of rupture. Kidnapped women returning from Lahore traverse a long journey back to Delhi, visually guided by a camera that moves from pastoral abundance to ruin. Directed by Manmohan Desai, with Raj Kapoor and Nutan, the film narrates the struggle of a woman separated from her family and rejected upon her return. The city, once majestic, is depicted in ruin, echoing the anxieties of urban planners of the 1950s (Gautam, 2024; Sutton, 2023). *Chhalia* typifies early Partition cinema through its portrayal of dual time-zones: pre-Partition prosperity and post-Partition devastation. Kidwai's *Azadi Ki Chhaon Main* offers a literary parallel, portraying refugee camp life and the shifting mise-en-scène of early Partition narratives. These films foreground the politics of naming and identity. In *Chhalia*, the revelation that the rescued child bears the Muslim name Anwar leads to rejection by his Hindu father, reflecting communal anxieties embedded in names. The recurrence of names like Sakina and Shanti across Partition narratives from *Gadar* (2001) to Manto's *Khol Do* illustrates how names become symbolic

carriers of communal identity and gendered suffering (Pillai et al., 2024). As Vasudevan (2022) notes, Partition cinema plays a central role in shaping the self-image of a new nation. Films like *Chhaila*, *Nastik*, and *Amar Rahe Yeh Pyar* use narrative structures where the hero becomes a metaphorical nation-state figure restoring moral and social order. Yet *Amar Rahe Yeh Pyar* disrupts this patriarchal nation-building by depicting maternal agency and intergenerational displacement. Similarly, *Lahore* (1949) follows a lover reclaiming his abducted beloved from across the border, a trope revived decades later in *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001), which catalysed intergenerational Partition memory as grandparents and grandchildren attended screenings together. These cinematic moments reopened dormant memories and facilitated familial storytelling. Cinematic language evolved significantly between the 1950s and 1980s. *Tamas* (1988) marked a departure from earlier depictions by foregrounding guilt, displacement, and collective responsibility. The television series *Buniyad* (1986) similarly provided a longitudinal view of family devastation. Later films such as *Gadar*, *Train to Pakistan*, *Earth*, and *Pinjar* shifted towards humanitarian or religious narratives mediated through romantic and familial bonds, with limited engagement with the social body. Trauma memory and amnesia become structuring elements of cinematic form, influenced by cultural expectations and shifting aesthetic norms. Gendered trauma remains central. Male bodies openly articulate suffering, while female bodies often bear silent agony, enabling the cinematic language to inscribe patriarchal guilt. The fabricated aggression against female bodies is often deployed to generate male remorse. In *Earth*, the only major Partition film where no male protagonist commits the central betrayal, guilt is borne by a child-narrator, Lenny, whose disclosure leads to her Ayah's abduction. The film's final scene set amidst the abandoned colonial statuary of Coronation Park juxtaposes imperial decay with the narrator's

confession: “*Fifty years have gone since I betrayed my Ayah... On that day in 1947, when I lost Ayah, I lost a significant part of myself*” (Mehta, 1999). This rare depiction of guilt enduring beyond the film’s ending establishes a multi-layered emotional temporality. Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956), a foundational English-language Partition novel, depicts Mano Majra, a microcosm of harmonious interfaith co-existence, destroyed by Partition violence. The novel portrays murder, torture, and rape as cascading ruptures of everyday life (Nahal, 2023). Similarly, *Partition* (2007) depicts Gian Singh, a traumatised veteran suffering PTSD after killing a friend in combat, struggling with guilt, displacement, and communal rupture (Lamichhane, 2021). *The Viceroy’s House* (2017) recounts Gurinder Chadha’s grandmother’s real experiences, including the death of her daughter during migration and eighteen months spent in a refugee camp before reunion (Chadha, 2017). The other literary works explore similar themes. Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* portrays the dual victimhood of Lala Kashmiri Ram in both Pakistan and India, emphasising identity crisis, exile, and psychological suffering (Chhetri, 2020). Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* examines sectarian violence through Krishnan’s divided consciousness and Kamala’s sacrificial love (Pandey, 2020). Attia Hossain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* provides a Muslim perspective on Partition’s upheaval, interrogating the two-nation theory and the decline of feudal Muslim households (Pandey, 2021). Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* juxtaposes Gandhian ideology with Partition’s violent reality, depicting Shafi’s shift from nationalism to communalism and the tragic disintegration of the Teckchand family (Shirture & Kumar, 2020). Raj Gill’s *The Rape* reveals dehumanisation and the dissolution of human values through the story of Dalipjit and his beloved Leela, whose violation at the hands of her would-be protector exemplifies moral collapse (Roy, 2021). Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* explores women’s trauma, patriarchy, education, and

the struggle for autonomy across three generations of an upper-middle-class Punjabi family, paralleling the nation's own search for identity (Priya & Venkatesan, 2025). Collectively, these discourses illuminate how regions once united were fractured by a single colonial act that produced divergent identities. Each community became an 'other' to itself. These accounts underscore the everyday hardships of kidnapping, exclusion, displacement, and exploitation of girls and women. At the same time, they document resilience, demonstrating how women confront, survive, or succumb to overwhelming trauma. Through these narratives, the Partition emerges as both a collective wound and a site of ongoing cultural meaning-making. For this thesis, they also serve as intertexts against which filmic representations of gendered trauma are measured and evaluated.

Existing Partition scholarship has been dominated by historical and literary studies, while film research often privileges plot and dialogue over the audiovisual construction of memory, trauma, and national identity. At the same time, studies that apply trauma theory to Partition frequently rely on Euro-American paradigms without sufficiently examining how colonial discourse and Orientalist frameworks shape what becomes visible, sayable, or silenced on screen. This thesis addresses these gaps by analysing Partition films as audiovisual memory texts: it examines how Orientalist narrative logics, postcolonial dilemmas, and gendered trauma are produced through cinematic form (*mise-en-scène*, framing, editing, sound) rather than through story alone. By bringing together postcolonial theory, trauma/memory studies, and close film analysis across a selected corpus of South Asian and transnational Partition films, the study clarifies how Partition is repeatedly re-authored for later generations as cultural memory and contested national history.

The selection of the four films is grounded in a critical reassessment of decolonisation as an incomplete and ideologically fraught process rather than a moment of uncomplicated national triumph. Independence in 1947 did not dismantle colonial structures; instead, it reconfigured them within new political formations, generating communal violence, displacement, and enduring psychic rupture. Rejecting celebratory nationalist historiography, the chosen films foreground the traumatic experiences of ordinary individuals and expose the persistence of colonial power relations within postcolonial societies. Through Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, the study interrogates how colonial discourse constructed the East as inferior and how such representational hierarchies continued to shape both Western and South Asian cinematic narratives. The films thus become sites where colonial attitudes are not only depicted but also critically negotiated, revealing the internalisation and reproduction of imperial ideologies within Partition cinema.

Integrating postcolonial theory with trauma studies, the dissertation argues that Partition must be understood as a historically specific catastrophe that fractured individual and collective identities. Drawing on Freud's theory of repression and dissociation, as well as later trauma scholarship, the study conceptualises Partition trauma as a psychic wound marked by belatedness, fragmentation, and the instability of memory. The four selected films *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017) are justified on the basis of their grounding in eyewitness or inherited memory and their capacity to enable diachronic comparison across cinematic periods. Collectively, they provide a focused corpus through which to examine the interplay of Orientalist discourse, colonial legacies, and the cinematic representation of Partition-specific trauma.

2.3 Critical Gaps in Existing Scholarship and Positioning the Present Study

Within studies on Partition, trauma is frequently conceptualised as a profound break that disrupts historical continuity and unsettles established identities. However, the most scholarship has concentrated on literary representations, while comparatively little attention has been paid to how trauma is visualised through cinema. This absence is significant, as cinema offers uniquely forceful methods of depicting traumatic experiences that often resist direct representation. Although the scale of devastation during Partition was immense, Trauma Studies has not devoted to it the same sustained focus afforded to the other major historical tragedies. Partition resulted in vast human suffering and stands as a major breakdown within the broader project of decolonisation. While Postcolonial scholarship has extensively examined issues such as displacement, enslavement, racial oppression, political brutality, genocide, segregation, and diasporic movement, yet such work has often neglected the gender-specific violence endured by many across the Indian Sub-continent as well violence borne disproportionately by women. This dissertation responds to these lacunae by foregrounding Partition films that centrally stage women's experiences, bodies, and memories.

Taken together, the scholarship surveyed in this chapter shows that postcolonial theory, Orientalism, trauma studies, and film studies each offer valuable though incomplete lenses for examining Partition. They illustrate the ways in which colonial residues continue to manifest in linguistic practices, legal structures, geopolitical formations, and cultural imagination; however Orientalist frameworks still play a role in constructing portrayals of the Indian Sub-continent that how traumatic experience becomes embedded in memory, storytelling, and visual representation and how film serves as an important space for

exploring guilt, identity formation, and ideas of national attachment. At the same time, they also reveal gaps: inadequate engagement with Orientalism in cinematic discourse, a tendency to privilege literary over filmic texts, insufficient attention to the interplay of gender, body, and space on screen, and the marginal status of Partition trauma in the broader canon of trauma theory.

2.4 Content Analysis and Film Analysis in Partition Studies

A further methodological gap concerns the distinction between content analysis and film analysis. Much of the existing scholarship on Partition representations, particularly in communication and cultural studies, has applied content analysis coding themes, motifs, and narrative elements across large corpora of texts or films. Such work, including surveys of Partition cinema that categorise films by ideology, communal bias, or dominant narrative tropes, has been invaluable in mapping patterns of representation and identifying hegemonic silences. However, content analysis often treats films as containers of textual content rather than as complex audiovisual constructions. By contrast, film analysis as developed in film and media studies takes seriously formal elements such as mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, sound design, performance, and genre conventions. It asks how framing, camera movement, colour palette, music, and narrative structure shape the viewer's affective and ideological engagement with history and trauma. Studies that read *Tamas*, *Earth*, *Train to Pakistan*, or *Pinjar* primarily through dialogue and plot, for instance, risk overlooking how slow tracking shots, lingering close-ups, ruptured timelines, and dissonant soundscapes themselves perform the work of mourning, denial, or displacement. Existing literature has not always clearly differentiated between these two approaches, sometimes subsuming formal analysis under broad thematic coding. This

dissertation explicitly adopts film analysis as its primary interpretive method, while remaining informed by insights from content-analytic surveys. By closely examining visual composition, spatial arrangements, and sound alongside narrative and dialogue, the study aims to show how postcolonial trauma, Orientalism, and gendered dilemmas are not only narrated but also embodied and spatialised within the films' formal structures. Clarifying this distinction strengthens the thesis's methodological coherence and marks its contribution within interdisciplinary Partition studies. This dissertation positions itself at the intersection of these debates by integrating postcolonial theory, Orientalism, trauma studies, memory studies, and film analysis to examine selected South Asian and transnational films on Partition 1947. It foregrounds postcolonial trauma and postcolonial dilemma as central analytical categories, reading cinematic representations as both products and critiques of colonial legacies and national memory. By focusing on film as primary text, the study contributes to closing the identified gaps and offers a more nuanced understanding of how Partition is remembered, visualised, and contested in contemporary cultural production.

2.5 Orientalism and the Colonial Legacy

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) stands as a foundational text critiquing Western portrayals of the East as backward, alien, and fundamentally subordinate. Said argues that Orientalism operates as a discourse of dominance through which the West reshapes and subordinates the Orient in ways that reassert Western superiority. Later scholars, such as Sharp (2009) and Varisco (2011), extended Said's paradigm to postcolonial media, highlighting the persistence of Orientalist themes even within non-Western cultural products. Hafeez and Ara (2016) observe that Bollywood films frequently embody

Orientalist perspectives, portraying the Indian Sub-continent as chaotic, mystical, and exotic tropes originally shaped by colonial discourse. While Said's model is influential in revealing power imbalances, scholars have also criticised it for its scope and for occasionally applying its logic too broadly across diverse non-Western settings (Akhtar, 2023). This thesis adopts a refined understanding of Orientalism to analyze how Bollywood Partition films perpetuate colonial attitudes for national and international audiences, and where they depart from such patterns. In *Orientalism* (1978), Said describes how the Western world constructs a rigid dichotomy between the Occident and the Orient, effectively dividing the globe into two opposing cultural zones. The term Orientalism was introduced not only to identify art-historical representations of the East but also to expose the wider epistemological structures through which the West defined, disciplined, and controlled the East. He contended that the cultural representations produced through this 'us-versus-them' division are artificially created and continually reinforce one another. The West systematically produced cultural narratives that enabled it to dominate populations in the Middle East, the Indian Sub-continent, and the other regions by portraying them as fundamentally distinct and civilisationally divergent. European thinkers depicted the Orient as backward, undisciplined, irrational, and inferior, while simultaneously portraying the West as advanced, orderly, rational, and culturally refined. Edward Said underscored the crucial role of philological study through language, history, biography, politics, and literary forms in maintaining these representational structures (Abedi Valoojerdi, 2020).

The films *Earth* (1999), *The Viceroy's House* (2017), *Train to Pakistan* (1998), and *Partition* (2007) reveal numerous Orientalist elements consistent with Said's critique, especially in their framing of religious communities, landscapes, and colonial authority. The British contempt and unfavourable perceptions directed at the people of the Indian

Sub-continent, observations that reinforce Said's theorisation of Orientalism. Traditionally, Orientalism refers to artistic and cultural representations of Eastern worlds produced primarily by Western artists, writers, and intellectuals. After the publication of Said's book, the term expanded to signify a generalised Western attitude of condescension toward Middle Eastern, Asian, and North African societies. Said maintained that the West frames these cultures as unchanging and undeveloped entities or objects that can be analysed, reproduced, and employed to legitimise imperial control. He asserted that Western culture defines itself as mature, rational, adaptable, and superior, while constructing the Orient as its inferior opposite. British colonial interactions with the populations of the Indian Sub-continent also reflected this mentality. As noted earlier, the imprint of colonial authority on language, cultural practices, and social organisation continues to linger in the region, even decades after independence. According to Said, this enduring dominance enables Western political, economic, cultural, and social supremacy, both during the colonial era and in contemporary times (Al Mtairi, 2019).

The persistence of colonial ideologies within the societies of the colonised, even after independence, affirms Said's argument and provides an important lens for interrogating how Partition films may unconsciously reproduce these hierarchies even when they appear to celebrate national independence. Within art history, Orientalism refers to Western artistic works produced in response to nineteenth-century travels throughout Western Asian regions (Clines, 2020). In the article *Musicking the Other: Orientalism in Hindi Cinema*, Booth (2017) analyses the film *Khuda Gawah* and illustrates the ways in which Orientalist tropes are woven into its musical framework. Similar Orientalist elements appear in *Lagaan*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, and numerous other Bollywood productions. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) became foundational within postcolonial cultural

studies. In this work, Said reinterprets Orientalism as a pervasive Western academic and artistic tradition that constructs biased representations of the East, influenced by eighteenth and nineteenth-century imperial attitudes. He conceptualised Orientalism as an intellectual system that turns the Orient into a vast representational arena, one that makes the East appear less threatening and more manageable to the West while reinforcing the Western claim to civilise it (Al Mtairi, 2019).

Said asserted that the British initiated colonialism in the Indian Sub-continent to control local resources, viewing the population as primitive and uninformed, a perception that persists in continued characterisations of the region as underdeveloped or third-world (Rahman et al., 2018). By mobilising this framework, the present study asks not only how Western films about Partition may Orientalise South Asia, but also how South Asian films themselves sometimes internalise and reproduce Orientalist tropes. In *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (2000), Stephen Howe agrees with Said that the exploitation of impoverished nations and the extraction of wealth and labour enabled the establishment and expansion of Western empires (Hickel et al., 2021). From this perspective, it is historically accurate that the British first entered the Indian Sub-continent as commercial traders, although they ultimately expanded their presence into full administrative and territorial rule. This thesis examines postcolonial society in the Indian Sub-continent as represented through cinema, interpreted through the lens of Orientalism. Before Partition, British officials engaged with local communities through interactions shaped by Orientalist pre-suppositions; yet even after the division, colonial habits, institutions, and practices endured as lingering legacies within Indian Sub-continental cultures. The films under analysis are therefore read as visual sites where Orientalist discourse, postcolonial identity, and national memory intersect.

2.6 Postcolonial Theory and Counter-Narratives

Frantz Fanon (1925–1961), both psychiatrist and philosopher, argues that colonial rule is fundamentally damaging and imposes deep, long-term consequences upon the societies that endure its domination. He championed active and forceful resistance to colonial authority (Castelli, 2022). An examination of his postcolonial theories reveals that the societies of the Indian Sub-continent still display traces of colonial influence embedded within their linguistic patterns, cultural practices, and social structures. One such lingering legacy is the continued prominence of the English language, which persists as an official medium on both sides of the border despite more than seven decades of independence. This ongoing linguistic reliance complicates efforts to challenge colonial remnants and reinforces enduring postcolonial difficulties and psychological limitations. Although the inhabitants of the Indian Sub-continent have achieved political decolonisation, economic limitations and ingrained cultural hierarchies continue to reinforce mental colonisation, giving rise to ongoing postcolonial tragedies and crises. Fanon's emphasis on psychological alienation and internalised inferiority provides a crucial bridge between postcolonial studies and trauma theory in this thesis. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a leading postcolonial theorist, employed the concepts of essentialism and strategic essentialism to articulate the social aims of postcolonial movements. Essentialism involves compressing varied cultural identities into simplified, stereotypical categories, while strategic essentialism despite recognising diversity supports the tactical use of a collective identity to advance specific political or social objectives (Tzanelli, 2021). The Indian Sub-continent is characterised by significant cultural and ethnic plurality, encompassing many social communities with unique identities. This wide array of religious and cultural groups played a role in shaping the circumstances that ultimately led to the region's Partition, as many

groups failed to co-exist harmoniously within the constraints of colonial governance and rising communal tensions. Spivak's analysis of representation and voicing helps this study consider whose perspectives are foregrounded or silenced in Partition films. Bhabha (1949), in *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha argues that human societies are organised into unequal and distinct cultural groupings, often framed through terms such as Christendom, the Islamic world, and the First, Second, and Third Worlds (Bhandari, 2022). He maintains that hybridity produced through the encounters between colonisers and colonised peoples fundamentally unsettles the conceptual authority of colonial power. The Indian Sub-continent has been labelled part of the Third World since the post-1945 era (Penier, 2015), classification that perpetuates perceptions of the region as underdeveloped or backward views that existed even before independence. The colonisers' Orientalist perceptions of the colonised remain a continual site of contention. Additional postcolonial scholars Siva Kumar (1956), Dipesh Chakrabarty (1948), Derek Gregory (1951), and Amar Acheraiou (1967) have offered critical perspectives on post-colonialism in relation to nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets, writers, and cultural thinkers. Their work, in different ways, emphasises the need to provincialise Europe and recognise local epistemologies, a concern that this thesis extends to cinematic practices. Postcolonial literature is generally understood as literary production that emerged following the withdrawal of imperial powers from territories they once controlled. The term postcolonial emerged from the ideology of European or imperial civilisational superiority, which formed the basis of colonial rule. Colonial era literature includes the works of Creole and indigenous authors written under imperial domination. This section examines the components of postcolonial theory marginalisation, identity crises, hybridity, multiculturalism, racial discrimination, and cross-cultural interactions as articulated by

Rana (2021). Since the 1980s, the term post-colonialism has gained significant prominence. Although formal imperial rule has ended, formerly colonised nations continue to reclaim their diminished identities after centuries of linguistic, literary, and cultural imposition. Post-colonialism involves reclaiming histories and identities that were marginalised or obscured during periods of imperial rule. Movements opposing colonial domination emerged well before the formal processes of decolonisation in places such as China, Japan, India, and several other regions, ultimately leading many colonies to achieve self-rule and establish local governance. Post-colonialism investigates colonial practices, the consequences of imperial subjugation for indigenous peoples, and the literary works created both as reactions to colonial rule and under its continuing shadow. Pramod K. Nayar explains that the theoretical aspect of post-coloniality is encapsulated in the term post-colonialism, a methodology of reading, political analysis, and cultural resistance that critiques both historical and contemporary forms of colonial and neo-colonial power. It challenges entrenched systems of racism, inequality, and exploitation through principles of social justice, emancipation, and democratic liberation (Bhandari, 2022).

Post-colonialism and postcolonial theory is therefore deeply interconnected. They reject all forms of hegemonic domination and critique any manifestations of colonial power. The early 1990s signalled an important moment in postcolonial scholarship, represented by influential works including Said's *Orientalism*, Bhabha's *Nation and Narration*, Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths' *The Empire Writes Back*, and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (Rana, 2021). This thesis draws on these canonical works not merely as abstract theory but as interpretive tools for reading how Partition films stage questions of nation, narrative, and subjectivity. Frantz Fanon remains a central figure in postcolonial and late twentieth-century literature. Born in the French Antilles in 1925, he

trained as a psychoanalyst in France and Martinique. His seminal texts *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) draw from his psychiatric practice and explore the psychological effects of colonialism on both colonisers and colonised. Fanon noted that colonial rule stripped indigenous peoples of their humanity and fostered a psychological state in which they internalised feelings of inferiority. John McLeod (2000) notes that in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon explores the existential distress of existing in a society where one's skin colour renders one peculiar, mocked, and excluded, an experience that is both painful and illuminating (Jean-Marie, 2017). Fanon argues that colonialism drained the indigenous people of their essence, representing them as malevolent, pagan, superstitious, and primitive. McLeod supports Fanon's assertion that colonisers portrayed themselves as civilised, rational, and superior, while casting the colonised as 'other.' In this framework, the coloniser becomes the centre and the self, whereas the colonised becomes the margin and the 'other.' Fanon describes how colonised subjects begin to internalise Eurocentric perceptions of identity, viewing themselves through the gaze of white individuals. In doing so, they abandon their own culture, religion, and language in favour of Western norms yet still never achieve acceptance. Fanon describes this state, metaphorically captured in the image of 'white masks over black skin' as producing a deeply fragmented sense of identity. The inability of colonised subjects to fully assimilate forces them to rediscover and reclaim their suppressed identities (McLeod, 2013).

Through this process, indigenous populations begin to decolonize Eurocentric norms, reclaiming their traditions, religions, and cultural identities. They free themselves from colonial constraints by writing their own histories and literatures. Fanon insists that culture must be dynamic rather than static; it must evolve rather than remain confined to

tradition. Although political independence marks the end of formal colonial rule, Fanon argues that colonial influence continues long after liberation, making political freedom only the beginning of a deeper cultural struggle. This insistence on the unfinished nature of decolonisation is particularly relevant for reading Partition cinema, which is produced in formally independent yet psychologically and materially unequal societies. Bhabha's contributions to postcolonial theory further illuminate the complexities of colonial encounters. He argues that identities formed during colonial contact are inherently unstable and relational. The coloniser constructs identity by contrasting himself with colonised populations, while the colonised are shaped by the very structures that oppress them. In *Of Mimicry and Men*, Bhabha expands on the notion of mimicry by illustrating how colonised individuals emulate their colonisers, taking on Western schooling, language, attire, and cultural habits. This mimicry, however, is never complete; it undermines the authority of colonial power by revealing its contradictions. Bhabha calls this dual condition hybridity, a liminal state in which the colonised subject occupies a space between official Englishness and authentic Indian-ness (Bhandari, 2022). In filmic terms, this liminality can be traced in characters that move between languages, religions, and geographies in Partition narratives. Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* interrogates whether the Subaltern, the oppressed and marginalised classes, can truly articulate their voices. She contends that intertwined colonial and patriarchal systems mute Subaltern subjects particularly women, by placing them within discursive frameworks they cannot shape or control. Discourse itself is a system governed by power; thus, individuals lacking representation within dominant discourse cannot construct identities on their own terms (Salih, 2017). Spivak argues that Subaltern women are doubly marginalised, their voices mediated through agents who speak for them. The Subaltern Studies collective maintains

that historical narratives are composed of numerous intersecting voices, each possessing its own legitimacy. However, Spivak cautions against scholars who presume to speak for the Subaltern, noting that such representations often reproduce Western conceptual frameworks (Piu, 2023). These concerns are crucial for this dissertation's analysis of how Partition films depict women, lower-class characters, and religious minorities: as speaking subjects, metaphors, or silent victims. Postcolonial literature spans the South Pacific, Africa, Bangladesh, the Caribbean, New Zealand, India, Malaysia, Malta, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Australia. Its purpose is to reinterpret history from the perspective of the colonised, restoring narratives erased or distorted by colonial rule. Core components of postcolonial analysis include marginalisation, identity, multiculturalism, hybridity, mimicry, and migration. Marginalisation takes place when powerful groups keep disadvantaged populations in unstable economic, social, or political positions. Marginalised groups face exploitation, lack basic rights, struggle economically, and are denied equal opportunities. Their caste or class becomes a barrier to quality employment and socio-economic mobility. They endure systemic injustices and remain far removed from centres of power and progress. Postcolonial theory examines literary works whether authored by colonisers or colonised peoples to shed light on the cultural, political, and psychological realities shaped by colonial influence. Postcolonial remnants appear not only in literature but also in art and film. This study classifies films into two principal categories: productions emerging from formerly colonised nations and those crafted by filmmakers belonging to former colonial powers. These categories embody contrasting perspectives and methodologies, resulting in a clear dichotomy between 'us' and 'them.' In this dissertation, films by colonised producers, directors, and writers are examined alongside films by creators from former colonial powers. Although the filmmakers from

the Indian Sub-continent represent a nation with political autonomy, their engagement with colonial legacies remains deeply shaped by postcolonial realities. Their artistic output reveals the continued cultural and psychological imprint left by imperial domination, revealing how the decolonised populations of the Indian Sub-continent continue to grapple with postcolonial trauma and dilemma (Dar & Manzoor, 2017). This comparative approach also highlights the visual and narrative differences between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives on Partition.

2.7 Historical and Political Context of Partition 1947

The Partition of the Indian Sub-continent in 1947 was not simply a political transition but the outcome of colonial policies that intensified communal divisions. British administrative strategies, particularly divide-and-rule practices, contributed to the fragmentation of social cohesion, while the rushed process of independence and boundary-making exposed millions to violence and displacement. As one of the largest forced migrations in history, Partition reflects both the culmination of nationalist movements and the enduring consequences of colonial intervention, leaving a legacy of trauma that continues to shape postcolonial identities and memory.

2.7.1 Postcolonial Society and Colonial Legacies

The focus of this research is the postcolonial society of the Indian Sub-continent as portrayed in the selected films. Post-colonialism explores the subjugation of colonised populations frequently racialised as inferior, undeveloped, or uncivilised through entrenched forms of political, economic, and cultural control. It signifies an ongoing tension between dominance and subordination, shaping identity construction, societal

frameworks, and economic conditions, while leaving the cultural imprint of imperial rule upon the colonised (Loomba, 2015). Even after the attainment of independence, the signs of imperial influence persisted within the societies of the Indian Sub-continent and ultimately surfaced within their cinematic expressions. The films selected for this study therefore do not simply depict historical events; they also register the lingering effects of colonial hierarchies on postcolonial subjectivities. Throughout the mid- to late-nineteenth century, various racialised political forces endeavoured to assert control over the language, cultural life, and geopolitical direction of colonised societies. Consequently, the concepts of imperialism and post-colonialism became established globally (Raja, 2021). This kind of dominance whether exerted through language, cultural institutions, or infrastructural systems, forms part of the enduring colonial legacies embedded within societies, shaped by imperial governance. The Indian Sub-continent similarly suffered linguistic, cultural, and infrastructural domination. This research therefore examines these colonial legacies as they appear in the films selected for analysis, especially because such themes remain underexplored in cinematic studies, despite film's proximity to real-world conditions. Raja (2021) provides useful frameworks for this investigation, though his work does not entirely accommodate the postcolonial dilemmas and traumas that are central to this dissertation. European powers including Belgium, Britain, France, and Germany rationalised their colonial and postcolonial authority over Asian and African regions by asserting that they were 'civilising' populations they depicted as existing in a state of darkness. Within neo-colonial discourses, geopolitical categorisations often consign formerly colonised regions particularly in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania to the position commonly labelled as the 'third world.' The Indian Sub-continent continues to be described in such terms today. Under the broader scope of post-colonialism, concepts such as 'the Arabs,' 'the First

World,' 'Christendom,' and 'the Ummah' are also examined. Although postcolonial theory formally emerged in the late nineteenth century, invasions of peoples, cultures, traditions, languages, and territories had been ongoing since the early Middle Ages, when the Persian and Roman empires confronted successive incursions. Later, Spain fell under Muslim rule, and such invasions continued across continents, states, kingdoms, and regions. Viewed from this broader historical perspective, the forces associated with post-colonialism possess long-standing and far-reaching origins across many parts of the world (Raja, 2021). Accordingly, this research investigates the manifestations of post-colonial conditions within Indian Sub-continental society as represented in the chosen films, arguing that these legacies shape not only historical experiences but also contemporary visual narratives.

2.7.2 Colonial Historiography and Political Narratives of Partition

An important account of Pakistan's early formation can be found in Khalid Bin Sayeed's *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857-1948*. The text begins with the 1857 War of Independence and concludes with Partition. Sayeed documents the major developments that culminated in the creation of Pakistan and outlines the successive phases of the Pakistan Movement, illustrating how an aspiration once viewed as unattainable eventually took shape. The book also highlights the dilemmas and traumas experienced by the people during this transformative period (Rauf, 2020). For this dissertation, Sayeed's work is significant because it provides a political and chronological scaffold against which cinematic reconstructions of Partition can be assessed. Another significant historical perspective largely unbiased in its discussion of politics, colonial practices, trauma, and postcolonial dilemmas can be found in the works of Stanley Wolpert, including *Gandhi's*

Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Jinnah of Pakistan, and Shameful Flight. Along with Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi profoundly shaped the lives and destinies of millions. Wolpert depicts Gandhi as both a moral exemplar and a foundational architect of the modern Indian nation. In order to illuminate Gandhi's life and ideology, Wolpert first explores the evolution of his enigmatic personality, explaining the transformation from Mohandas to Mahatma with clarity and nuance. Wolpert compares Gandhi's passion to the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross, emphasising Gandhi's lifelong willingness to embrace sacrifice. For Gandhi, the core principles that shaped his philosophy were *tapas* (the embrace of suffering), *ahimsa* (commitment to non-violence), and *satyagraha* (the steadfast pursuit of truth). He surrendered worldly comforts, endured harsh climates, travelled in crowded rail compartments, accepted imprisonment, and often walked barefoot. Mahatma Gandhi's opposition to British rule and his steadfast adherence to his ideals form part of the postcolonial complexities and traumas analysed in this dissertation (Wolpert, 2023).

Gandhi's philosophy evolved in response to the injustices he encountered, particularly the racial discrimination he experienced in South Africa and early in his legal career in India. Such encounters profoundly informed his perception of the psychological and social wounds inflicted by colonial domination. He relied on his religious convictions and adhered to non-violent political strategies. Gandhi and Jinnah differed substantially in their approaches to independence: Gandhi rejected constitutional negotiations, while Jinnah relied upon them. Jinnah eventually secured Pakistan through relentless advocacy, whereas Gandhi, in the latter stages of his political life, struggled to mobilise sufficient support for non-violent resistance. These divergent political strategies are often simplified or mythologised in film; the present study instead reads cinematic representations of these

figures against such nuanced historical accounts. Wolpert's *Jinnah of Pakistan* is considered one of the most balanced examinations of Jinnah's contributions to the Muslims of the Indian Sub-continent. Wolpert avoids demonising Jinnah as many Indian writers have and equally refrains from mythologising him. Instead, he portrays Jinnah as a shrewd political strategist who outmaneuvered both Hindus and the British. The book presents Jinnah as a complex leader with emotional and physical vulnerabilities whose greatness lay in overcoming these limitations to reshape South Asia's political map. Contrary to some Indian portrayals, Wolpert portrays Jinnah as a practical rather than a self-interested leader, contending that Muslims turned to the demand for Pakistan only after finding themselves politically marginalised. Jinnah's persistence, even while battling a terminal illness, exemplifies his resolve. These political crises contributed to the postcolonial dilemmas and traumas experienced by the people. In contrast, some scholars claim that Jinnah pursued personal political ambitions. Napoleon's famous remark resonates here: "History is a myth agreed upon" Napoleon Bonaparte (Roberts, 2015). History is often recorded by the victors, and thus one perspective is amplified while the others are suppressed. Nowhere is this more evident than in the histories of India and Pakistan. The British administration meticulously documented communications, agreements, notes, memoirs, and journals, yet these documents were kept inaccessible for fifty years under official secrecy regulations. When they were released in 1977, many principal actors were no longer alive. These documents reveal deep insights into the political dilemmas and postcolonial traumas of the period and provide an important inter-text for reading films like *The Viceroy's House*, which dramatise elite negotiations over Partition. Wolpert later published *Shameful Flight*, a powerful critique of British handling of the Partition. The title refers to the 'shameful flight' described by Winston Churchill in a House of Commons debate, where he

condemned the British government's hasty withdrawal from India. Wolpert uses this concept to frame his narrative. He argues that the massacre and estimated two million deaths were avoidable, implicating all major actors but identifying Lord Mountbatten as the central figure responsible for the disastrous haste. The British government had planned to leave India by June 1948, but Mountbatten hastened the timeline, resulting in the division of the Indian Sub-continent by mid-August 1947. His choice to withhold the boundary maps until after the independence ceremonies severely undermined Britain's image of impartiality. Some Muslim-majority areas were assigned to India in violation of the Boundary Commission's criteria. This same issue is examined in this study through the film *The Viceroy's House*. According to Wolpert, the Labour government's distrust of Indian leaders underpinned the rushed Partition. H. M. Seervai's *Partition of India: Legend and Reality* presents the final decade of British rule, offering multiple perspectives on the events that led to Partition. Seervai examines the growing rift between Hindus and Muslims, rejected proposals, and the reactions of the people. The arrogance of Congress leaders and the revival of the Muslim League after its 1937 electoral defeat are also connected to postcolonial dilemmas and traumas. Seervai, like Abul Kalam Azad in *India Wins Freedom*, criticises Congress for rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan, which could have preserved a united India through a coalition government. He maintains that Jinnah repeatedly showed both foresight and a readiness to co-exist with Hindus, until shifting political conditions compelled a different course. This study reveals the conflicted nature of Congress leadership, whose political judgements often faltered outside strictly political contexts. When read alongside Partition films, such works highlight the extent to which cinematic narratives either reproduce or challenge nationalist blame-laying. Dennis Judd's *The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj* explores how a small group of

foreign invaders managed to dominate the Indian Sub-continent with surprising ease. The book traces British rule from 1600 to 1947 and analyses its impacts on both Indians and Pakistanis, placing these developments within a wider constellation of postcolonial tensions and historical traumas. Judd traces early interactions between the British and local populations, beginning with the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's decision to allow East India Company merchants to trade. At that time, the Dutch dominated the East Indies spice trade, prompting the British to focus on India. Their eventual dominance stemmed from maritime superiority, technology, strategic alliances, and sustained administrative and financial support. Judd poses critical questions about whether the British sought genuine development or mere exploitation and whether they lived up to their self-proclaimed mission to civilise the so-called barbaric races. Although the author does not always provide definitive answers, he enriches the narrative with vivid anecdotes and references to literary figures such as Rudyard Kipling, Noel Coward, George Orwell, and E. M. Forster (Gopal, 2019). These nuances invite a more sceptical reading of films that present the British either as benevolent rulers or as one-dimensional villains. Narendra Singh Sarila's *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition* examines Partition through the lens of geopolitical strategy. Sarila contends that Partition did not arise solely from political bargaining but constituted one element of a broader geopolitical 'Great Game' engineered by Western powers. He highlights Jinnah's relentless pressure on the British and compares the differing perspectives of Muslims, Hindus, and the British leading up to Partition. Sarila's account is especially compelling given his position as a young diplomat on Mountbatten's staff. The text proposes that British policies helped cultivate the roots of religious extremism and communal antagonism within the region, an argument that resonates strongly in the post-9/11 world. This geopolitical emphasis

complicates cinematic narratives that localise blame within communal communities alone. Lady Pamela Mountbatten's *India Remembered* offers a first-person account of the tumultuous years of 1947–1948. Having lived in India for fifteen months with her parents, she kept journals documenting events surrounding independence. Her journal entries from August 1947 are especially striking. She describes Jinnah as cold and distant, yet possessing a magnetic presence, and recalls the emotional turmoil of watching her father transition from being the most powerful man in India to one with no authority. While the book may not offer deep political analysis, it provides intimate insight into the human dimension of Partition and its generational impact. Such personal recollections echo the affective registers often foregrounded in Partition cinema, where elite political histories intersect with ordinary emotional lives. Finally, Charles Ball's *History of the Indian Mutiny* explores the mythologised figure of Mangal Pandey, released on the 150th anniversary of the Indian uprising. Many British-authored works provide personal accounts of Englishmen who survived the conflict. Bell's history is notable for striving toward impartiality, highlighting British missionary attempts to convert locals especially sepoys as a source of resentment. He acknowledges the growing animosity long before Battle of Plassey but maintains that internal social structures, such as the Hindu caste system, contributed significantly to local unrest. Although the text cannot be regarded as wholly devoid of colonial bias, it nonetheless provides significant insight into early colonial mindsets and interpretive frameworks. These perspectives enrich this research by illuminating the historical roots of postcolonial dilemmas and traumas that are reflected in the films under study (Dalrymple, 2019). They also serve as a reminder that cinematic narratives of resistance, mutiny, and betrayal are often haunted by much older imperial anxieties.

2.8 Memory Studies and Partition: Cultural and Prosthetic Memory

Trauma theory grounded in Freud's notions of belated reaction and the compulsion to repeat distressing experiences has been extended into postcolonial scholarship to examine various forms of collective historical suffering (Caruth, 2016). In Partition-related research, trauma is frequently understood as an overwhelming break that disrupts historical continuity and unsettles established identities (Choudhury, 2022). Sengupta (2020) shows that in many Partition narratives, women's bodies are fashioned as emblematic sites of collective trauma, often simplified into fixed representations of victimhood. Yet, while scholarship has largely concentrated on literary portrayals, comparatively little academic work has examined how trauma is visually articulated in cinema. This gap is significant, for cinema through its fusion of visual and auditory techniques offers uniquely potent means of depicting traumatic experiences that otherwise resist representation (Sarkar & Mukherjee, 2020). The present study therefore aligns with memory and trauma scholarship while explicitly shifting the focus from textual to visual media. As Susannah Radstone, Janet Walker, and Noah Shenker (2007) explain, the shifting nature of memory, the different representational modes realist or otherwise and critiques of psychoanalytic frameworks as potentially Eurocentric indicate that trauma emerges in multiple, intricate forms. This multidimensionality accounts for the wide spectrum of traumas, ranging from psychological to physical. It also implies that no single aesthetic mode realist, melodramatic, allegorical can exhaustively capture Partition's violence, a point that is crucial for analysing the heterogeneous styles of the films in this corpus. In Abigail Ward's *Postcolonial Traumas: Memory, Narrative, Resistance*, drawing on Deleuze, trauma is described as comprising 'many levels of past' interwoven across 'layers of reality,' inhabited by different characters within distinct temporalities. Memory, he argues, operates

beyond temporal, cultural, historical, and political boundaries, shaping the recollection and transmission of painful experiences (Ward, 2013). Such distressing events can therefore serve as long-lasting sources of psychological pain, remaining etched into human memory for prolonged durations, and at times indefinitely. Although the Holocaust is often viewed as the defining trauma of the twentieth century, the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent is similarly recognised as among the gravest collective traumas in modern global history, generating multiple layers and forms of trauma during and after its unfolding. Partition films frequently stage these layered temporalities through flashbacks, voice-over narration, and multi-generational storytelling. Visual portrayals of trauma whether conveyed through still images or moving recordings produce an unusually immediate mode of encountering such experiences. Yet viewers of traumatic imagery do not always respond with the expected emotion. Stephen Eisenman's (1937) study on reactions to the photographs of torture from Abu Ghraib prison in 2004 found that these images failed to generate political outrage and instead elicited a disconcerting sense of indifference (Hansen, 2015). Roger Luckhurst maintains that when trauma remains unexamined, it can blunt communal awareness and diminish attention to matters of atrocity, genocide, and conflict. He warns that the concept of 'cultural trauma' may, at times, inhibit necessary political engagement (Davis & Meretoja, 2020). These cautions remind us that Partition films may function both as tools of remembrance and as spectacles that risk normalising or aestheticising suffering. Cinema functions as a distinctive medium through which the cultural taboos surrounding traumatic wounds can be dismantled and made visible taboos that, due to cultural, ideological, mythological, or historical sensitivities, often remain too painful to articulate publicly. Cinema possesses a singular ability to depict ruptures, absences, and temporal dissonances, making it the medium the most proficient at bringing trauma into visual form.

It conveys distant memories, lost iconologies, and deep flashbacks that permeate social consciousness. Cinema can thus be understood as an artistic attempt to communicate experiences that cannot be shared through conventional discourse (Lau-Zhu et al., 2019). It equally operates as a mode of prosthetic memory, allowing audiences to experience global tragedies through vantage points beyond their own lived realities (Hutton, 2021).

For this dissertation, the concept of prosthetic memory is central: Partition films are treated as cultural technologies through which later generations ‘remember’ an event they did not themselves live through. This research explores cultural trauma and investigates how communal fissures amplify shared experiences of suffering. It focuses specifically on the visual representation of tragedy in films, analysing the numerous forms of trauma stemming from the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent. The memory studies framework therefore complements postcolonial theory by highlighting how trauma is transmitted, re-enacted, or silenced across time and media.

2.9 Trauma Theory and Partition

Trauma theory, informed by Sigmund Freud and Cathy Caruth, conceptualises trauma as an overwhelming experience that cannot be fully processed and returns through fragmented and repetitive memory. In the context of Partition, this framework explains how violence and displacement persist as unresolved psychological and collective wounds, shaping memory and identity across time.

2.9.1 Interpretation and Categories of Trauma

This study interrogates human suffering and existential rupture through the conceptual prism of trauma, with particular attention to the multiplicity of traumatic

formations that emerge from catastrophic and historically convulsive events such as the Partition of 1947. Within trauma scholarship, Ghassan El-Baalbaki (2016) and Christophe Fortin (2016) delineate child maltreatment as a critical category, encompassing not only overt neglect but also physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological abuse as structurally embedded modes of harm. Domestic violence constitutes another analytically significant domain, extending beyond the immediate subject of abuse to implicate witnesses and those inhabiting environments saturated with coercion, intimidation, and sustained aggression. War-related trauma is similarly theorized as a complex constellation of psychological and corporeal disturbances, encompassing the experiences of refugees, civilian populations in conflict zones, victims of terrorism, and individuals directly exposed to combat. Community and school-based violence are further identified as recurrent trauma sites, manifesting in peer aggression, sexual violation, shootings, and robbery, each functioning as a locus of destabilized subjectivity and fractured social trust. Medical trauma may arise from chronic illness, prolonged bodily suffering, severe injury, or acute health crises, wherein the body itself becomes a terrain of vulnerability and distress. In parallel, the abrupt or unforeseen death of a loved one may precipitate traumatic bereavement, characterized by enduring psychic dislocation and affective disintegration. Trauma linked to natural disasters may originate in hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and the other catastrophic environmental upheavals that disrupt the ontological security of everyday life. Furthermore, the forced relocation or disappearance of a family member or acquaintance may generate profound emotional and psychological turmoil, underscoring trauma's entanglement with loss, displacement, and the erosion of relational continuity (Muldoon, 2019). Accordingly, this research centres on the various traumatic experiences that arose during and after the 1947-Partition of the Indian Sub-continent, many of which fit these

categories but occur within a distinct historical and political context. Trauma theory has evolved into a dynamic field of study that took shape in the 1980s through the intersection of psychological research and the humanities, along with its growing integration into film and media studies. Rather instead of following a straightforward developmental path, trauma theory has grown through a layered and historically cyclical trajectory, one characterised by debates, revisions, and disciplinary intersections. This research employs trauma theory to investigate the multiple forms of human suffering that followed the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent. In doing so, it also interrogates how far Euro-American trauma paradigms can be applied to South Asian experiences, a question raised by several critics. Many scholars in cinema and media studies, as well as researchers from the other academic fields, have recognised the significance of trauma theory. In much of the trauma studies literature, the Holocaust is often cited as the most devastating collective trauma of the twentieth century (Maercker, 2023). The 1947 Partition of the Indian Sub-continent is widely considered one of the most catastrophic events in Asia's modern history, second only to the destruction wrought during the Second World War, given its capacity to produce far-reaching and enduring traumatic consequences. Yet, as the next subsection suggests, trauma theory's Holocaust-centred genealogy sometimes limits its ability to fully apprehend colonial and postcolonial violence. Scholars including John Eric Erichsen, Jean-Martin Charcot, Hermann Oppenheim, Josef Breuer, Sigmund Freud, and later Cathy Caruth are recognised as pivotal contributors to the early development of trauma studies and the emergence of trauma theory during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By the 1990s, trauma studies had secured a strong disciplinary presence across numerous academic fields and research areas, including American studies, history, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology. Antze and Lambek (1996)

produced a cross-disciplinary collection that brought together varied analyses of the concept of trauma, although their work returned to a more binary interpretive model as opposed to the more nuanced theoretical approaches that had become common in film and media studies. Caruth, Tal, and Hirsch concentrated on examining the ways trauma is depicted in literary texts, cinematic works, and photographic media as reinforced in more recent scholarship that reassesses classical trauma theory and its limitations (Bond & Craps, 2020). In alignment with this scholarly trajectory, this dissertation focuses specifically on the forms of trauma portrayed in films produced in the aftermath of the 1947 Partition of the Indian Sub-continent and asks how these visual narratives confirm or challenge dominant trauma paradigms.

2.9.2 Trauma and Postcolonial Theory

Trauma and postcolonial thought are deeply interlinked, since colonial and postcolonial conditions frequently serve as the underlying catalysts for traumatic experiences. Numerous previously colonised regions continue to carry profound injuries stemming from sustained forms of colonial oppression. A close examination of the society of the Indian Sub-continent reveals numerous traumas occurring both before and after independence. Irene Visser maintains that the expanding engagement with cultural trauma within postcolonial critique underscores the continuing relevance of trauma scholarship today, regardless of geographical or historical context. Nonetheless, trauma theory is frequently critiqued for being inadequate to the aims of postcolonial literary research. A key issue when examining trauma studies in relation to postcolonial literature is determining whether the two frameworks can be meaningfully synthesised as reinforced by

recent scholarship that reevaluates the applicability of Western trauma models to colonial and postcolonial histories (Bond & Craps, 2020).

The present study takes up this question in the specifically cinematic domain. In his seminal article *On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies* (1995), Geoffrey Hartman (1929–2016) welcomed the paradigm shift introduced by trauma theory, noting its capacity to expand theoretical discourse and deepen understanding of human response. The significant influence of trauma theory on literary criticism was accurately anticipated. Yet since the incorporation of trauma theory into postcolonial literary studies, researchers have repeatedly questioned and critiqued the pre-dominance of conventional trauma frameworks. Multiple publications in 2008 drew attention to trauma theory's shortcomings in postcolonial contexts, particularly its inclination to remove trauma from its political and historical dimensions. Another crucial critique concerns indigenous storytelling traditions, which often rely on rituals and culturally specific practices that fall outside the analytical boundaries of trauma theory. Several scholars argue that trauma theory does not adequately conceptualise spirituality (Gone, 2023). Trauma theory and postcolonial theory are therefore deeply intertwined, with post-colonialism often functioning as the catalyst for traumas such as community violence. Trauma, in this sense, mirrors colonialism itself, wherein one community becomes a sustained source of exploitation for another. Yet, as the next subsection suggests, trauma theory's Holocaust-centred genealogy can limit its ability to fully apprehend colonial and postcolonial violence. Recent scholarship in trauma and postcolonial studies highlights that conventional trauma paradigms rooted in Euro-American psychoanalytic models and event-based understandings often struggle to account for the sustained, historical, and politically embedded forms of suffering characteristic of colonial and postcolonial contexts. For instance, Khan (2024) argues that trauma in

colonial settings involves long-term processes of violence, dislocation, and identity fragmentation that conventional Western trauma frameworks do not adequately capture, underscoring the need for decolonised approaches to understanding trauma beyond singular catastrophic events (Khan, 2024). In this context, the current study investigates postcolonial trauma within the colonised territories of the Indian Sub-continent, examining experiences both prior to independence and in the aftermath of Partition, and considers how Partition films embody or resist these theoretical developments.

2.10 Cinema as a Site of Memory and Trauma

Cinema operates as a visual surface that allows viewers to observe terrifying images of cruelty, horror, and violence without being consumed by immediate fear. Film becomes an especially potent medium by permitting audiences to internalise concealed or unexpressed forms of pain on a subconscious level, thereby reshaping the fear they evoke and framing discussions around real-life brutality. It translates intricate human experiences by deploying narrative techniques, dramatic structure, aesthetic form, symbolic imagery, specific lighting, camera work, montage, and sound design. As a medium, Film maintains the emotional and psychological imprint of violent encounters as they are carried within both individuals and collective memory embodied in both physical and psychological registers (Solanki & Parmar, 2023). Numerous scholarly works, such as Adam Lowenstein's *Shocking Representation*, Linnie Blake's *The Wounds of Nations*, and Elisabeth Bronfen's *Specters of War*, address the intersection of trauma, fear, and violence. Lowenstein examines horror classics such as *Peeping Tom* (1960), *Onibaba* (1964), *Last House on the Left* (1972), and films by David Cronenberg, exploring their connections to the Vietnam War, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the other man-made catastrophes (McMurdo,

2022). Linnie Blake (2008) observes that the continuum of violence stretching from the Second World War to the events of 9/11 has become deeply woven into cinematic expression. She explains that film can serve as a multiplier of psychological and intellectual knowledge by mediating traumatic events such as genocide, war, persecution, and social marginalisation, and by examining the relationship between horror cinema, historical trauma, and nation-building. Bronfen's *Specters of War* contends that Hollywood's war cinema repeatedly recycles the fascination and terror associated with warfare, linked to cultural beliefs, fears, and fantasies. Visual material acts as a mirror, persistently reflecting America's violent wartime history, independent of shifting political contexts. While these studies focus largely on Euro-American cases, they offer important conceptual tools for reading South Asian trauma films, especially concerning spectatorship, affect, and national myth-making. The acute and devastating violence, shock, and distress inflicted by atrocity, genocide, war, and catastrophe particularly in the United States, Germany, and Israel/Palestine. Such nations are frequently characterised as 'wounded cultures,' 'trauma cultures,' or 'traumatised societies' (Eyerman, 2019). Although the Indian Sub-continent is not traditionally categorised among these trauma cultures, the 1947 Partition rendered the region deeply traumatised. Despite the persistence of Partition trauma across generations, yet it would be imprecise to portray the whole population as enduring a permanent state of trauma. In clinical literature such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III), issued by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, The DSM-III formally codified these symptoms under the category of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many trauma survivors in later conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, and Kosovo were diagnosed with PTSD, loss of ontological security, or moderate traumatic

brain injury. Similarly, in the film *Earth*, the protagonist Lenny exhibits symptoms of PTSD, tormented by the guilt of having betrayed her maid during the Partition, even fifty years later. The use of such clinical categories in film reinforces the connection between individual psychological suffering and broader historical violence. Films concerned with historical trauma appear across numerous genres melodrama, thriller, horror, documentary, and art cinema among them, depicting trauma through narrative structures, settings, character trajectories, sound, and music. Much of this global corpus focuses on World War II, the Holocaust or Shoah, the Nakba, the 1961 Paris massacre of Algerian protestors, and the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, all of which target not only individuals but entire communities. Following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Hollywood produced numerous films addressing war-related trauma, particularly combat trauma. Yet in the global context, research on the traumas generated by the 1947 Partition remains limited. The Partition, occurring in the mid-twentieth century after World War II, became one of the most tragic events in human history, unleashing a cascade of catastrophes. This relative scholarly neglect of Partition cinema is one of the central gaps that this dissertation addresses. Like film industries across the world, Bollywood has also produced numerous works addressing trauma. The Partition of the Indian Sub-continent after World War II provided fertile ground for artistic expression across multiple media, and Bollywood contributed significantly by creating films in various languages on diverse themes. The Indian film industry, and Bollywood in particular, has represented trauma especially war-related trauma such as refugee displacement, violence, rape, kidnapping, and profound human stress arising from the loss of home, loved ones, land, and cultural identity. These films also portray community violence trauma, reflecting the brutalities inflicted by one community upon another on both sides of the border. They highlight the trauma of forced

migration, the loss of homeland, and the grief of separation. On occasion, domestic violence trauma is also integrated into narratives of Partition. In summary, films produced on the theme of the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent represent a wide range of traumatic experiences (Thakore, 2020). This study examines how these tragedies became embedded within the culture of the Indian Sub-continent through cinematic portrayals of the Partition, and how such portrayals intersect with, or diverge from, theoretical formulations of trauma and memory discussed earlier.

2.11 South Asian Cinematic Representations of Partition

Cinema acts as a visual surface that lets viewers confront harrowing images of violence, cruelty, and fear without directly undergoing the terror those events would evoke. Film emerges as an especially powerful medium because it allows audiences to internalise concealed or emotionally overwhelming images on a subconscious level, thereby reshaping the fear they convey and mediating conversations surrounding real-life brutality. Through narrative structures, dramatic techniques, visual aesthetics, symbolic imagery, lighting patterns, camera work, montage, and soundscapes, films register and transmit traumatic experience into bodies, collectives, and psyches (Groh, 2023). As previously discussed, Bronfen's *Specters of War* contributes to cinematic trauma discourse by examining Hollywood's war films, arguing that they circulate the allure of war through culturally embedded fears, fantasies, and beliefs. Visual material acts as a mirror, rendering America's horrific war history visible in a manner that transcends political fluctuation. As discussed previously, the intensity of violence and catastrophe has led nations like the United States, Germany, and Israel-Palestine to be described as 'wounded cultures,' 'trauma cultures,' or 'traumatised societies' (Eyerman, 2019). Although the Indian Sub-

continent is not typically included among such societies, the Partition nonetheless rendered it a traumatised cultural space. Even though the trauma of Partition persists, the society at large cannot be universally classified as traumatised. Historical trauma films span multiple genres, including melodrama, thriller, horror, documentary, and art film. Trauma is embedded in their topics, narratives, settings, trajectories, figures, soundscapes, and musical compositions. As discussed previously, following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Hollywood released numerous films exploring war-related trauma, with special emphasis on combat trauma. However, on an international scale, scholarly work devoted to the traumatic consequences of the 1947 Partition remains relatively limited. The mid-twentieth-century Partition, occurring shortly after World War II, stands as one of humanity's most tragic historical ruptures, triggering a cascade of catastrophes. Thus, South Asian Partition cinema occupies a relatively marginal position in global trauma film scholarship, despite its thematic relevance. Cinema fulfils a distinctive function by dismantling the cultural taboos that surround traumatic wounds. National mentalities, narrations, histories, mythologies, and ideologies often render such scars too painful or impenetrable to share publicly. Cinema becomes the most effective medium to represent anomalies and anachronisms; it visualises trauma with exceptional potency. Through its capacity to convey remote visions, lost iconologies, and deep flashbacks, film influences consciousness within social discourse. It becomes an artistic attempt to translate what resists transformation into shared experience and cannot be communicated through non-obtrusive means (Reimer & Zachau, 2017). As Alison Landsberg (2004) contends, film operates as a medium of cultural memory, enabling spectators to encounter and internalize historical catastrophes from the perspectives of others. Partition films render such forms of cultural memory accessible not only to transnational audiences but also to younger

generations in South Asia who did not directly witness the events of 1947. Similar to global cinema, Bollywood has produced a substantial corpus of films that engage with diverse manifestations of trauma. The Partition of the Indian Sub-continent in the aftermath of the Second World War inaugurated a distinct thematic terrain for artistic and cinematic production, and Bollywood made a significant contribution through films spanning multiple languages and genres. Trauma in Bollywood, particularly within Partition cinema has pre-dominantly foregrounded war-inflected suffering, including the experiences of refugees, communal violence, sexual assault, abduction, and the enduring psychological devastation resulting from the loss of homes, kinship networks, ancestral lands, and cultural traditions. Community violence trauma, involving brutality across religious and communal lines on both sides of the border, is also a central theme. Forced displacement trauma being expelled from one's home by members of another community is frequently represented. Domestic violence trauma appears in several Partition narratives as well. Collectively, Cinematic portrayals of Partition encompass an extensive spectrum of traumatic events and emotional ruptures (Thakore, 2020). This research investigates how these varied traumas became woven into the cultural fabric of the Indian Sub-continent and how cinema transforms them into visual narratives representing the Partition of 1947. It also interrogates whether these films reproduce nationalistic mythologies or open space for critical reflection.

2.12 Summary of the Chapter

The theories of post-colonialism and trauma, along with their relevance to this study, have been examined in this chapter in conjunction with the literature aligned to the theoretical framework. This research adopts postcolonial theory with particular emphasis

on its three major postulates: Orientalism, colonial legacies, and trauma theory. Accordingly, the chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of both classical and contemporary scholarship on post-colonialism and its intersections with Orientalism, the lingering legacies of colonial rule, and the multiple dimensions of trauma theory, as well as their collective relevance to filmic representation. Moreover, since this study focuses on films produced on the theme of the 1947 Partition, the chapter also reviewed the literature pertaining to the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent. All pertinent academic work concerning the trauma of Partition, particularly literature that foregrounds cinematic portrayals, has been addressed under this heading. Bollywood, the largest film industry in the Indian Sub-continent, has generated a considerable corpus of films on the Partition, and this dissertation engages with those films and the relevant scholarly analyses that illuminate their significance to the present study. Thus, this section synthesises both thematic and theoretical literature related to the Partition and the films that depict its human, cultural, and psychological consequences.

The next chapter addresses the Research Methodology, detailing the research design and the theoretical approach adopted in this dissertation. It explicates the nature of the filmic texts under analysis, the methods of film analysis employed, and the criteria guiding the selection of films. Furthermore, the chapter outlines how the researcher's ontological stance diverges from that of previous scholars, thereby identifying the conceptual space that this study occupies. The delimitations of the research are also discussed to clarify the scope and boundaries within which the study operates.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The present chapter outlines the methodological framework that underpins this study. It explicates the guiding principles, procedures, analytical strategies, and epistemological commitments that shape the research process. Methodology in humanities research extends beyond techniques: it justifies how knowledge is constructed, why particular analytical pathways are chosen, and in what ways interpretations are grounded in systematically generated evidence. Since the present study investigates cinematic representations of the 1947 Partition through the interrelated lenses of Orientalism, postcolonial memory, and trauma, the research methodology must integrate textual, visual, discursive, and symbolic analysis in a coherent and academically defensible manner.

This chapter provides a detailed description of the qualitative approach, research design, sampling logic, unit of analysis, data collection procedures, analytical framework, reliability mechanisms, ethical considerations, delimitations, and chapter summary.

3.2 Research Paradigm and Qualitative Orientation

Qualitative research is grounded in interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, which hold that meaning is socially and culturally produced rather than objectively discovered. This assumption is crucial for a study centred on films, which are themselves socially constructed cultural artefacts shaped by historical memory, ideological formations, artistic choices, and institutional frameworks. The meanings embedded in cinematic texts

are never fixed; they are mediated by visual symbols, narrative decisions, and representational strategies (Babbie, 2017).

The interpretivist paradigm assumes that reality is not an objective entity waiting to be measured but a constructed field of meanings shaped through perception, ideology, memory, and discourse (Tracy, 2019). This study therefore treats films not as transparent reflections of the 1947 Partition but as interpretive reconstructions of history. Each film deploys particular frames such as dialogue, colour, camera angles, *mise-en-scène*, sound, and performative gestures to create a version of Partition that is emotionally resonant, historically inflected, and ideologically charged.

A constructivist epistemology shapes the methodological choices of this research. Knowledge is produced through engagement with texts but also through the theoretical lens adopted by the researcher. Postcolonial theory, trauma studies, and analysis do not simply interpret films; they shape what counts as relevant, what is foregrounded, and what meanings are drawn from silence, absence, or emphasis. The researcher is therefore positioned not as a neutral spectator but as an active interpreter who negotiates meaning through historically situated theoretical frameworks (Cannella et al., 2015).

This methodological paradigm also foregrounds positionality. The researcher's geographical, cultural, and intellectual location influences how cinematic material is read. Reflexive memo-writing is therefore integrated into the analytical process to acknowledge and bracket interpretive biases. Rather than diminishing objectivity, reflexivity enhances scholarly honesty and methodological transparency.

Finally, the qualitative orientation of this study allows for nuanced examination of layered phenomena such as trauma, cultural memory, identity, and colonial discourse which cannot be meaningfully captured through numerical measurement. The complexity of Partition's representation requires a methodology that accommodates ambiguity, multiplicity, affect, and symbolic resonance.

3.3 Research Design

The research design provides a structured framework that links the research questions, theoretical perspectives, sampling strategy, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures (Singh, 2022). This study adopts an exploratory qualitative design, which is appropriate for research domains where existing literature is limited or methodologically inconsistent (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Existing scholarship on Partition cinema often lacks systematic analytical procedures or close visual analysis. The exploratory design therefore offers flexibility to identify emergent themes while maintaining coherence with the theoretical framework.

3.3.1 Theoretical Alignment

The design is anchored in three theoretical pillars: Orientalism, postcolonial memory, and trauma theory. These frameworks shape both the conceptual foundation and the analytical orientation of the study. Partition films articulate meaning through narrative, visual composition, sound, spatial design, and symbolic imagery. A design that integrates textual analysis, visual interpretation, and thematic understanding is therefore essential for capturing this multi-dimensionality as can be seen in Figure: 3.1.

Within this design, Orientalism, postcolonial memory, and trauma theory function as the primary theoretical lenses guiding the interpretation of the films. Concepts such as colonial legacies, gendered trauma, and intergenerational transmission are treated as analytical dimensions that emerge within these broader frameworks rather than as separate theoretical pillars. This clarification ensures conceptual coherence between the research objectives, analytical framework, and the structure of Chapter 4.

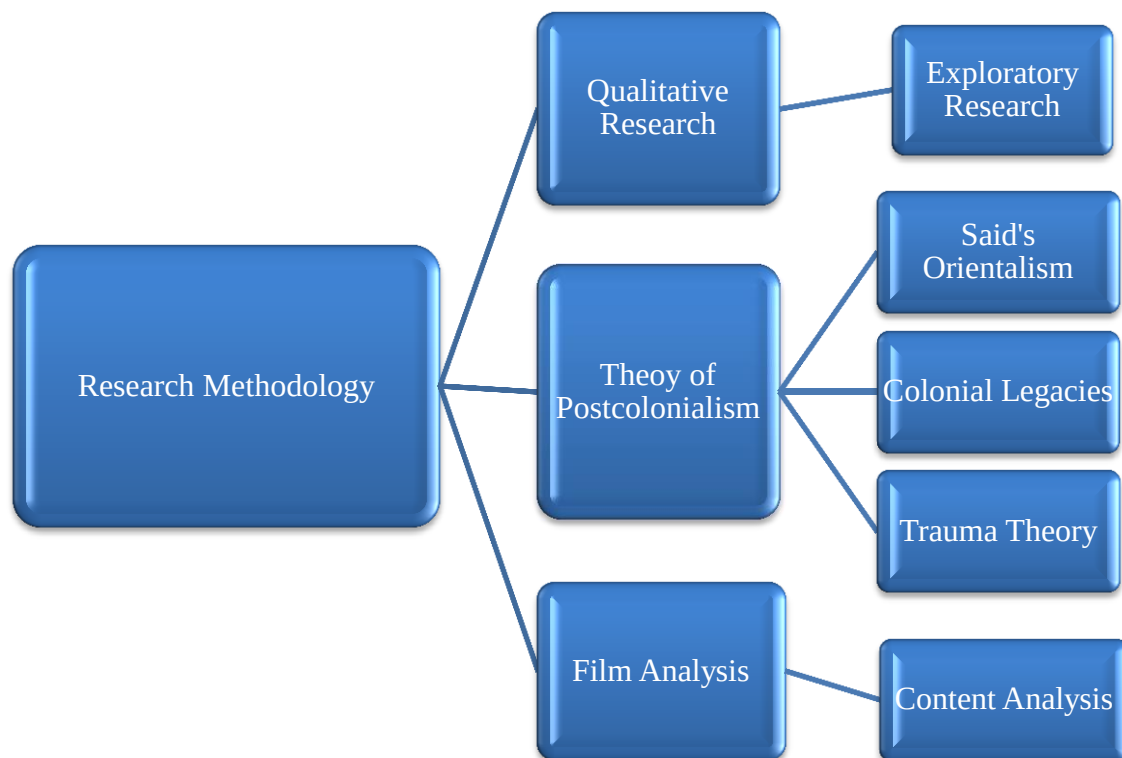


Figure 3.1: Methodological Framework of the Study

3.3.2 Iterative and Reflexive Process

Data collection and interpretation occur through an iterative and reflexive process. Initial viewing informs later analytical observations, while emergent insights refine

interpretive categories. Analytical memos help track interpretive decisions and ensure methodological consistency.

3.3.3 Comparative Component

Since four films are analysed, the design supports cross-film comparison. A comparative matrix captures patterns, divergences, and representational strategies shared across decades and directorial backgrounds. The exploratory design does not aim for statistical generalisability but for analytical depth and interpretive richness.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

The methodology explicitly identifies the following units of analysis.

3.4.1 Primary Unit of Analysis: The Scene

A scene is defined as a continuous segment unified by location, time, or narrative purpose. It represents the smallest coherent unit of meaning in cinematic storytelling, making it suitable for examining both textual and visual elements (Bordwell et al., 2020). Each scene offers a concentrated frame for exploring character interactions, narrative development, visual composition, symbolic markers, trauma indicators, and colonial or postcolonial power relations.

3.4.2 Secondary Unit of Analysis: Key Narrative Event

Certain crucial events such as mob attacks, refugee journeys, border crossings, and traumatic flashbacks extend beyond a single scene. These events are treated as larger analytical clusters when they contain dense thematic material. The exploratory design does

not aim for generalisability but for analytical depth and interpretive richness. This approach is consistent with qualitative scholarship in film studies, postcolonial analysis, and trauma research.

3.5 Inclusion Criteria for Analytical Scenes

To determine which scenes qualify for analysis, the following inclusion criteria were developed:

i. Violence and Trauma

The scenes depicting communal riots, killings, sexual violence, abductions, or emotional breakdowns are studied under this heading.

ii. Displacement and Migration

Train journeys, refugee camps, abandoned homes, border crossings, and the forced movement of the people all reflect the harsh realities of displacement.

iii. Colonial Power Structures

Administrative offices, discussions among British officials, and hierarchical interactions together illustrate the structured nature of colonial governance.

iv. Gendered Trauma

Forced conversion, sexual exploitation, the silencing of women, and honour-based violence reveal the deeply oppressive structures imposed on women.

v. Symbolic or Memory-Laden Imagery

Flashbacks, maps, borders, divided landscapes, ruins, and significant objects work together to evoke the fragmented memory and geography of a divided world.

vi. Discursive Elements of Orientalism

Dialogues or narrative structures depicting the colonised through stereotypical binaries reinforce simplified and often harmful representations.

3.6 Sampling Logic

Purposive sampling was adopted to select films that most effectively serve the study's aims. The four films were selected because they present an explicit narrative focus on the 1947 Partition, demonstrate grounding in eyewitness memory or intergenerational testimony, are accessible through English language or English subtitles, and provide thematic richness related to trauma, colonialism, and memory. The sample also demonstrates diachronic balance, with two films produced in the late twentieth century and two produced in the twenty-first century. This temporal distribution allows examination of representational shifts across decades.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection in qualitative film research requires a structured and multi-layered approach (Batty & Kerrigan, 2018). Since films constitute the primary source material for this study, the data collection process was designed to capture both textual and visual dimensions of cinematic representation.

3.7.1 Phase One: Immersion and Preliminary Viewing

The first phase involved watching each selected film in its entirety without interruption. This immersion enabled an initial understanding of narrative structure, character trajectories, tonal shifts, and the overall emotional atmosphere of the films. A narrative map was produced for each film documenting the principal characters, central conflicts, historical and geographical settings, dominant cinematic motifs, and scenes likely to contain colonial discourse, trauma, or memory representation. Figure 3.2 shows the primary and secondary data obtained in the study.

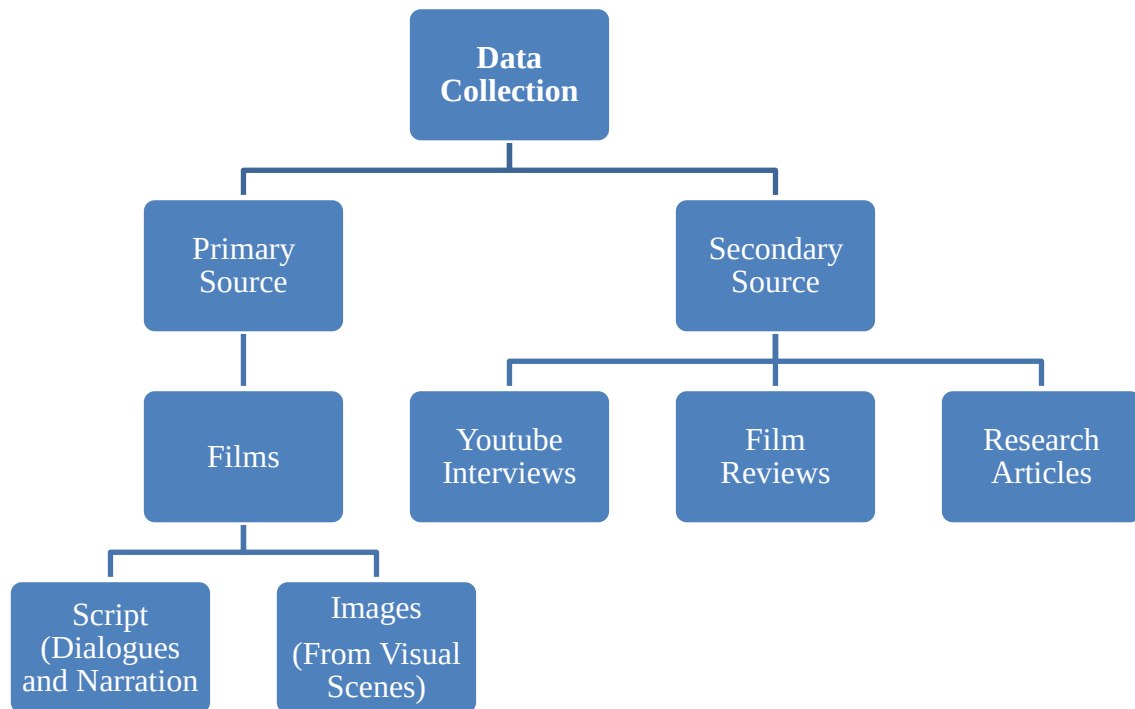


Figure 3.2: Primary and Secondary Data Sources of the Study

3.7.2 Phase Two: Scene-by-Scene Segmentation

In the second phase, each film was divided into discrete scenes using timestamps. Each scene was documented with information regarding its location, characters present, summary of action, key dialogues, and visual elements relevant to the study.

3.7.3 Phase Three: Textual Data Extraction

The textual dimension of the films includes all spoken and written language within the narrative. Dialogues relevant to trauma, memory, and colonial discourse were transcribed, while voiceovers, narrative commentary, and written text appearing on screen were documented.

3.7.4 Phase Four: Visual Data Extraction

Visual material was documented through detailed observation of mise-en-scène, lighting patterns, spatial organisation, gestures, facial expressions, and symbolic objects such as maps, borders, religious markers, and trains. Screenshots were captured strictly for research purposes and catalogued using timestamps and analytical notes.

3.7.5 Phase Five: Analytic Memo-Writing

Analytical memos were written throughout the research process in order to record emerging interpretations, conceptual connections, and theoretical reflections. These memos helped maintain transparency and reflexivity throughout the analysis. To ensure clarity in the analytical execution of the study, the films were analysed through a systematic multi-step procedure. First, all four films were viewed in their entirety to understand the narrative structure and thematic orientation. Second, each film was segmented into scenes using

timestamps and a detailed viewing log. Third, scenes that met the inclusion criteria identified in Section 3.4 were selected for closer examination. Fourth, the selected scenes were documented through dialogue transcription, visual description, and analytical notes. Fifth, these scenes were interpreted using the theoretical lenses of Orientalism, postcolonial memory, and trauma. Finally, patterns and contrasts were examined across the four films through comparative analysis. This structured workflow ensured that the interpretive analysis remained systematic, transparent, and consistent across the selected cinematic texts.

3.8 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework integrates qualitative content analysis with film analysis to investigate how the selected films represent Partition, trauma, and colonial discourse. While content analysis ensures thematic clarity, film analysis allows the researcher to examine the visual, spatial, and aesthetic forms through which meaning is constructed (Krippendorff, 2018). This dual strategy prevents the study from becoming either overly descriptive or overly abstract, striking a balance between interpretive depth and methodological rigour.

3.8.1 Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis examines how stories about Partition are structured, fragmented, or silenced. Partition narratives frequently employ flashbacks, testimonial narration, and temporal disruptions. The analysis therefore examines plot architecture, narrative perspective, temporal structures, and character arcs in order to understand how cinematic storytelling conveys trauma and memory.

3.9 Reliability, Validity, and Dependability

To ensure methodological rigour, the study incorporates strategies aimed at interpretive credibility, analytical transparency, and consistency in the reading of cinematic texts. Credibility is enhanced through prolonged engagement with the films, engagement with multiple theoretical perspectives, and detailed descriptive analysis. Analytical consistency is strengthened through documentation of methodological decisions and reflective discussion during the research process. Confirmability is supported by reflexive memo-writing and transparent analytical procedures. Detailed documentation of the research design and analytical approach enables readers to understand how interpretations were developed from the film texts.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations remain important even when analysing publicly available cultural texts. The study approaches cinematic material with respect for sensitive historical experiences and avoids sensationalising violence or trauma. Screenshots used in the study are included only for scholarly analysis and comply with fair dealing principles. Copyright remains with the original filmmakers and production studios.

3.11 Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality recognises that interpretation is influenced by the researcher's cultural background, academic training, and emotional perspective. In studies related to the Partition, this awareness becomes particularly important because of the event's historical and emotional significance. The researcher's familiarity with South Asian history provided interpretive sensitivity, while reflexive practices such as memo-

writing and peer dialogue helped monitor potential biases. Academic training in postcolonial theory, trauma studies, and visual analysis guided how scenes were interpreted and which elements were emphasised, thereby ensuring methodological transparency. Additionally, emotional proximity to the historical experience of Partition required careful reflexivity to avoid over-identification while maintaining empathy. Ethical awareness was also maintained throughout the research process to ensure responsible representation of suffering and to prevent misrepresentation or erasure. Together, these practices strengthened the study's interpretive responsibility and scholarly accountability.

3.12 Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations are intentional boundaries that clarify the scope of the research. This study is delimited in the following ways:

i. Film Selection

The study deliberately selected four films from the larger body of Partition cinema in order to maintain a focused and manageable scope of analysis. Although numerous films depict the events of the 1947 Partition, the selected sample was chosen based on several important considerations. The films represent diversity across different decades, allowing the study to observe how cinematic representations of Partition have evolved over time. They also reflect varying directorial backgrounds, which provides a broader range of narrative perspectives and interpretive approaches to the historical event.

In addition, the chosen films are significantly grounded in eyewitness memory and historical experiences associated with Partition, which strengthens their relevance for examining trauma and cultural memory. Linguistic accessibility was another important

factor, as the films are available in English or with English subtitles, ensuring accurate interpretation of dialogue and narrative context. Most importantly, these films strongly engage with themes of trauma, colonial legacies, and postcolonial memory, which form the central focus of this research. Therefore, the selection prioritises analytical depth and thematic richness rather than attempting to cover the entire range of Partition-related films.

Table 3.1: Justification of Film Selection

Film	Director	Country	Thematic Focus	Dominant Trauma
Train to Pakistan (1998)	Pamela Rooks	India	Violence and displacement near a village at a border	Collective Trauma
Earth (1999)	Deepa Mehta	India/ Canada	Friendship torn by religious conflict	Psychological & Gendered
Partition (2007)	Vic Sarin	Canada/ India	Cross-border romance between a Sikh man and a Muslim woman.	Refugee & Sexual Assault Trauma
The Viceroy's House (2017)	Gurinder Chadha	UK	British politics and transfer of power after Partition 1947	Colonial Ideology & Refugee Trauma

ii. Temporal Scope

The study focuses on films from 1998 to 2017. This period reflects renewed cinematic interest in Partition as postcolonial discourse evolved.

iii. Theoretical Focus

The study is confined to Orientalism, Colonial Legacies, Trauma, Postcolonial memory. The other frameworks (feminism, subaltern studies, performance theory) are acknowledged but not fully explored.

iv. Linguistic Boundaries

Only English-language films or those with English subtitles were included to ensure accuracy of textual analysis.

3.13 Limitations of the Methodology

Although the research methodology is carefully designed and methodologically rigorous, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations in order to maintain scholarly transparency. These limitations do not weaken the study; rather, they clarify the boundaries within which the research operates and indicate areas where the methodological focus narrows the interpretive scope.

First, the study relies solely on publicly available film texts as its primary data source. As a result, it does not include interviews with survivors or their descendants, testimonies beyond the films' narratives, or access to production archives and behind-the-scenes materials. While these sources could have enriched the contextual understanding of Partition, the research intentionally prioritises representational analysis of cinematic texts rather than audience reception or production ethnography.

Second, the study focuses only on films available in English or with English subtitles. This linguistic limitation ensures accuracy in dialogue transcription and

interpretation; however, it excludes a number of South Asian-language films that might offer additional perspectives on the Partition experience.

Third, the analysis is inherently interpretive in nature, as is common in qualitative film research. Although methodological strategies such as reflexive memo-writing and peer debriefing were employed to strengthen reliability and reduce bias, interpretations inevitably reflect the researcher's theoretical orientation, cultural background, and epistemological position. Another limitation concerns the scope of the theoretical framework. While the study employs Orientalism, postcolonial memory, and trauma theory to analyse Partition cinema, the other theoretical perspectives such as feminist theory, subaltern studies, and affect theory could also provide valuable insights. These approaches were not included in order to maintain theoretical coherence and manageability.

Additionally, the study does not explore audience reception, meaning it does not investigate how different audiences interpret or emotionally respond to these films across historical or contemporary contexts. Such analysis could have offered further insights into the political and cultural impact of Partition cinema but falls beyond the scope of the present research design.

Finally, the findings of the study are not intended to be generalised to all films about the Partition or to all cinematic representations of colonial rule. The sample is deliberately small and purposively selected to allow for detailed and in-depth analysis. Recognising these limitations ultimately strengthens the credibility of the study by demonstrating methodological awareness and transparency.

3.14 Overall Coherence and Integration of the Methodology

The revised methodology presents an integrated and coherent research approach in which each methodological component supports and complements the others. The sampling logic ensures that the selected films are relevant to the research objectives and suitable for meaningful comparison. The clearly defined unit of analysis enables systematic segmentation of the films, allowing the study to examine specific scenes and events in a structured manner. Analytical procedures provide an organised thematic structure that guides the interpretation of cinematic material.

Table 3.2: Analytical Framework for Film Analysis

Research Objective	Theoretical Construct	Operational Definition	Trauma Types	Key Analytical Indicators (Textual & Visual)	Data Collection & Recording Tools
RO1: To examine the selected films constructing Partition trauma (individual and collective) through narrative structure, character positioning, and visual perspective.	Trauma (Psychological & Cultural)	Cinematic depiction of emotional, social, and cultural distress resulting from Partition-related violence and displacement.	Displacement Trauma; Silence & Suppression; Loss of Home/Identity	Refugee movement scenes, abandoned homes, fragmented families, subdued dialogue, long silences, melancholic soundscapes.	Scene-by-scene viewing log; dialogue transcripts; trauma representation

Table 3.2: continued

	Postcolonial Memory	Representation of collective remembrance and forgetting of Partition through narrative and imagery.	Selective Remembrance; Visual Symbolism	Trains, borders, maps, ruins, flashbacks, nostalgic framing.	Visual semiotic analysis sheet; screenshot annotations
RO2: <i>To analyze Orientalist representational patterns (e.g., exoticisation, hierarchy, civilisational framing and native irrationality) appearing, persisting, or getting contested within these films' depictions of Partition.</i>	Orientalism	Discursive and visual construction of South Asian subjects as inferior, exotic, passive, or irrational.	Colonial Stereotyping; Exoticisation; Power Asymmetry	Dialogues emphasizing primitiveness; voyeuristic framing of suffering; hierarchical character positioning.	Thematic matrix; dialogue analysis chart
	Internalised Orientalism	Adoption of colonial viewpoints by native characters or narrative voice.	Internalised Colonialism	Characters valorizing colonial order or expressing self-denigration.	Character trajectory sheet; reflexive memo
RO3: <i>To explore the films negotiating postcolonial memory (including silence, testimony, and generational transmission) and what ideological work does that memory perform.</i>	Postcolonial Memory	Negotiation of history through cinematic storytelling that includes remembrance, silences, and counter-narratives.	Selective Remembrance; Counter-Memory	Marginalised voices, disrupted linear narratives, alternative historical viewpoints.	Cross-film comparative table; narrative mapping tool

Table 3.2: continued

	Inter-generational Trauma	Transmission of Partition memory across generations .	Inter-generational Transmission	Storytelling by elders, inherited silence, symbolic objects.	Timeline mapping chart; thematic memo
RO4: <i>To investigate Partition trauma made visible or narratively contained, and how those reveal psychological, war-related, and gendered traumas created at the time of Partition.</i>	Gendered Trauma	Gender-specific experiences of violence and marginalisation during Partition.	Gendered Violence; Silenced Femininity	Abduction narratives, forced conversion , muted female voices.	Scene documentation log
	Colonial Legacies	Persistence of colonial power structures and ideologies post-Partition.	Institutional Continuity; Divided National Identity	Bureaucratic imagery, border regimes, lingering imperial symbols.	Scene index; analytical memo

Table 3.2 operationalises the study’s analytical framework by linking research objectives with theoretical constructs and observable cinematic indicators. The table functions as an organisational guide rather than a rigid coding scheme, allowing the researcher to systematically identify relevant narrative and visual elements across the selected films.

At the same time, film analysis contributes aesthetic and visual depth by examining elements such as visual composition, cinematography, and sound, while narrative analysis

helps contextualise representations of memory, trauma, and historical experience within the films' storytelling structures. Furthermore, attention to reliability and ethical considerations strengthens the scholarly credibility of the research. Together, these interconnected components form a multi-layered methodological framework that provides a solid foundation for the detailed interpretive analysis presented in Chapter 4.

3.15 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has outlined the methodological architecture of the study in detail. It explained the philosophical orientation of the research, the qualitative and exploratory design, the purposive sampling strategy, and the explicit unit of analysis. The chapter expanded data collection into a multi-stage process involving segmentation, transcription, visual documentation, and analytic memo-writing. The analytical framework integrated narrative analysis and close examination of cinematic elements such as *mise-en-scène*, visual composition, and sound, ensuring interpretive depth and aesthetic sensitivity.

Interpretive transparency was strengthened through reflexive memo-writing and careful documentation of analytical observations throughout the research process. Ethical considerations were approached with attention to copyright, trauma sensitivity, and representational integrity. Positionality was acknowledged to foreground the researcher's interpretive standpoint. Finally, delimitations clarified the study's boundaries and analytical commitments.

Together, these methodological components create a robust, transparent, and theoretically grounded foundation for the analysis presented in Chapter 4.

The analytical discussion is organised in relation to the study's primary theoretical lenses while also examining related dimensions such as colonial legacies and gendered trauma that emerge within these frameworks. The methodology developed in this chapter enables a comprehensive exploration of how cinema constructs, reinforces, or challenges dominant narratives about the 1947 Partition. By integrating textual, visual, discursive, and symbolic forms of analysis, the research is equipped to reveal how traumatic histories are mediated through storytelling, how colonial hierarchies persist within representational frameworks, and how cultural memory is negotiated across generations.

Chapter 4 applies this methodology to a detailed analysis of the selected films. It is organised into three major sections corresponding to the theoretical pillars of the study. The first section critically examines Orientalist attitudes and power asymmetries. The second section explores colonial legacies that continue to shape social and cultural structures in post-Partition contexts. The third section focuses on trauma, including psychological, gendered, communal, and displacement-based trauma, and analyses how each film articulates or suppresses these traumatic histories through its formal cinematic choices.

The methodological architecture established here provides the analytical scaffolding necessary for the interpretive depth of Chapter 4. The next chapter therefore draws directly upon the operational definitions, narrative and visual analysis strategies, and theoretical frameworks outlined above to offer a rigorous and nuanced reading of Partition cinema.

CHAPTER 4

ORIENTALIST NARRATIVES, POST-COLONIAL MEMORY, AND TRAUMA IN CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that Partition cinema does not simply represent the historical event of 1947 as a completed rupture, but actively constructs it as an ongoing postcolonial condition shaped by the persistence of colonial discourse and the enduring structures of trauma. Through a close analysis of *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017), the chapter advances the central claim that cinematic representations of Partition are mediated by inherited frameworks of power, language, space, and perception that originate in colonial rule yet continue to organise postcolonial memory and identity. Rather than treating these films as transparent reflections of history, the chapter positions them as complex cultural texts that both reproduce and interrogate the ideological, material, and affective legacies of empire.

The analytical framework of the chapter brings together postcolonial theory and trauma studies within a film studies methodology attentive to visual form, narrative structure, and spectatorship. Drawing on postcolonial critiques of colonial discourse, the chapter examines how Orientalist modes of representation, institutional hierarchies, and symbolic systems of authority persist within cinematic narratives of Partition. At the same time, it engages trauma theory to explore how the films articulate psychic fragmentation, memory disruption, and the ongoing effects of violence across individual and collective domains. Crucially, however, the chapter does not apply these theoretical frameworks

uncritically. Instead, it interrogates the extent to which the films both conform to and complicate dominant theoretical models, revealing tensions between critique and reproduction, rupture and continuity, and representation and aestheticisation. In doing so, the chapter foregrounds cinema not merely as a medium of depiction but as a site where historical memory is actively shaped, contested, and reconfigured.

The first part of the chapter examines the persistence of colonial discourse and Orientalist frameworks in Partition cinema. It argues that these films often construct the Indian Sub-continent through visual and narrative strategies that reproduce colonial hierarchies of knowledge and power, even when they seek to depict anti-colonial or postcolonial realities. By analysing costume, characterisation, and narrative positioning, the section demonstrates how colonial modes of seeing continue to structure cinematic representation, producing an ambivalent relationship between critique and ideological inheritance.

The second part shifts the focus from representational discourse to material and institutional legacies, arguing that postcolonial memory is embedded within the physical and symbolic infrastructures of colonial modernity. Through the analysis of architecture, language, communication technologies, and transportation systems, this section demonstrates that colonial power persists not only in ideology but in the everyday organisation of space, communication, and movement. These elements are not presented as inert remnants of the past; they function as active structures through which authority, perception, and experience continue to be mediated. At the same time, the films reveal the ambivalence of these legacies, showing how they are simultaneously critiqued, aestheticised, appropriated, and normalised within postcolonial contexts.

The third part extends the analysis into the domain of trauma, arguing that Partition cinema constructs violence not as a contained historical episode but as an ongoing and multi-layered condition that fractures subjectivity, disrupts social relations, and shapes intergenerational memory. Through detailed examination of psychic fragmentation, communal violence, gendered trauma, and displacement, the section demonstrates that trauma operates as both a thematic concern and a structuring principle of cinematic form. The films are shown to mobilise narrative fragmentation, symbolic imagery, and affective intensity in ways that reproduce the instability of traumatic experience, while also raising critical questions about spectatorship and the potential aestheticisation of suffering.

Taken together, these three sections establish that Partition cinema must be understood not simply as a historical genre but as a postcolonial visual archive in which colonial legacies and traumatic memory intersect. The chapter's original contribution lies in its insistence that colonial structures and traumatic experience are not separate analytical categories but mutually constitutive processes that shape how Partition is represented and remembered. By demonstrating how cinematic form mediates this intersection, the chapter offers a more integrated understanding of Partition as both a historical event and an ongoing cultural and affective condition. In doing so, it contributes to broader debates in film studies, postcolonial theory, and trauma studies by foregrounding the role of cinema in producing, rather than merely reflecting, the afterlife of empire and the persistence of historical violence.

There are six sections in this chapter. This introduction is found in Section 4.1. In order to answer RO2, Section 4.2 looks at Orientalist representational tendencies as they emerge, continue, or are challenged in the four chosen films. In order to address RO3,

Section 4.3 examines how postcolonial memory is tangibly ingrained in the linguistic, technological, transportation, and physical infrastructures that were left over from colonial authority. In order to answer RO1 and RO4, Section 4.4 looks at how Partition trauma is created cinematically, across psychological, communal, gendered, and intergenerational dimensions, and how these constructions both make trauma apparent and narratively contains it. A cross-film synthesis that advances the chapter's three initial analytical claims and integrates findings from all four research objectives is presented in Section 4.5. The chapter summary is found in Section 4.6.

4.2 Orientalist Narratives Underpinning the Depiction of Orientalism in the Films

This section argues that the selected films do not merely depict Partition as a historical rupture but actively construct it through Orientalist frameworks that position the East as unstable, divided, and inherently vulnerable to violence, while simultaneously associating colonial authority with order, discipline, and political rationality. Through dialogue, visual composition, costume, and spatial hierarchy, the films mobilise and at times interrogate representational structures that align with what Edward Said conceptualises as Orientalist discourse. Crucially, however, these films do not simply reproduce colonial assumptions in a straightforward manner. Instead, they generate a complex visual and narrative field in which Orientalist representations are both reiterated and exposed, thereby revealing the instability of the very discourses they appear to sustain. The analysis that follows therefore contends that Orientalism is not an external interpretive framework imposed upon the films, but an internal organising logic that shapes how Partition trauma is visualised, narrated, and made intelligible.

Trauma in cinema is frequently represented through images of social breakdown, communal fragmentation, and intensified political conflict. Yet within colonial and postcolonial contexts, such representations are never ideologically neutral. Rather, they are mediated through historically sedimented structures of perception that determine how violence is attributed, explained, and visualised. Within Orientalist discourse, the East is persistently constructed as irrational, volatile, and incapable of sustaining political order without external governance. These assumptions do not remain confined to colonial archives or administrative discourse; they are reproduced through cinematic form, where dialogue, framing, and characterisation participate in the production of meaning. The films examined here therefore do not simply narrate Partition as tragedy. They stage it through visual and narrative conventions that are already shaped by colonial ways of seeing, thereby implicating representation itself in the reproduction of ideological power.

Earth (1999)

In *Earth* (1999), directed by Deepa Mehta, this dynamic becomes visible from the opening sequence. The camera's prolonged focus on moist clay does not merely function as atmospheric imagery but establishes a symbolic visual grammar through which the narrative will unfold. The earth is rendered as unstable, malleable, and vulnerable to rupture, prefiguring the fragmentation of territory and community that follows. However, this image also carries a deeper ideological resonance. By linking land to fragility and impending division, the film risks naturalising political violence as an almost organic condition of the landscape. At the same time, the image can be read critically as exposing how territory becomes the primary site upon which colonial and postcolonial power is

inscribed. The sequence therefore operates ambivalently: it both anticipates violence and invites reflection on how such violence is spatially imagined.

This ambivalence extends into the early social interactions at Lenny's household, where characters from different religious and cultural backgrounds initially appear to coexist harmoniously. The dinner scene is carefully staged to foreground conviviality through shared space, conversational exchange, and visual balance. Yet this apparent harmony is gradually destabilised as political discourse enters the frame. The transition from casual interaction to ideological confrontation is not abrupt but accumulative, suggesting that colonial discourse infiltrates everyday life rather than remaining confined to formal political arenas. The scene therefore constructs coexistence not as a stable condition but as one already under pressure from competing narratives of identity and power.

The exchange between Mr. Singh and Mr. Rogers crystallises this tension. When Mr. Singh expresses optimism about impending independence, he articulates a nationalist position that challenges colonial legitimacy. Mr. Rogers's response "*If we quit India today, you bloody will cut one another's throats. Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs will be Jacky for power* (Mehta, 1999)" does more than express scepticism. It mobilises a distinctly Orientalist logic in which communal violence is presented as the inevitable outcome of indigenous self-rule. The statement constructs the colonised as inherently prone to disorder, thereby positioning colonial governance as necessary and justified. Importantly, the film does not present this claim as an uncontested truth. Instead, it stages it within a dialogic structure that exposes its ideological function. The violence that Rogers predicts is not simply a future possibility; it is a narrative already embedded within colonial discourse.

From a critical perspective, this moment exemplifies Said's argument that Orientalism operates by producing knowledge about the East that simultaneously legitimises Western authority. Rogers's assertion obscures the historical coexistence of religious communities and displaces responsibility for violence away from colonial policies that exacerbated division. In doing so, it transforms political contingency into cultural inevitability. The film's significance lies in the way it allows this discourse to surface within everyday conversation, thereby revealing how deeply such assumptions are embedded in social interaction rather than confined to official rhetoric.

The subsequent exchange further intensifies this critique. By dismissing indigenous leaders such as Tara Singh as "fanatics," Rogers extends Orientalist logic from generalised cultural stereotype to specific political actors. This move is analytically significant because it delegitimises native political agency while reinforcing colonial authority as rational and necessary. Yet the scene does not isolate Orientalism within the figure of the coloniser alone. Characters such as Rustam Sethna and Bunty Sethna participate in the reproduction of colonial values by praising British infrastructure and language. This internalisation complicates the binary opposition between coloniser and colonised, suggesting that Orientalism operates not only through domination but through consent, aspiration, and cultural admiration. The film thus reveals Orientalism as a dispersed and relational system rather than a one-directional imposition.

Partition (2007)

A similar dynamic is evident in *Partition* (2007), where Orientalism operates through the incorporation of colonised bodies into imperial military structures. The opening sequence, set during the Burma campaign, foregrounds the mobilisation of Indian

soldiers within the British army. While the uniforms and historical details contribute to visual authenticity, their deeper significance lies in the symbolic subordination they encode. The presence of British insignia on Sikh turbans produces a visual contradiction in which local identity is preserved yet simultaneously subordinated to imperial command. This duality reflects a broader colonial strategy: the partial inclusion of the colonised within imperial systems in ways that maintain hierarchical control.



Figure 4.1: Gian with British Insignia on his Turban in British Uniform

Figure 4.1 shows how Gian Singh exemplifies this dynamic. His participation in the British army is not presented as purely voluntary or heroic but as structurally conditioned by colonial power. The film thus exposes the utilitarian dimension of Orientalism, in which the colonised are not only represented but instrumentalised. The large-scale recruitment of Indian soldiers during the World Wars underscores this point, revealing how colonial authority depended upon the mobilisation of indigenous labour while denying political autonomy. Orientalism here functions not only as a discourse of representation but as a material practice embedded in systems of exploitation.

***The Viceroy's House* (2017)**

In *The Viceroy's House* (2017), Orientalism is articulated most explicitly through spatial organisation and visual hierarchy. The architecture of the Viceroy's residence, with its expansive halls, portrait galleries, and monumental statues, constructs a spatial environment in which imperial authority is both centralised and aestheticised. The statue of Queen Victoria, for instance, does not merely signify historical presence; it monumentalises empire within the visual field, reinforcing the continuity and legitimacy of British rule. Similarly, the portraits of imperial figures create a visual lineage that situates contemporary authority within a broader historical narrative of dominance as can be seen in Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2: Statue of Queen Victoria at the Viceroy's House

However, the film complicates this display of power by foregrounding the labour required to sustain it. The scene in which Jeet and Duleep prepare Mountbatten's ceremonial attire reveals that colonial authority is not self-sustaining but depends upon the active participation of colonised subjects. This moment introduces a critical tension: the spectacle of empire is both imposed and collaboratively produced. The colonised are not merely passive recipients of power but are compelled to perform and reproduce it, thereby

implicating them in its visual and symbolic maintenance. Costume functions as another key site of Orientalist regulation. The imposition of uniforms standardises the appearance of colonised bodies, aligning them with institutional expectations of discipline and order. At the same time, the incorporation of local dress elements such as Aalia's *Shalwar Qameez* demonstrates that colonial power does not always erase cultural difference but instead reconfigures it within a hierarchical framework. Figure 4.3, shows the selective incorporation reinforces the idea that local identity is permissible only when it remains visibly subordinate to imperial authority.



Figure 4.3: Female Staff in Traditional dress with the British Emblem

***Train to Pakistan* (1998)**

Even in *Train to Pakistan* (1998), where explicit Orientalist discourse is less pronounced, the persistence of colonial visual structures remains evident as in figure 4.4. The opening image of British officers alongside local police in colonial uniforms signals that the world of Partition is already organised by imperial systems of governance and representation. The uniform, insignia, and institutional setting collectively indicate that colonial authority continues to shape the conditions under which violence unfolds.

Orientalism here operates not through overt ideological statements but through the visual normalisation of colonial order.

The character of the local magistrate Hukam Chand functions less as an extension of normalisation and more as a site through which its limits are exposed. His conduct exemplifies internalised Orientalism, evident in his bureaucratic inertia, procedural rigidity, and reliance on colonial legal frameworks over collective ethical judgement. Rather than a neutral administrator, he emerges as a colonial subject who reproduces the epistemic authority of the coloniser, treating inherited evaluative standards as the only legitimate basis of governance. In this sense, Orientalism as theorised by Edward Said operates not through external imperial agents but through an indigenous intermediary shaped by colonial institutional culture. Colonial power thus persists as an internalised logic within postcolonial governance. The film pointedly refuses to valorise Hukam Chand's proceduralism, instead exposing it as an inadequate colonial residue incapable of addressing the ethical ruptures of Partition. His failure is systemic rather than dramatic, marked by inaction and moral paralysis. By foregrounding the quiet collapse of institutional authority rather than spectacle, *Train to Pakistan* offers the most incisive critique of internalised colonialism within the corpus.



Figure 4.4: British and Local Police Officers Wearing Colonial Uniforms

Taken together, these films demonstrate that Orientalism is not confined to explicit narrative content but is embedded within cinematic form itself. Dialogue, costume, spatial arrangement, and visual symbolism work collectively to construct the East as divided, governable, and susceptible to violence, while presenting colonial authority as disciplined, rational, and necessary. Yet the films do not simply reproduce this framework uncritically. They also expose its contradictions, revealing how colonial discourse both shapes and distorts the representation of Partition. By doing so, they foreground the role of ideology in the production of historical memory.

This section has demonstrated that Orientalism in the selected films operates as a structuring logic embedded within cinematic form rather than as a series of isolated statements. Through dialogue, visual composition, costume, and institutional imagery, the films both reproduce and interrogate colonial assumptions that frame the East as unstable and the West as authoritative. Crucially, these representations do not simply reflect historical realities but actively shape how Partition is remembered and understood. Orientalist discourse thus becomes inseparable from the cinematic articulation of trauma, revealing that the violence of Partition is mediated not only through events but through the ideological frameworks that determine how those events are seen. While Sub-section 4.1 has demonstrated that Partition cinema is structured by Orientalist modes of representation that shape how the East is seen, interpreted, and narrated, these representational frameworks do not operate in isolation from material conditions. The ideological construction of the East as unstable, divided, and governable is not sustained solely through discourse or visual coding; it is reinforced and naturalised through the physical and institutional infrastructures inherited from colonial rule. In other words, the ways of seeing identified in the previous section are inseparable from the environments in which those

ways of seeing are produced and maintained. This shift from representational discourse to material structures is analytically necessary because it reveals that colonial power persists not only at the level of imagery and narrative but also within the spatial, linguistic, and technological systems that organise everyday life. If Orientalism provides the epistemological framework through which the colonised are understood, colonial infrastructures provide the material conditions that stabilise and reproduce that framework over time. The authority attributed to colonial governance in cinematic representation, for instance, is not merely an effect of dialogue or characterisation; it is anchored in architectural scale, administrative systems, communication networks, and modes of mobility that continue to structure postcolonial experience.

The films therefore invite a reorientation of analysis from how Partition is represented to how it is materially situated. The violence and trauma depicted in these narratives unfold within environments already shaped by colonial modernity, where institutions, objects, and spatial arrangements carry the residue of imperial power. These elements do not function as passive backdrops to historical events. Rather, they actively mediate perception, organise social interaction, and frame the conditions under which trauma is experienced and remembered. The persistence of colonial architecture, the dominance of English, the circulation of communication technologies, and the operation of transport systems all contribute to a postcolonial landscape in which the past remains materially embedded in the present. Accordingly, the next section extends the argument by examining how colonial legacies continue to structure postcolonial memory through visible and enduring infrastructures. By shifting the analytical focus from discourse to materiality, the chapter demonstrates that the afterlife of empire is not confined to representation but is embedded within the very systems that organise space, communication, and movement.

This transition therefore deepens the central claim of the chapter: that Partition must be understood not only as a moment of historical rupture, but as an experience shaped by the ongoing entanglement of colonial structures and postcolonial memory.

4.3 Post-Colonial Memory in the Society of the Indian Sub-continent and its Continuation through Colonial Legacies

This section argues that postcolonial memory in the selected films is not represented primarily as an abstract act of recollection but as a materially embedded and spatially organised experience. Colonial power survives in these cinematic texts through institutions, objects, languages, technologies, and built environments that continue to regulate postcolonial life long after the formal end of empire. The films do not treat colonial residues as passive historical leftovers; rather, they frame them as active structures through which memory is produced, inhabited, and interpreted. Colonial administrative buildings, linguistic practices, communication technologies, and transportation infrastructures recur not merely as markers of period authenticity but as signs of imperial continuity. Through framing, *mise-en-scène*, costume, architecture, and spatial arrangement, the films demonstrate that Partition trauma unfolds within environments already saturated by colonial forms of power. The central claim of this section, therefore, is that postcolonial memory is inseparable from the material afterlives of empire. It persists not only in speech and narration but also in spaces, objects, and institutional systems that continue to shape perception, movement, and social relations.

4.3.1 Imperial Authority and Spatial Power

This subsection argues that colonial authority in the selected films is not represented simply through historical reference or administrative function, but through the visual ordering of space itself. Architecture, ceremonial display, costume, framing, and symbolic objects work together to transform imperial power into something spatially legible and affectively persuasive. Buildings such as the Viceroy's House, colonial administrative halls, and official compounds do not merely provide historical backdrop; they operate as cinematic technologies of hierarchy, organising who may enter, who may speak, who may remain peripheral, and who appears authorised to decide the future of the others. At the same time, however, these films do not all mobilise imperial space in the same way. In some instances, colonial architecture is presented critically, exposing the monumental arrogance of empire; in others, it risks aestheticising imperial order by rendering authority visually coherent, ceremonially impressive, and structurally inevitable. The analytical task, therefore, is not simply to identify imperial symbols, but to examine how film form turns space into an instrument of power and how that power is made to appear either legitimate, fragile, or morally compromised. There are multiple legacies of colonial dominance in these films, but one of the most significant is the way imperial authority continues to organise the visual field at the very moment of decolonisation.

***The Viceroy's House* (2017)**

In *The Viceroy's House*, the opening establishing view of the Governor's House in Delhi in figure 4.5 does more than situate the narrative geographically. It frames political transition through a structure built to monumentalise British rule. The building's scale, symmetry, and separation from the city visually assert command before any political

speech has occurred. This matters because the division of the Indian Sub-continent is not shown emerging from a neutral democratic space but from within a site architecturally designed to embody imperial control. Even before the narrative begins to discuss independence, the mise-en-scène suggests that decolonisation is being managed inside the spatial logic of empire. The visual message is therefore double: colonial rule is ending in constitutional terms, yet it remains dominant in representational terms. The film does not allow the viewer to forget that power is still housed, elevated, and staged as British.



Figure 4.5: Union Jack Positioned Above the Governor's House

This contradiction becomes sharper because the Union Jack remains visibly raised above the building as independence approaches. The flag is not simply a historical detail verifying the time period. Its elevated placement in the frame repeatedly reasserts imperial sovereignty over the very space in which the transfer of power is being negotiated. If captured in wide or carefully balanced establishing shots, such imagery does more than denote British authority; it naturalises it by making it appear visually central and compositionally stable. This is precisely where a more critical reading becomes necessary. The film may intend to expose the persistence of empire, yet the elegance with which the image is composed also risks aestheticising the authority it seeks to historicise. In other words, the spectator is invited both to recognise colonial domination and to look at it

through an image grammar that grants it dignity, order, and visual coherence. That tension is important because it reveals how cinema can critique empire while simultaneously reproducing some of its visual prestige. Another striking visual marker is the tower topped with a crucifix. The cross is not an incidental decorative feature; it signifies the inscription of Western religious and civilisational authority into South Asian public space. Yet its significance lies not only in iconographic meaning but in placement. The verticality of the structure, its prominence within the shot, and its relation to the larger architecture of the residence transform Christianity into part of the visual language of rule. The film thereby suggests that colonial power was not merely administrative or military, but also epistemic and symbolic: it ordered the world through religion, culture, and ideas of civilisation. At the same time, the scene should not be reduced to a simple symbolic equation in which the cross straightforwardly means colonialism. More precisely, the crucifix participates in a broader cinematic composition that aligns elevation, visibility, and sacred legitimacy with empire. The effect is to show how imperial power presented itself not as contingent domination but as a moral and civilisational order.

The location of the Viceroy's House further strengthens this spatial logic. Set apart from the city and surrounded by greenery, distance, and enclosure, the residence materialises political separation as visual hierarchy. This is not merely an architectural fact but an ideological arrangement. The rulers inhabit an elevated and disciplined world, insulated from the social disorder that their decisions will intensify elsewhere. Such separation matters because it translates power into lived geography: those who govern are physically removed from those who will bear the consequences of governance. The film thereby gives spatial form to a broader colonial structure in which authority is centralised, protected, and distanced from local suffering. Yet once again, the representation remains

ideologically complex. The serenity and symmetry of the setting can be read as exposing colonial aloofness, but they can also produce a seductive image of composure in contrast to the violence beyond its walls. The question, therefore, is not only what the space symbolises, but what kind of spectatorial response it solicits.



Figure 4.6: Union Jack Displayed in the Main Hall of the Governor's House

The next scene shifts into the main hall of the Viceroy's House as in figure 4.6, where British emblems and multiple Union Jacks dominate the interior space. This hall is not a neutral meeting room. It is the ceremonial centre of decision-making, and the repetition of imperial symbols within it matters because it frames negotiation itself through the visual grammar of empire. The political future of millions is discussed beneath flags that continue to mark the room as British sovereign space. Such imagery implies that decolonisation is not represented as a complete rupture with imperial order, but as a process still narrated, staged, and disciplined by colonial authority. The film therefore makes visible an important contradiction: political transition is presented as historical change, yet the room insists on continuity. The architecture and insignia do ideological work by reminding the viewer that the symbolic order of British rule remains intact even as its administrative permanence is being publicly dissolved. Throughout *The Viceroy's House*, the repeated appearance of the Union Jack does more than mark historical setting; it

structures visual memory. Each recurrence rehearses the same claim: that empire remains the frame within which political change becomes intelligible. Yet the repetition also raises a critical question. Does the film foreground the flag in order to indict imperial dominance, or does it rely too heavily on imperial iconography to produce historical grandeur? A distinction level reading cannot assume the answer in advance. Rather, it must acknowledge that the film's critique of empire is complicated by its attraction to imperial spectacle. The result is an ideologically unstable text in which colonial symbols signify domination while also being granted cinematic prominence and aesthetic authority.



Figure 4.7: Red-Carpet Welcome Extended to the Viceroy

In *The Viceroy's House*, Lord Louis Mountbatten's arrival is marked by a lavish red-carpet ceremony as in figure 4.7. This sequence is especially important because it reveals how imperial authority is mediated through spectacle. The red carpet does not simply signify honour; it choreographs deference. It creates a visual corridor of privilege through which the coloniser is elevated above the colonised and recognised as the centre of ceremonial attention. In cinematic terms, such a scene does more than illustrate protocol. It converts power into performance. The colonised are not merely governed; they are required to participate in the ritual affirmation of authority. This is why the scene matters analytically: it shows that imperial power is sustained not only through coercion but

through repeated visual and ceremonial acts that make hierarchy appear orderly, natural, and publicly endorsed. Yet here too, the sequence is ideologically ambivalent. The film may intend to reveal the absurd theatricality of empire, but the splendour of the scene can also produce fascination. Spectacle critiques domination only imperfectly, because it often depends on making domination visually compelling. The red carpet is therefore best read not simply as a symbol of colonial prestige but as a cinematic mechanism through which imperial hierarchy is sensorially experienced. It structures vision, movement, and attention. It tells the viewer where to look and whom to regard as central. The ceremony thus performs colonial order at the level of form as well as narrative. This is precisely the kind of detail that reveals why film analysis must go beyond paraphrasing historical meaning. What matters is not only that colonial ritual is shown, but how its visual arrangement solicits spectatorship.

Partition (2007)

Partition (2007) presents a related but more fleeting example through the image of the Union Jack at the Delhi Polo Club. Although brief, this detail is analytically important because the polo club is itself a colonial leisure space associated with elite exclusivity, racial distinction, and imperial sociability. The flag's presence in such a setting suggests that colonial authority survives not only in government buildings and formal institutions, but also in spaces of class performance and social prestige. This is crucial because it expands the argument beyond administrative power. Empire is not represented solely as law or bureaucracy; it is also represented as culture, habit, and elite style. The club becomes a site where colonialism persists through the normalisation of privilege. The visual economy of the scene suggests that even leisure has been organised by imperial

hierarchy, and that the soft textures of colonial prestige may outlast the more visible mechanisms of governance.

***Train to Pakistan* (1998)**

By contrast, *Train to Pakistan* offers fewer grand ceremonial images, yet it still represents colonial authority through disciplined space and institutional visibility. The police station, the posed group photograph, and the officers' uniforms collectively encode state power as something bureaucratically staged. The police are not simply enforcers of law; they are visual representatives of order. The photograph in particular is revealing because it turns authority into an image of legitimacy. To pose outside the police station is to convert institutional control into public visibility, as though the state must be seen in order to be believed. Colonial power here is less monumental than in *The Viceroy's House*, but no less significant. It appears through routine institutional form rather than imperial pageantry. This is important because it shows that colonial domination persists not only through spectacular symbols like palaces and flags, but through ordinary bureaucratic settings that normalise surveillance, control, and administrative discipline.

The uniforms in *Train to Pakistan* intensify this point in figure 4.8. They regulate the body and encode authority through dress, posture, and insignia. Even where local forms such as turbans remain visible, they are marked by imperial symbols, indicating that cultural continuity survives only under colonial authorisation. Such images should not be read too simplistically as evidence of total domination; the persistence of local dress also indicates that empire often governs not by replacing indigenous identity entirely but by incorporating and subordinating it. This is a more precise way of understanding colonial visual power. It does not always erase difference; it reorganises difference into hierarchy.



Figure 4.8: District Commissioner with Police Officers in Colonial Uniform

Taken together, these scenes demonstrate that colonial authority in the selected films is represented not merely as a constitutional fact or historical backdrop, but as a visual and spatial regime. Architecture, flags, uniforms, ceremonial protocols, and institutional settings do not simply recall empire after the fact. They shape how empire is remembered, how decolonisation is framed, and how the spectator is invited to understand political transition. At the same time, the films do not occupy a single stable ideological position. Some scenes expose the arrogance, distance, and theatricality of imperial rule, while others risk rendering that rule visually coherent and aesthetically impressive. This tension is precisely what makes the films analytically interesting. They show that colonial power survives in postcolonial memory not only because it was historically dominant, but because cinema itself may continue to organise authority through forms of vision inherited from imperial spectacle.

This subsection has shown that colonial authority in the selected films is produced through the cinematic ordering of space, symbol, and ceremony. Buildings, flags, ritual protocols, uniforms, and institutional interiors function as visual technologies that make imperial hierarchy legible and emotionally persuasive. However, the films do not simply denounce colonial authority from a secure critical distance. They often remain caught

between critique and aestheticisation, exposing imperial domination while also reproducing some of its visual prestige. Reading these spaces critically therefore requires attention not only to what they represent, but to how film form itself participates in the afterlife of empire.

4.3.2 English Language and Administrative Power

This subsection argues that English in the selected films functions not merely as a neutral medium of communication but as a historically sedimented structure of authority that continues to organise administration, education, and public visibility in the postcolonial moment. Rather than treating language as a transparent vehicle of meaning, the films render English as a visual, institutional, and affective system through which colonial power persists beyond formal independence. Signboards, official documents, classroom instruction, bureaucratic exchanges, and even intimate writing practices collectively demonstrate that linguistic dominance operates at multiple levels of social life. At the same time, however, English in these films cannot be understood solely as an instrument of domination. It also appears as a contested and appropriated medium, used for resistance, emotional expression, and political articulation. The subsection therefore advances a more complex claim: English in Partition cinema is simultaneously hegemonic and unstable, authoritative yet ambivalent, imposed yet internalised.

Language is one of the most enduring colonial legacies represented in the selected films, but its persistence should not be reduced to mere continuity. English appears repeatedly in signboards, official documents, educational settings, and administrative environments, yet these appearances are not simply evidentiary details confirming colonial influence. Rather, they form a visual pattern through which the films demonstrate how

colonial linguistic structures organise everyday life even at moments of extreme disruption. Importantly, English is not confined to elite spaces alone. It circulates across urban landscapes, bureaucratic procedures, and domestic contexts, appearing on shop signs, letters, certificates, maps, and public notices. This widespread presence suggests that colonial language has moved beyond the domain of governance into the fabric of ordinary experience. At the same time, the films raise an implicit question: does the persistence of English indicate continued domination, or does it reflect a process of linguistic adaptation within postcolonial society? The answer, as the films suggest, lies in the tension between these possibilities.

Earth (1999)

In *Earth* (1999), the presence of English within scenes of escalating violence is particularly revealing. As Lahore descends into communal unrest following the announcement of Partition, the camera captures fragments of urban space in which English signboards remain visible. A partially legible English inscription on a shopfront and the clearly readable *Kundan Lal Sweet House* sign situate colonial language within a marketplace that is otherwise defined by local culture, commerce, and community. These images are analytically significant not because they simply demonstrate linguistic dominance, but because of the contrast they produce. The environment is marked by chaos, fear, and breakdown, yet the visual order of English lettering persists. This juxtaposition suggests that colonial language operates as a structuring residue that outlives political stability. Even as the social world collapses, the linguistic landscape retains the imprint of empire. However, the scene also complicates a straightforward reading of domination. The use of English on local businesses indicates a degree of assimilation and adaptation. The

language is no longer exclusively imperial; it has been incorporated into everyday economic life. The film therefore presents English as both a marker of colonial history and a tool embedded within local practice. This ambiguity becomes more pronounced when considered in relation to the longer history of English in the Indian Sub-continent. From the expansion of the East India Company to the consolidation of Crown rule, English gradually became the language of administration, education, and institutional legitimacy. By the time of Partition, it had already acquired cultural authority and functional necessity. In *Earth*, the persistence of English within scenes of violence does not simply reflect colonial imposition; it reflects a linguistic system that has already been internalised. The film thus suggests that postcolonial trauma unfolds within a pre-structured linguistic order. Language does not collapse alongside political structures. It endures, shaping how space is read, how institutions operate, and how meaning is publicly displayed. *Earth* reinforces this point through its depiction of institutional spaces. English-language notices on post office doors, railway station signage such as *Mano Majra Railway Station*, and police station boards demonstrate how colonial language is embedded within state apparatuses. These are not decorative details; they reveal that institutions of communication, transport, and law continue to operate through linguistic forms established under colonial rule. Importantly, the visual presentation of these signboards matters. They are often centrally placed within the frame or captured in ways that ensure legibility. This compositional emphasis draws the viewer's attention to language as a visible structure of authority. The films thus encourage spectators not only to notice English but to recognise its continued organisational function.

***Partition* (2007)**

In *Partition* (2007), the use of English introduces a striking paradox. During Gian's search for Naseem in Lahore, the slogan *Quit India* appears on a wall, written in English as in figure 4.9. This image is particularly important because it reveals that anti-colonial resistance is articulated through the language of empire. The slogan calls for the end of British rule, yet it does so in a linguistic form inherited from that very rule. This is not merely an ironic detail; it exposes the depth of colonial linguistic penetration. English becomes the medium through which political resistance achieves visibility and circulation. At the same time, the scene complicates any simple binary between domination and resistance. The language of the coloniser is appropriated, repurposed, and redeployed for anti-colonial ends. However, this appropriation does not entirely escape the structure of colonial authority. It remains dependent on the visibility and legibility that English provides within public space. The film therefore presents language as a site of tension in which power is both exercised and contested.



Figure 4.9: English Slogan *Quit India* on a Wall in Lahore

The persistence of English in *Partition* extends beyond slogans into institutional and everyday contexts. As Margaret and Walter relocate to Lahore, English appears on

hotel signage, railway station boards, and urban markers. In figure 4.10, Margaret's reading of an English-language application or letter further demonstrates that bureaucratic legitimacy continues to be tied to colonial linguistic forms. These scenes indicate that English is not simply present; it structures access to official processes, documentation, and recognition. The ability to read and write in English becomes implicitly associated with authority, mobility, and participation in administrative systems. Yet once again, the film does not present this dominance as entirely external. Margaret's engagement with English is expected, but its acceptance within local environments suggests that the language has been normalised. This normalisation complicates any attempt to treat English as purely foreign. It has become both inherited and inhabited.

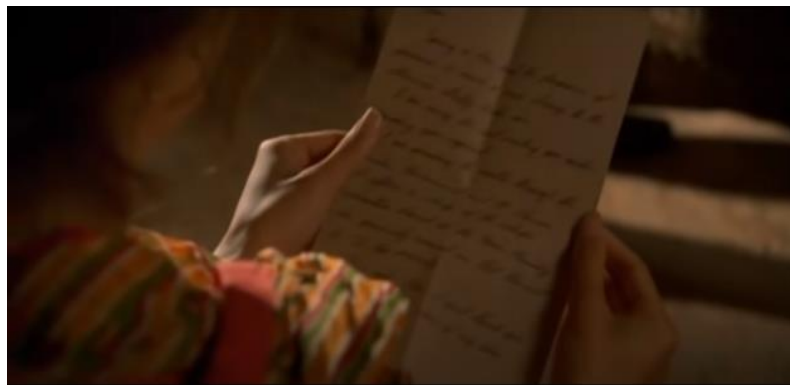


Figure 4.10: Miss Margaret Reading an English-Language Letter

***The Viceroy's House* (2017)**

The Viceroy's House (2017) provides perhaps the most explicit exploration of linguistic dominance through its representation of education. In the classroom scene where Lady Pamela teaches South Asian children using the English alphabet, language becomes an instrument of cultural transmission. The act of writing small and capital letters on the board is not merely pedagogical; it is ideological in figure 4.11. It introduces English as a

normative system of knowledge, implicitly positioning it as a marker of refinement and civilisation. This aligns with broader postcolonial critiques of linguistic imperialism, in which the coloniser's language is presented as superior and universal. However, the scene also invites a more nuanced reading. The children's participation suggests not only imposition but also adaptation. They are learning the language within a context that is already hybrid. English is not encountered as entirely alien; it is being integrated into local educational practice. The scene therefore oscillates between domination and incorporation.



Figure 4.11: Lady Pamela Teaching English Alphabet to Children

The affective dimension of language is further developed through Aalia's character. Her act of repeatedly writing Jeet's name in English is particularly significant because it shifts the function of language from administration to emotion. English here becomes a medium of longing, grief, and attachment. This internalisation complicates the notion of linguistic domination. The language of empire has entered the intimate sphere, shaping how personal feeling is expressed and recorded. Yet this does not necessarily indicate liberation from colonial structures. Rather, it reveals the depth at which those structures operate. Language has moved from the external world of governance into the internal world of affect. The films thus suggest that colonial legacy is the most powerful not when it is visibly imposed, but when it is emotionally inhabited.

The administrative division of resources in *The Viceroy's House* further underscores the persistence of English. As goods, finances, and institutional assets are distributed between India and Pakistan, labels, documents, and bureaucratic records remain in English. The scene in which kitchen utensils and financial reserves are divided illustrates a striking irony: political sovereignty is being redistributed, yet the linguistic framework through which that redistribution is organised remains unchanged. This suggests that independence does not entail a complete rupture with colonial structures. Instead, it reveals continuity at the level of administrative practice. English continues to function as the language of classification, allocation, and governance, even as new national identities are being formed.

This continuity extends into media and public communication. The use of English in newsreels, printed materials, and visual displays demonstrates that the language also structures how information is mediated and consumed. The cinema projector showing riot-related news emphasises that even representations of postcolonial violence are framed through colonial linguistic systems. This raises an important analytical question: if trauma is mediated through the language of empire, to what extent does that mediation shape how trauma is understood? The films do not provide a definitive answer, but they suggest that linguistic structures influence not only communication but perception itself. Further examples in *The Viceroy's House* reinforce the ubiquity of English. Text on buses, vehicles, calendars, and public markers consistently appears in English, indicating that the language organises not only space but time. The countdown to independence, displayed through an English-language calendar, symbolically frames national transition within colonial temporality. This is a subtle but important point. Time itself is represented through

the language of empire, suggesting that colonial structures extend beyond space and administration into the temporal imagination of the nation.



Figure 4.12: Quaid-e-Azam Holding an English-Language Partition Text

The figure of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah holding an English-language document during his speech further complicates the relationship between language and power in figure 4.12. This image is particularly significant because it places national assertion within a linguistic framework inherited from colonial rule. It does not diminish the political significance of independence, but it does highlight the persistence of colonial forms within postcolonial governance.

The tension between Urdu and English in Pakistan, referenced implicitly in this moment, reflects a broader struggle over linguistic identity, authority, and authenticity. English remains associated with administration and law, while Urdu is tied to cultural and national identity. The film thus gestures toward the ongoing negotiation between inherited structures and emergent identities.

The recurrence of English on milestones and directional markers during scenes of migration adds another layer to this analysis. As refugees move across newly drawn borders, the landscape through which they travel remains linguistically marked by colonial

authority. The milestone indicating distance to Lahore in figure 4.13, written in English, becomes a powerful visual reminder that even movement toward a new national identity is mediated through the language of the past. This suggests that colonial legacy is not left behind geographically; it accompanies displacement and redefines the experience of transition.



Figure 4.13: English-Language Milestone between India and Pakistan

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that English in the selected films operates as a complex and multi-layered legacy. It is not simply a tool of communication but a structure that organises administration, education, public visibility, emotional expression, and even temporal experience. At the same time, the films do not present English as a monolithic force of domination. They reveal its ambivalence, showing how it is appropriated, internalised, and contested within postcolonial society. This duality is crucial for a nuanced understanding of linguistic power. English persists not only because it was imposed, but because it has become embedded within the practices and identities of those who inherited it.

This subsection demonstrates that English in the selected films functions as a continuing structure of authority that extends across institutional, spatial, and emotional

domains. Through classrooms, signboards, documents, media, and intimate writing, the films show how colonial language remains central to postcolonial life. However, this persistence is not straightforward. English operates as both a hegemonic legacy and a contested medium, simultaneously enabling communication, shaping identity, and reproducing the linguistic hierarchies of empire.

4.3.3 Colonial Media and Communication Technologies

This subsection argues that communication technologies introduced during colonial rule function in the selected films not simply as historical artefacts or markers of modernity, but as infrastructural systems that reorganise perception, authority, and the circulation of information in the Indian Sub-continent. Devices such as gramophones, radios, typewriters, cameras, projectors, and print media are not neutral tools. They shape how subjects hear, record, interpret, and remember events. In cinematic terms, these technologies often operate as mediating layers between lived experience and its representation, structuring not only communication but also the conditions under which reality becomes intelligible. At the same time, however, the films do not present these technologies as uniformly oppressive or emancipatory. Instead, they reveal a tension between control and circulation: colonial media both extends administrative power and enables new forms of cultural participation, memory-making, and affective connection. The subsection therefore argues that communication technologies in Partition cinema must be read as ambivalent instruments that simultaneously sustain colonial structures and become embedded within local social life.

Communication technologies appear across domestic, political, and institutional spaces in the selected films, suggesting that colonial modernity is experienced not only

through visible authority but through mediated sound, image, and text. These devices reorganise how events are accessed and understood. Rather than encountering violence, politics, or social change directly, characters often experience them through broadcast, recording, or representation. This mediation is crucial because it introduces distance, framing, and interpretation into experience. The films therefore suggest that colonial modernity does not only transform institutions; it transforms perception itself.

***The Viceroy's House* (2017)**



Figure 4.14: Gramophone Positioned in the Lawn of the Viceroy's House

The gramophone provides one of the most illustrative examples of this process as in figure 4.14. In *The Viceroy's House* (2017), the presence of a gramophone at a political gathering initially appears incidental, positioned on a table under a canopy while political figures converse. However, its visual placement within the mise-en-scène is significant. Although not foregrounded through dialogue, the object occupies a visible position within elite space, indicating that colonial technology has been seamlessly integrated into environments of authority and decision-making. The gramophone's presence suggests that colonial modernity is not confined to bureaucratic structures; it permeates social and cultural life. At the same time, its relative visual subtlety raises an important question: does

the film normalise this technological presence by embedding it unobtrusively within the scene, or does it invite the viewer to recognise it as a sign of colonial infiltration? The ambiguity of its presentation reflects the broader ambivalence of colonial media itself.



Figure 4.15: Staff at the Viceroy's House Listening to Radio Broadcasts

The radio represents another crucial colonial communication legacy, particularly in its role as a mediator of crisis. In *The Viceroy's House*, Aalia's father listens attentively to radio broadcasts, and later, groups gather around a radio to follow developments as demonstrations and violence escalate in figure 4.15. These scenes highlight the radio's function as a centralised source of information that shapes collective awareness. Importantly, the radio does not merely transmit events; it structures how those events are experienced. Characters encounter political developments and communal violence not through direct observation but through mediated sound. This introduces a temporal and perceptual distance that transforms experience into something received rather than lived. At the same time, the act of gathering around the radio produces a collective mode of listening, suggesting that media can create shared affective spaces even as it centralises authority.

The camera itself functions as one of the most significant colonial media technologies represented in the films. Photography historically linked to colonial documentation, classification, and surveillance, appears in scenes where bodies, events, and authority are recorded. Photography is explicitly linked to political visibility. Photographers document major events, including Jinnah's press conference as in figure 4.16, suggesting that political authority must be seen in order to be recognised. The camera thus becomes part of the apparatus through which history is produced. It does not simply record events; it constructs them as public and significant. This aligns with a broader understanding of media as not merely reflective but constitutive of reality.



Figure 4.16: Photographers Using Modern Cameras to Capture Political Events

The cinema projector in *The Viceroy's House* extends this logic further in figure 4.17. When Churchill's speech is screened, political authority is mediated through cinematic technology. The projector does not simply display information; it transforms speech into spectacle. The audience does not encounter Churchill directly but through an image projected onto a screen, framed, edited, and temporally controlled. This introduces another layer of mediation in which power is experienced through representation rather than presence.



Figure 4.17: Film Projector inside the Viceroy's House

The film thus suggests that colonial authority is sustained not only through direct governance but through mediated visibility. The inclusion of musical instruments such as saxophones, brass instruments, and French horns broadens the analysis by showing that colonial media influence extends into sonic culture. These instruments, embedded within both diegetic and non-diegetic sound, indicate the incorporation of Western musical traditions into Indian cultural life. Their presence suggests that colonial modernity is not limited to communication technologies in a narrow sense but includes broader aesthetic forms that shape auditory experience.



Figure 4.18: Visual Illustration of Colonial Legacy in Indian Society

English-language newspapers in *The Viceroy's House* further reinforce the role of print media in structuring public discourse in figure 4.18. Newspapers function as sites

where information is produced, circulated, and legitimised. Their presence indicates that colonial authority extends into the domain of journalism, shaping not only what is reported but how it is framed. The use of English in print media aligns with the earlier discussion of linguistic dominance, demonstrating that language and technology operate together to produce systems of communication.

***Partition* (2007)**

The typewriter in *Partition* (2007) introduces another dimension of mediated communication: the production of official text. Margaret's act of typing a letter foregrounds the mechanical process through which written communication is standardised and formalised in figure 4.19. The typewriter is not simply a writing tool; it represents bureaucratic order, efficiency, and the institutionalisation of documentation. In colonial contexts, typed text carries authority precisely because it appears uniform, legible, and impersonal. This standardisation is significant because it removes the variability of handwriting and replaces it with a controlled, reproducible format. The film thus suggests that colonial administration operates not only through language but through the technologies that produce that language.



Figure 4.19: Miss Margaret Typing a Letter on a Typewriter

In *Partition*, photography acquires a more personal dimension. Margaret's offer to take a photograph in a train compartment and Andrews' request for a group pose demonstrate how the camera is also used to preserve memory and emotional connection. These scenes complicate the association between photography and colonial surveillance. The camera becomes both an instrument of control and a tool of personal remembrance. This dual function reinforces the broader argument that colonial technologies are not monolithic; they operate across multiple registers of meaning.

***Train to Pakistan* (1998)**

In *Train to Pakistan* (1998), the gramophone is associated with elite pleasure and patriarchal authority. When Hukam Chand listens to music while Haseena performs for him, the device becomes part of a power-laden environment in which gender, class, and colonial modernity intersect. The gramophone here is not merely a source of entertainment; it frames the performance itself. Music is mediated through technology that is historically linked to colonial modernity, and the scene subtly aligns sensory pleasure with structures of control. The device thus participates in the production of a particular atmosphere, one in which authority is exercised through both institutional and intimate means. This suggests that colonial technologies do not only circulate culture; they also organise relations of power within domestic and private spaces. In *Train to Pakistan*, journalists photograph the bodies of dacoits outside the police station, transforming death into visual record. This act of documentation is not neutral. It converts violence into an image that can be circulated, archived, and interpreted. The camera thus participates in the production of knowledge about violence, shaping how it is remembered and understood. The interaction between Iqbal and the elderly postman in *Train to Pakistan* further complicates this representation.

When Iqbal requests to type a confidential document but is told to dictate it instead, the scene reveals both the limitations and the intimacy of colonial communication systems. The absence of advanced technological access contrasts with the expectation of confidentiality, highlighting a gap between bureaucratic aspiration and infrastructural reality. This moment is analytically important because it shows that colonial modernity is unevenly distributed. Technologies exist, but their accessibility and functionality vary across social contexts. Even seemingly minor objects, such as the electric fan in *Train to Pakistan*, contribute to this network of colonial modernity. While not a communication device in the strict sense, the fan represents the domestic penetration of technological infrastructure introduced during colonial rule. Its presence signals that modernity is experienced not only through grand systems of communication but through everyday objects that regulate comfort, environment, and bodily experience.

Earth (1999)

This ambivalence becomes more pronounced in *Earth* (1999), where the gramophone appears in everyday urban and domestic contexts. A vendor cycling through a park with a gramophone transforms the device into a mobile source of sound, circulating music through public space. Here, colonial technology is no longer confined to elite or institutional settings; it has entered popular culture. Similarly, Lenny's mother uses a phonograph during dance lessons, integrating the device into domestic routine and embodied practice. These scenes are significant because they demonstrate how colonial artefacts become naturalised. The gramophone does not appear as foreign or imposed; it becomes part of the rhythms of daily life. Yet this normalisation should not be read as simple cultural assimilation. The device continues to carry the historical weight of colonial

introduction, even as it is recontextualised. The films therefore suggest that colonial technologies persist not by remaining external, but by becoming internal to local practice. In *Earth*, radio broadcasts intensify this dynamic by relaying reports of massacres, killings, and displacement. The auditory nature of radio is particularly significant in cinematic terms. Unlike visual media, it requires listeners to imagine what they cannot see, thereby producing anxiety, anticipation, and fear. The absence of images does not reduce the impact of violence; it often amplifies it. The films therefore demonstrate that colonial communication technologies reshape not only access to information but also the emotional texture of that information. Sound becomes a vehicle for trauma, carrying news of violence into domestic spaces and embedding it within everyday life.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that colonial media and communication technologies in the selected films function as complex and ambivalent systems. They extend the reach of administrative power, structure the circulation of information, and mediate perception, yet they are also appropriated, normalised, and integrated into local cultural practice. The films do not present these technologies as external impositions that disappear after independence. Instead, they show that colonial modernity persists through the infrastructures that organise sound, image, and text. These infrastructures continue to shape how individuals experience reality, remember events, and participate in social life.

This subsection has shown that colonial media and communication technologies in the selected films are not merely historical artefacts but active mediating systems that structure perception, authority, and memory. Through gramophones, radios, typewriters, cameras, projectors, and print media, the films reveal how colonial infrastructures continue

to organise the circulation of sound, image, and information. At the same time, these technologies are not represented as purely instruments of domination. They are also appropriated, normalised, and embedded within local practices, producing an ambivalent legacy in which colonial modernity persists even as it is reinterpreted within postcolonial life.

4.3.4 Railways, Mobility, and Displacement

This subsection argues that transportation infrastructures introduced under British colonial rule particularly the railway system function in the selected films as critical sites where the promises of colonial modernity are transformed into instruments of mass displacement, vulnerability, and violence during Partition. While railways, roads, bicycles, and motor vehicles initially signify mobility, connectivity, and technological progress, the films reconfigure these infrastructures as spaces of rupture, fear, and forced movement. In doing so, they expose a fundamental contradiction at the heart of colonial modernity: systems designed to facilitate circulation and control becomes the very mechanisms through which trauma is enacted and intensified. The subsection therefore contends that mobility in Partition cinema is not simply movement through space; it is a historically charged process through which colonial infrastructures are re-signified within the experience of postcolonial suffering.

Transportation infrastructures appear repeatedly across the selected films, suggesting that colonial modernity is embedded not only in institutions and language but also in the organisation of movement itself. Roads, railways, vehicles, and pathways structure how characters navigate space, encounter danger, and experience displacement. Importantly, these infrastructures are not neutral backdrops. They shape the conditions

under which movement becomes possible, restricted, or lethal. The films therefore invite a critical reconsideration of mobility: rather than representing freedom or progress, it often becomes synonymous with uncertainty, exposure, and loss.

***Earth* (1999)**

In *Earth* (1999), the motorcar offers an early indication of this ambivalence. Mr. Rustam Sethna's frequent use of the car positions it as a marker of urban privilege, technological advancement, and social status. The vehicle signifies access to mobility, to safety, and to a certain cosmopolitan modernity associated with colonial influence. However, this apparent security is quickly destabilised. When Lenny and her family are caught in a protest and attacked by a mob, the car ceases to function as a protective enclosure. Instead, it becomes a confined space of vulnerability. The camera's framing of the vehicle during the attack often tightening the space within the shot and emphasising the proximity of the crowd transforms it from a symbol of control into a site of entrapment. This shift is analytically significant because it demonstrates how colonial technologies of mobility can be reconfigured under conditions of violence. The car does not lose its association with modernity, but that modernity is revealed to be fragile and contingent.



Figure 4.20: Railway Bridge as a Symbol of Colonial Infrastructure

***Partition* (2007)**

In *Partition* (2007), the bicycle operates at a different scale but carries a similar ambivalence. Margaret's repeated movement through Lahore on a bicycle situates her within an urban environment shaped by colonial-era mobility in figure 4.21. The bicycle suggests accessibility, everyday movement, and a degree of independence. Unlike the motorcar, it does not signify elite status but rather integration into the rhythms of the city. Yet this apparent normalcy must be read critically. The bicycle's ease of movement contrasts sharply with the growing instability of the surrounding environment. As communal tensions escalate, the freedom associated with mobility becomes increasingly precarious. The film thus juxtaposes the continuity of everyday movement with the impending disruption of social order, highlighting the fragility of ordinary life under the pressure of Partition.



Figure 4.21: Miss Margaret Riding a Bicycle in Lahore

In *Partition* (2007), the railway similarly functions as a site of narrative and symbolic convergence. The climactic scenes involving the train and the death of key characters underscore the extent to which colonial transport infrastructure becomes entangled with personal and collective tragedy. The presence of the steam locomotive, with

its visible mechanical processes such as coal being shovelled into the engine emphasises the materiality of the system.

This is not an abstract network; it is a machine that requires fuel, labour, and continuous operation. The visual emphasis on these processes invites a more critical reading: the same system that once enabled imperial expansion now facilitates mass displacement and suffering. The film thus foregrounds the continuity between colonial infrastructure and postcolonial trauma, suggesting that the legacy of empire is embedded not only in memory but in the physical systems that organise movement.

***Train to Pakistan* (1998)**

The railway system, however, occupies the most central and symbolically charged position within Partition cinema. Across *Earth*, *The Viceroy's House*, *Train to Pakistan*, and *Partition*, trains function as recurring visual and narrative motifs that connect colonial infrastructure directly to the experience of displacement and violence. Historically, the railway network in the Indian Sub-continent was developed under British rule to facilitate administrative control, military movement, and economic extraction. In the films, this historical function is not erased but recontextualised. Railways continue to operate as systems of large-scale movement, but the nature of that movement changes dramatically during Partition. Trains no longer primarily carry goods or passengers within a stable system; they transport refugees, bodies, and trauma across newly drawn and violently contested borders. Likewise, in *Train to Pakistan* (1998), the centrality of the railway is both thematic and structural. The village of Mano Majra is organised around the rhythms of the train, with daily life regulated by its arrivals and departures. This temporal structuring of life by the railway reflects the integration of colonial infrastructure into local

existence. However, this familiar rhythm is violently disrupted with the arrival of trains carrying corpses. The transformation of the train from a predictable marker of time into a vehicle of death is one of the most powerful symbolic reversals in Partition cinema.



Figure 4.22: Coal Being Shovelled into a Steam Engine

The camera's treatment of these trains often lingering on their stillness, their silence, or the horrific revelation of their contents reconfigures the railway as a site of trauma rather than movement. The train does not merely carry violence; it embodies it. This shift is crucial because it demonstrates how colonial infrastructure, once associated with order and connectivity, becomes inseparable from the experience of mass death. The forced involvement of villagers in handling and cremating the bodies further intensifies this transformation. The railway does not remain an abstract system; it intrudes into everyday life, compelling ordinary people to confront the material reality of violence. The canal filled with corpses extends this imagery, suggesting that the infrastructure of movement has overflowed into the natural environment. Movement, death, and landscape become intertwined, reinforcing the idea that Partition trauma cannot be contained within discrete spaces.

Earth (1999) & The Viceroy's House (2017)

In *Earth* and *The Viceroy's House*, railway infrastructure appears less centrally but remains significant. Tracks, stations, and trains form part of the visual landscape through which Partition is experienced. These elements often appear in transitional moments, marking shifts from stability to movement, from belonging to displacement. The railway bridge, in particular, functions as a powerful visual symbol. As a structure designed to connect spaces, it becomes a reminder of both linkage and division. During Partition, the very networks that once connected regions become lines of separation, directing flows of refugees and demarcating new national boundaries.

The scale of railway usage during Partition further reinforces its symbolic weight. The mass movement of refugees often under conditions of fear, overcrowding, and violence transforms the railway into one of the most visible and traumatic infrastructures of the period. The films draw on this historical reality to construct trains as sites where individual stories intersect with collective catastrophe. The anonymity of the crowd, the compression of bodies within compartments, and the uncertainty of arrival all contribute to a cinematic representation of displacement as both physical and existential. Crucially, the films do not present the railway solely as external structure acting upon passive subjects. They show how individuals experience and interpret this infrastructure. For some, it represents escape; for others, it becomes a site of loss, separation, or death. This multiplicity of meanings underscores the ambivalence of colonial modernity. The railway is neither purely beneficial nor purely destructive. Its significance depends on historical context and lived experience. Partition reconfigures its meaning, revealing the latent violence within systems designed for control and efficiency. This dialectical tension

between mobility and immobilisation is central to the subsection's argument. While colonial infrastructure promises movement, Partition transforms movement into compulsion. Refugees do not travel by choice; they are forced to move under threat. Mobility becomes displacement, and displacement becomes trauma. The films capture this shift through visual contrasts between motion and stillness, crowding and emptiness, departure and arrival. Trains move, but they do not necessarily lead to safety. Roads extend, but they do not guarantee passage. The very act of movement becomes uncertain.

Taken together, these representations demonstrate that transportation infrastructure in the selected films operates as a critical link between colonial modernity and postcolonial trauma. Railways, vehicles, and pathways do not simply facilitate movement; they structure the experience of displacement and reconfigure the meaning of mobility itself. By transforming symbols of progress into sites of suffering, the films expose the contradictions of colonial development and reveal how its legacies continue to shape the lived realities of Partition.

This subsection has shown that transportation infrastructure particularly the railway system functions in the selected films as a key site where colonial modernity is re-signified through Partition trauma. While initially associated with progress, connectivity, and control, these infrastructures are transformed into mechanisms of displacement, vulnerability, and violence. The films thus reveal a fundamental contradiction: the systems that once enabled imperial expansion become the very structures through which postcolonial suffering is experienced and remembered.

4.4 Fractured Histories on Screen: Cinematic Articulations of Trauma after Partition 1947

This section argues that the selected films do not merely depict the violence of Partition as a historical event but construct it as an ongoing traumatic condition that continues to shape subjectivity, social relations, and collective memory across time. Rather than presenting trauma as an individual psychological response to discrete acts of violence, the films articulate it as a multi-layered and historically embedded phenomenon that operates simultaneously at psychic, social, and cultural levels. Through narrative fragmentation, symbolic imagery, affective intensity, and the mobilisation of cinematic form, Partition cinema renders trauma as both an experience of psychological rupture and a condition of broader social disintegration. Crucially, however, the films do not simply represent trauma; they produce it as a mode of perception. By structuring narrative through memory, repetition, absence, and visual disruption, they position the spectator not as a detached observer but as a witness to fragmented experience. In doing so, they complicate conventional trauma theory by oscillating between incoherence and retrospective narration, between rupture and the desire for meaning. Partition trauma therefore emerges not as a singular or resolved past, but as an unstable and continually mediated presence that resists narrative closure.

This section examines how the selected films represent Partition as a traumatic rupture whose effects extend beyond the historical event itself into memory, identity, family life, gender relations, and collective experience. Trauma in these films is not treated simply as an individual emotional reaction but as a layered post-Partition condition that fractures consciousness, disrupts social bonds, and reshapes moral and cultural life.

Through close analysis of narrative events, character behaviour, visual symbolism, and recurring motifs of loss, violence, and displacement, this section argues that Partition cinema articulates trauma as both psychological injury and social disintegration.

Trauma is often understood as a distressing event that profoundly alters a person's emotional orientation and understanding of the world. Trauma studies therefore examine the psychological, cultural, and rhetorical effects of such experiences as they are represented in literature, cinema, and society. In the case of the Indian Sub-continent, the Partition of 1947 generated acute and multiple forms of suffering, including psychological trauma, communal violence, sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, forced migration, and war-related trauma. The selected films reveal that these forms of suffering are interconnected rather than separate. Trauma in Partition cinema is represented as cumulative and enduring: it affects how individuals interpret what has happened to them, how they remember it later, and how their identities are reshaped by that experience over time. Within psychology, Sigmund Freud's early work on memory and traumatic experience is foundational to the study of trauma. Freud initially argued that repressed sexual assault lay at the root of traumatic hysteria, and more broadly he conceptualised trauma as an event that wounds the psyche, disrupts consciousness, and returns through memory in fragmented and troubling forms. While contemporary trauma studies have moved far beyond Freud, his formulations remain important for understanding how deeply painful experiences exceed ordinary cognition and produce dissociation, repetition, and fractured recall. In the context of Partition cinema, this framework is especially useful because the selected films repeatedly depict trauma not as a single completed event, but as a wound that survives through memory, guilt, fear, repetition, and emotional dislocation. At the same time, the films do not simply illustrate trauma theory. They test its limits by

showing that traumatic experience may be narratively reassembled even when it remains emotionally unresolved. This tension between fragmentation and retrospective coherence is central to the cinematic articulation of Partition.

4.4.1 Psychic Fragmentation

This subsection argues that the selected films represent trauma primarily through psychic fragmentation: the breakdown of psychological coherence under the pressure of violence, separation, guilt, and irreversible loss. Psychic fragmentation refers to the disintegration of an individual's psychological coherence under traumatic pressure. In relation to the Partition of 1947, this fragmentation manifests as disrupted memory, fractured identity, emotional instability, loneliness, moral injury, and an inability to integrate past and present realities. The films under study repeatedly show that trauma is not experienced as a singular event that can be easily contained. Instead, it persists as a prolonged psychological rupture that affects cognition, memory, and emotional continuity. Importantly, this fragmentation is not only thematic but cinematic. Through repetition, delayed revelation, symbolic objects, and shifts in temporal perspective, the films formalise disturbance rather than merely describing it. In this sense, psychic rupture is not simply represented; it is made perceptible through the structures of film itself.

4.4.1.1 Psychological Trauma and Fragmentation of Consciousness in the Aftermath of Partition

This subsection argues that the films portray Partition as a form of situational and cumulative trauma that overwhelms the capacity of individuals to process reality coherently. Through characters such as Lenny, Aalia, Aliya's father, and Gian Singh, the

films show how consciousness becomes fractured by fear, insecurity, guilt, and unresolved loss. Psychological trauma refers to emotional and cognitive injury resulting from a severely stressful or overwhelming incident (Spytska, 2023). Such trauma often arises when the intensity of an event exceeds an individual's capacity to cope with or integrate its emotional impact. It may result from a single catastrophic incident or from a sequence of distressing experiences extending across weeks, years, or even decades. In either case, the long-term consequence is often a lasting disturbance in thought, memory, feeling, and behaviour (Freedman, 2019, p. 225). Psychological responses, however, vary from person to person. Not all individuals who endure a potentially traumatic event will develop the same symptoms, and the form of trauma may depend on the kind of violence involved as well as on age, biography, class, and social location. Human-induced violence, warfare, abuse, and displacement can all produce psychological trauma, and in the case of Partition these conditions converged on an immense scale.

The Partition of the Indian Sub-continent may be understood as a form of situational trauma, marked by both acute shock and prolonged distress. The stress emerged unpredictably and with devastating speed, while communities were entirely unprepared for the scale of violence that followed. Once the Sub-continent was divided into India and Pakistan, a catastrophic cycle of rioting, forced migration, and social collapse inflicted profound psychological trauma upon the population. Partition is widely recognised as one of the largest forced migrations in history. As noted by Dr. Crispin Bates, UNHCR estimates place the number of forcibly displaced Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims at approximately 20 million, making Partition one of the largest mass migrations in human history (Lakshman & Rajan, 2023). This upheaval exposed the population to refugee trauma, war-related trauma, sexual violence, domestic abuse, child vulnerability, and

community terror. The selected films draw directly on this historical devastation and transform it into cinematic representations of fractured consciousness.

These experiences not only reshaped the social world of the Indian Sub-continent; they also informed the cinematic portrayal of Partition across later decades. Cinema in South Asia, including Bollywood, repeatedly turned to Partition as a subject through which to represent the anguish of refugees, communal violence, sexual assault, kidnapping, forced migration, domestic suffering, and the psychological damage produced by the loss of home, loved ones, and ancestral belonging (Chatterjee, 2023). In the films analysed here, psychological trauma is not presented in abstract clinical terms but through objects, gestures, silences, repeated memories, and bodily reactions. Cognitive trauma often appears as fear, anxiety, confusion, dissociation, and isolation.

***Earth* (1999)**

Film *Earth* offers one of the strongest portrayals of fractured consciousness through the character of Lenny. The film is based on Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man*, itself rooted in the author's childhood experience of Partition. This biographical basis intensifies the theme of memory and psychological distress. The film opens with newly formed clay on the ground, already linking land to vulnerability and disintegration. Lenny, the young Parsi narrator, lives with polio and belongs to a relatively affluent family that maintains relations with Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and British acquaintances. Her early world appears socially mixed and emotionally secure. Yet this apparent stability is gradually shattered by the unfolding crisis of Partition. Much of Lenny's pain is bound to what she sees, overhears, and fails fully to understand. Her trauma is therefore cognitive as well as emotional: she is

forced to witness a world changing around her before she has the conceptual means to interpret it.

The film begins with Lenny drawing in her sketchbook. Books, crayons, and coloured pencils are spread on the table as she sketches and then draws a map of India. This scene is especially important because it translates national rupture into child psychology. She cannot understand why a country is being divided, and she attempts to process political disintegration through drawing. The map becomes an object through which she externalises fear. Later, she and her ayah sit in the park among friends from different religious communities who repeatedly discuss Partition. These same figures also gather at meals in her home. Lenny overhears their conversations and absorbs the tension without being able to master it intellectually. In this way, the film aligns traumatic history with the child's fractured consciousness. The scene also positions the spectator within a limited and unsettled perceptual field: like Lenny, the viewer is invited to encounter political transformation through partial comprehension, overheard discourse, and emotional disturbance rather than explanatory mastery.



Figure 4.23: Lenny's Shattered Plate symbolizing her Distress of Partition

In the midst of this growing crisis, Lenny begins asking questions for which she receives no satisfying answers. Her family remains formally neutral as Parsis, yet neutrality offers no emotional protection. Lenny's anxiety intensifies, and she begins to experience the division of the country as a threat to identity itself. She does not know where she belongs, or even how belonging will be defined once the map has been redrawn (Sathya, 2020). This is one of the film's most effective representations of psychic fragmentation: national disintegration enters the consciousness of a child as confusion, dread, and symbolic disturbance. In one moment of anguish, she throws a plate to the floor and asks, '*Can a country be divided like a plate?*' (Mehta, 1999). The shattered plate visualises her internal state as in figure 4.23. It symbolises a psyche unable to reconcile political abstraction with lived reality. At the same time, the scene demonstrates how cinema condenses trauma through visual metaphor, allowing the symbolic object to carry an affective weight that exceeds literal explanation.

As violence intensifies, Lenny's trauma deepens. She and her parents are trapped in a protest while driving, and a mob attacks their car. Her mother clutches her tightly in the middle of chaos, and the event remains etched in her memory. Her father, overwhelmed by insecurity, discovers a hidden firearm delivered in a parcel. The weapon signals the collapse of ordinary security and introduces the child to a new logic of fear. Lenny's trauma is also inseparable from Shanta, her ayah, whose eventual disappearance becomes the emotional centre of Lenny's later life. Even in old age, Lenny remains haunted by memories of her childhood intimacy with Shanta and continues to visualise herself as a child sitting in her ayah's lap. This return of childhood imagery shows how trauma fragments time: the past is not left behind but repeatedly intrudes into the present. The

film's temporal oscillation between child and adult consciousness formally reproduces that instability, suggesting that trauma is not only remembered but structurally re-lived.



Figure 4.24: Adult Lenny Recalling Childhood Intimacy with her Ayah

As she grows older, the image of Shanta continues to haunt her. The event remains psychologically alive even fifty years later. The film thus represents Partition trauma not as a completed historical wound but as an unresolved structure of memory and guilt. Lenny's psychological suffering is intensified by the belief that she betrayed Shanta by revealing her hiding place. This burden culminates in her confession: *"Fifty years have gone by since I betrayed my ayah. Some say, she married ice candy man, some say they saw her in a brothel in Lahore, others say that they saw her in Amritsar but I never set eyes on her again. And that day, in 1947, when I lost ayah, I lost a large part of myself (Mehta, 1999)."* The line is crucial because it links personal guilt to psychic disintegration. Her identity remains fractured by the event; the loss of Shanta becomes the loss of self. The closing image of elderly Lenny walking through Lahore reinforces this unresolved grief in figure 4.25. The film's temporal movement from child to old woman demonstrates that trauma extends across the life course, sustaining melancholia rather than closure.



Figure 4.25: Elderly Lenny Walking in Lahore, Embodying Unresolved Grief

***The Viceroy's House* (2017)**

In contrast, *The Viceroy's House* contains fewer explicit representations of memory-based psychological trauma, yet the moments it offers remain significant. Although the film centres on Lord Mountbatten and the political transfer of power, it also introduces characters whose personal histories are marked by trauma. Aliya's father carries the memory of imprisonment and persecution, while Aliya herself is burdened by the emotional pressure of a childhood engagement and a later forbidden love. When Jeet arrives at the Viceroy's House and tries to speak with Aliya, she repeatedly distances herself. This hesitation reflects not simply restraint but emotional conflict shaped by memory, duty, and impending separation.

When Jeet later meets Aliya's father at a wedding, the older man is blind due to retinal degeneration. His blindness does not erase memory; instead, it intensifies the way the past continues to structure his present. He struggles to recognise Jeet, yet remains grateful for Jeet's earlier assistance, which had come at personal risk. The father's condition symbolises another form of psychic fragmentation: vision is impaired, but memory remains painfully active. Jeet and Aliya gradually develop affection for one

another, but Aliya's father remains committed to her previous engagement to Asif, a British Army officer presumed absent because of war. When Asif returns, Aliya is emotionally paralysed. She cannot articulate her attachment to Jeet and is instead trapped between familial duty, social expectation, and personal desire. The film uses photographs to index this conflict. Asif carries Aliya's photograph in his wallet, preserving her image as a token of memory and prior promise. The photograph functions as more than a sentimental object. It compresses the pressure of memory, expectation, and unresolved emotional allegiance into a single visual sign. In cinematic terms, the photograph also arrests time, freezing a prior emotional order that no longer corresponds to the present and thereby making trauma visible through visual stasis.

***Partition* (2007)**



Figure 4.26: Framed Photograph of Andrews, Encapsulating Gian's Guilt

Similarly, Gian Singh in *Partition* (2007) suffers from psychological trauma rooted in memory and guilt. As a young soldier in the British Army, he is deployed to Burma, where his friend and superior officer Andrews is killed. Gian feels responsible for this death because he could not save him. The guilt follows him into later life. A framed photograph of Andrews functions as a continual reminder of loss, responsibility, and

unfulfilled obligation in figure 4.26. The image is not merely commemorative; it fixes trauma visually within Gian's domestic space.

Before leaving for war, Andrews receives a whistle from his sister Margaret. He keeps it with him until his death, and Gian later preserves it as a relic of traumatic memory as in figure 4.27. The whistle becomes a material object of unresolved guilt. Gian repeatedly tries and fails to return it to Margaret, and this inability reinforces his sense of moral and emotional incompleteness. By the end of the film, his psychological pain is renewed when his wife Naseem travels to Pakistan and is prevented from returning. He turns back to old letters and photographs, re-entering a world of memory that now intensifies rather than alleviates grief.



Figure 4.27: Mr. Andrews' Whistle, Preserved by Gian Singh

These films show that psychological trauma after Partition is represented through fractured consciousness, intrusive memory, guilt, and emotional disorientation. Rather than portraying trauma as a momentary shock, they depict it as a prolonged rupture that continues to shape identity across time. While psychic fragmentation captures the internal disintegration of subjectivity under traumatic pressure, its persistence is most powerfully registered through memory. Trauma does not simply disrupt consciousness in the present;

it re-emerges through fragmented, repetitive, and often incomplete acts of recall. The following subsection therefore shifts from the structure of the psyche to the instability of memory as one of trauma's primary sites of articulation.

4.4.1.2 Trauma of Memory and Fragmented Recall

This subsection argues that memory in the selected films is not stable recollection but a site of injury, repetition, and fragmentation. Trauma returns through images, objects, confessions, and embodied recall, demonstrating that post-Partition memory is incomplete, painful, and often impossible to master. In psychology, memory is commonly defined as the capacity to store, retain, and retrieve information (Goldstein, 2019). Traumatic experience, however, often alters this capacity. Psychological or physical injury may affect how an individual remembers the event itself, how earlier and later events are connected, and whether coherent recall remains possible at all. One of the most debated psychological consequences of trauma is repressed or disrupted memory: an experience so painful that it is either permanently imprinted or buried under shame, fear, and dissociation. Since Freud's early writings, repression has remained a key concept in understanding trauma's relation to memory, even as later theorists have refined or challenged it.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is one of the most widely recognised psychological conditions associated with traumatic memory. It may arise from direct exposure to terrifying events involving actual or threatened harm, or from learning that such events have happened to close family members or emotionally significant others (Tahan et al., 2021). PTSD is particularly relevant to war, displacement, and communal violence because such conditions repeatedly generate intrusive recollections, heightened arousal, nightmares, and emotional numbing. The selected films do not diagnose characters

clinically, but they repeatedly depict behaviours and memory structures consistent with trauma-based fragmented recall.

***Earth* (1999)**

In film *Earth*, memory is central to narrative form. The film is rooted in Lenny's recollection of Partition from later life, and this retrospective voice makes trauma inseparable from memory. The narrative is not simply about what happened in 1947; it is about how what happened continues to be remembered, relived, and narrated decades later. Lenny's memory is fragmented because it is marked by guilt, fear, and the unrecoverable loss of Shanta. She remembers childhood scenes of social closeness, meals, drawing, play, the park but these memories are gradually invaded by images of division and violence. This movement from warmth to rupture is a key feature of fragmented recall. The past cannot be retrieved as a unified whole because it has been broken by trauma.

The film's visual and narrative structure reinforces this. Lenny's childhood drawing of India as a single map and her later violent question about whether a country can be divided like a plate show memory working symbolically rather than linearly. Likewise, her adult confession about losing her ayah demonstrates that what survives most vividly is not a complete history but a wound. Her inability to determine what happened to Shanta whether she married, entered a brothel, or reached another city further intensifies fragmented recall. The trauma lies not only in losing Shanta but in the incompleteness of knowledge itself. Memory becomes a structure of uncertainty. At the same time, the film complicates trauma theory's emphasis on fragmentation by giving that broken memory a retrospective narrative shape. What is offered is not closure, but a fragile and partial

reconstruction that exposes the tension between traumatic incoherence and the cinematic desire to narrate.

The Viceroy's House (2017)

In *The Viceroy's House*, memory is less dominant as a narrative device but still functions importantly through images, photographs, and withheld emotion. Aliya's photograph in Asif's wallet preserves an earlier promise and a version of the past that no longer matches present reality. Likewise, Aliya's father is haunted by imprisonment and past suffering, while Jeet and Aliya themselves are caught between remembered duty and present attachment. Here memory is not fully verbalised, but it continues to organise decision-making and emotional pressure. The film therefore suggests that traumatic memory may persist not only through explicit confession but through silence, suspended choice, and unresolved affect. In film *Partition*, Gian Singh's memory is more directly tied to guilt and unresolved duty. Andrews' photograph and whistle function as objects through which memory becomes materially preserved. These items anchor traumatic recall, making the past continuously available yet never fully resolved. Gian's failure to return the whistle to Margaret mirrors his inability to complete the moral work of mourning. This is not simply remembrance; it is the persistence of psychic injury through objects that bind the past to the present.

Thus, the selected films show that traumatic memory after Partition is fractured in several ways: through incomplete knowledge, repeated images, symbolic objects, guilt, and emotional reactivation. The past survives not as a coherent narrative but as an unresolved disturbance that repeatedly intrudes upon the present. In cinematic terms, this disturbance is mediated through recurring visual motifs and temporal return, so that memory becomes

not only a theme but a formal logic of repetition. The films represent memory as one of the main carriers of trauma. Through photographs, objects, confessions, and recurring visual images, they show that Partition survives in fractured recall rather than settled remembrance. If traumatic memory reveals the persistence of the past within the present, it also produces a corresponding disruption in social and emotional attachment. The inability to integrate traumatic experience often results in forms of isolation that are not merely physical but deeply psychological. The next subsection therefore examines loneliness as a key affective manifestation of psychic fragmentation.

4.4.1.3 Experiencing Isolation: Loneliness as a Form of Psychic Trauma

This subsection argues that loneliness in the selected films functions not merely as social separation but as a psychological consequence of traumatic rupture. The characters' isolation reflects the breakdown of trust, attachment, and emotional continuity after Partition. Early-life trauma often contributes to adult depression, anxiety, and difficulty forming stable relationships. Children who experience traumatic shock may later develop profound loneliness, particularly when early bonding is disrupted by neglect, rejection, abandonment, imprisonment, or death (Ambre, 2022). Within the broader framework of psychic fragmentation, loneliness must therefore be understood as more than physical solitude. It is an internal condition shaped by loss, emotional discontinuity, and the inability to trust others or imagine secure belonging.

***Earth* (1999)**

In *Earth*, Lenny experiences intense loneliness as Partition destroys the social world around her. Friends leave Lahore, communal violence spreads, and the city becomes

emotionally unfamiliar. Without Shanta, she feels abandoned at the most intimate level. The division of the population along religious and political lines deepens her sense of isolation. On her birthday, her father reminds her that she has grown older in a time that has changed violently. She wanders away to Imam Din Chacha, who prays for her and then returns to reading the news. This scene is important because it stages loneliness within proximity to the others. Lenny is not always physically alone, but she is emotionally isolated in a world where the adults around her are absorbed by fear and uncertainty. The *mise-en-scène* of partial distance and emotional disconnection gives visual form to that loneliness, showing how trauma can isolate a subject even within shared domestic or social space.

Lenny's loneliness deepens further as her emotional dependence on Shanta becomes harder to sustain. Shanta herself withdraws into anxiety and fear. Lenny resents her changing relationships, especially her concern for Hassan and her inability to remain emotionally available in the old way. When Hassan asks Lenny to go to bed and leaves with Shanta, the child is once again left in solitude. Here the film shows how private emotional deprivation parallels broader communal fragmentation. Shanta, too, becomes emotionally isolated. Dilnawaz's transformation from a playful street vendor into a vengeful and increasingly dangerous figure produces fear and estrangement. His own loneliness becomes visible when he sits alone smoking, engulfed in grief and rage as in figure 4.28. This solitude is not innocent. The film suggests that loneliness can also harden into resentment and violent possessiveness. When Shanta rejects his proposal, his sense of exclusion intensifies and eventually contributes to her abduction. Thus, loneliness is represented as both vulnerability and a possible source of further trauma.

Lenny, as an adult, continues to remember Shanta's abduction as the defining emotional event of her life. She never finds her again. The closing scenes, in which elderly Lenny walks through Lahore, preserve loneliness as an enduring condition rather than a passing emotion. Her sorrow remains unresolved because the social and emotional world of childhood was irreparably broken.



Figure 4.28: Dilnawaz Embodying Grief and Trauma-induced Transformation

***The Viceroy's House* (2017)**

In *The Viceroy's House*, loneliness is represented both personally and politically. Aliya and Jeet, whose love is thwarted by Partition, experience traumatic isolation as departure becomes unavoidable. Their final meetings are marked by silence, tears, and the knowledge that political decisions made elsewhere are destroying personal futures. After losing Aliya, Jeet experiences anxiety, insecurity, and loneliness so intensely that he symbolically rejects the Viceroy's uniforms and blames Mountbatten for the violence. In this case loneliness becomes political as well as emotional: separation from the beloved merges with anger at colonial power. Mountbatten himself is also shown in private moments of regret, suggesting that power does not prevent solitary reflection, though the moral weight carried by coloniser and colonised remains profoundly unequal.

Partition (2007)

In *Partition*, loneliness affects not only individuals but also the family unit. Naseem, who is separated from her original family and later confined in Pakistan, experiences repeated forms of abandonment. Gian feels deserted when she cannot return, and their son Vijay suffers from maternal absence. The film therefore portrays Partition-induced loneliness as intergenerational and cumulative.

Train to Pakistan (1998)

In *Train to Pakistan*, Nooran experiences loneliness after Jagga's imprisonment. Although their relationship is emotionally intimate, she is left without protection and later forced to migrate toward Pakistan with her blind father. Her departure is saturated with uncertainty and emotional abandonment. Hukam Chand and Haseena also experience loneliness in another register. Once he sends her away to her grandmother, he loses a companion whose presence had temporarily relieved his own emptiness. Loneliness in this film thus appears across class and gender, though in different forms.

The selected films portray loneliness as a crucial form of psychic trauma. It emerges from loss, displacement, betrayal, and social fragmentation, revealing how Partition damages not only bodies and communities but also the intimate structures of attachment. While loneliness emerges from the breakdown of interpersonal bonds, trauma in Partition cinema is not limited to relational loss. It is also shaped by prior histories of violence, particularly those produced through colonial warfare. The following subsection extends the analysis by examining combat-related trauma and moral injury as precursors that complicate post-Partition suffering.

4.4.1.4 Combat-Related Trauma and Moral Injury

This subsection argues that *Partition* represents combat-related trauma not simply as fear of war but as moral injury: the lasting psychic wound produced when survival depends on actions that violate one's ethical commitments. Combat-related trauma applies to individuals who have participated in military service or armed conflict. Such trauma may occur in training or active battle and often produces long-term psychological consequences. Veterans may witness mass destruction, the deaths of comrades and civilians, and constant threats to life. Even those in support roles may develop persistent stress, nightmares, guilt, and emotional dysregulation (Vermetten et al., 2017). Within the framework of psychic fragmentation, combat trauma also includes moral injury: the enduring inner conflict that arises when one's actions in war violate deeply held ethical beliefs.

***Partition* (2007)**

Although combat trauma is not a major focus in most Indian Sub-continent Partition films, *Partition* (2007) offers a significant example through Gian Singh. His traumatic memories are rooted in military service in Burma during the Second World War. Historically, Indian formations played a substantial role in Burma under British command (Callahan & Marston, 2021), and the film uses this context to connect imperial warfare with later post-Partition suffering. In the film, Gian Singh, his friend Avtar, and the British officer Andrews enlist in the British Army and are deployed to Burma. Before departure, Margaret Andrews, the officer's sister, entrusts Gian with the responsibility of bringing her brother back safely. This promise later becomes central to Gian's trauma. In a trench scene, Andrews becomes trapped under water and begs Gian to shoot him in order to end his

suffering. Gian hesitates but eventually complies. This act is the core of his combat trauma: he survives, but only by performing an act that becomes psychologically unbearable afterward. The force of the scene lies not only in the event itself but in its staging: hesitation, duration, and emotional restraint make the spectator confront the moral impossibility of the choice rather than merely its outcome. Gian keeps Andrews' whistle as a token of memory and failed duty. The whistle symbolises an unfulfilled promise, survivor guilt, and moral injury. His post-war life is overshadowed by this scene as in figure 4.29. He experiences recurring recollection, silence, and emotional weight long after the battlefield has disappeared. His inability to return the whistle to Margaret reinforces the idea that the trauma remains unresolved. The film therefore represents combat trauma not merely as exposure to danger but as a wound carried in conscience.



Figure 4.29: Gian Absorbed in Traumatic Recollection of Burma Campaign

By contrast, *Train to Pakistan*, *Earth*, and *The Viceroy's House* do not foreground combat-related trauma because their main characters are not structured as veterans returning from war. Their focus lies primarily on civilian suffering, communal violence, displacement, and domestic vulnerability. This contrast is useful because it highlights how *Partiion* introduces a distinct but related trauma: the psychic damage of imperial war feeding into postcolonial life. Through Gian Singh, *Partiion* shows that trauma after 1947

is linked not only to communal violence but also to the afterlife of imperial war. Combat-related trauma appears here as moral injury, guilt, and unresolved duty that continues to fracture the self-long after battle ends. Although the preceding discussion has focused on trauma at the level of individual subjectivity, Partition cinema repeatedly demonstrates that such psychological rupture cannot be separated from the broader structures of communal violence within which it emerges. Trauma is not only internal; it is produced through collective breakdown. The analysis therefore now turns to communal violence as a foundational condition shaping both individual and social experience.

4.4.2 Communal Violence and Displacement

This section contends that communal violence is portrayed in the selected films as a central and constitutive trauma of Partition. Scenes of riots, abductions, attacks on migrant caravans, and trains carrying corpses do more than depict historical brutality; they function as key narrative devices through which the films construct experiences of social breakdown, pervasive fear, displacement, and moral collapse. Community violence trauma can be understood as exposure to intentional acts of interpersonal or collective violence occurring within public or communal spaces, regardless of whether individuals are directly targeted (Ceballo et al., 2022). Such violence encompasses acts including sexual assault, armed attacks, riots, civil unrest, and terrorism. Unlike accidental harm, it is deliberate and produces broader social consequences, eroding trust, disrupting communal cohesion, and generating fear that extends beyond immediate victims to affect families, neighbours, and witnesses. While children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable, repeated exposure can destabilise entire communities over the long term (Zhang et al., 2021). Within the context of Partition, this form of violence includes both colonial aggression and post-

Partition conflicts among Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. The process of migration further intensified these conditions, as caravans were ambushed, trains attacked, women abducted, villages destroyed, and even routine movement became a matter of survival.

Within cinematic representation, communal violence is not presented merely as historical fact. It is constructed through images of crowds, broken bodies, fires, empty spaces, and escalating confrontations that transform ordinary environments into sites of terror. *The Viceroy's House* and *Earth* both depict the deterioration of social interaction into communal hostility.

***Earth* (1999)**

In *Earth*, an early verbal disagreement between Mr. Rogers, Mr. Rustam, and Mr. Singh gradually intensifies into physical confrontation. This movement from political discussion to bodily aggression symbolically mirrors the broader descent into violence. Lenny, as a child observer, is acutely sensitive to the frightening instability of adult behaviour, and the scene foreshadows the collapse of civic coexistence. Lenny's conversation with her mother about Parsi identity is also important in this context. "Mummy...!" She vociferates to her mother. "Imam Din Chacha was saying that we Parsis are the biblical of the English." "What!" Her mother exclaims, laughing. "I don't think that we are the biblical actually." "Then What...?" Lenny inquires. She takes a seat in the recliner and pulls Lenny into her lap to respond. "You know... the lizard in the garden that changes its Colour... chameleon. The Parsis are like that actually." "What Lizard...?" "No chameleon...the Parsis also take on the Colour of the people around them because they have to survive. There are so few Parsis in the world and alone they can't stand out. Do you know that when the Parsis come to India from Persia 1300 years ago... The Indian

prince wouldn't let us enter India. A wise man sent gifts to them... a bowl of milk with sugar inside... and he said that we Parsis will be like the sugar in the milk. Sweet but invisible..." Then Lenny responds, "*We are not biblical but we are invisible* (Mehta, 1999)." Her mother explains that Parsis survive by adapting, comparing them to sugar dissolved invisibly in milk. This metaphor of invisibility reflects the fear of becoming exposed in a landscape increasingly organised by communal identification. It reveals how violence produces identity anxiety even before overt physical attack occurs. In this way, communal violence is already present as anticipation, vulnerability, and strategic self-erasure.

In the park, the multi-religious group of friends begins to divide into factions. Teasing turns into insult; religious differences become sharper and less playful. Dilnawaz's impersonation of a Sufi saint initially invites humour, but the exchange soon hardens into hostility. The shift is crucial because it shows how everyday speech and joking can become the prelude to community aggression. Later, discussion of the British-drawn borders and Lahore's uncertain political future heightens tension further. As riots spread, Hindu friends begin leaving for India. Jaswant Singh's bitter comment about cities being distributed, "*Playing god under the ceiling fans of Lahore Hotel... Distributing Indian Cities like bank of god... Amritsar to India... Sialkot to Pakistan... Pathankot to India... Lahore to Pakistan...*" (Mehta, 1999)" crystallises resentment toward the bureaucratic arrogance with which borders are drawn. The remark links colonial decision-making directly to communal trauma.

As violence escalates, the characters become confined to domestic space. From a rooftop, Lenny, Shanta, Hassan, and Dilnawaz witness a man tied between two jeeps and

torn apart. The brutality of this scene captures communal violence in its most dehumanising form. The victim is reduced to a body destroyed because of identity. The traumatic force of the scene falls not only on the victim but on those who witness it. Lenny and Shanta are traumatised spectators, while Dilnawaz's own grief hardens further into rage and revenge. The film thus shows how communal violence reproduces itself: violence generates trauma, trauma mutates into hatred, and hatred seeks new targets. At the same time, the scene raises difficult questions of spectatorship. By confronting the viewer with spectacular brutality, the film solicits ethical witnessing, yet it also risks aestheticising suffering through the intensity of its visual staging. Himmat Ali's forced stripping to prove circumcision is another powerful example. Here violence polices the body directly, treating anatomy as evidence of communal identity. In the most brutal sequence, Shanta is abducted by Dilnawaz and the other extremists as in figure 4.30. Her abduction condenses gendered and communal violence into one image. Partition violence against women was widespread, and the film positions Shanta as a figure through whom that broader historical reality becomes visible. Her body becomes a site of revenge, symbolic ownership, and communal hatred.



Figure 4.30: Shanta Being Abducted by Rioters, Symbolizing Targeting of Women

The Viceroy's House (2017)

The Viceroy's House also depicts forms of community violence and hostility, though often through tensions within institutional settings. Miss Hudson's discomfort with Indian proximity reflects colonial prejudice, while the confrontation in the kitchen and among staff members reveals rising resentment, class tension, and racial hostility. Lady Mountbatten's encounter with the kitchen staff becomes a scene where politeness, translation, and suppressed anger collide. Later, when a Muslim worker spits at Mr. Edwart and a Hindu guard strikes him, causing his nose to bleed, the film captures a concentrated moment of collapsing authority and cross-communal aggression. It shows that violence is not confined to streets or mobs; it erupts within the very institutions meant to organise order.

At the political level, the heated exchange between Jinnah and Nehru also dramatises incivility, mistrust, and hardened positions. Mr. Jinnah says, "*I wanted all of the Punjab and Bengal. You expect me to accept a moth-eaten Pakistan?*" Mr. Nehru replies, '*You should be grateful. You've held us to ransom for long enough.*' Mr. Jinnah addresses him angrily, '*Mr. Nehru, it is you...*' (Berges, 2020)." Mr. Jinnah vehemently reprimands him. This contentious dialogue between two leaders indicates instances of incivility within Muslim and Hindu communities. Meanwhile, Duleep Singh's transformation after discovering the devastation of his village shows how communal violence produces not only direct suffering but also radical emotional change. He moves from warmth to bitterness, and his confrontation with Nehru further suggests that trauma can be redirected toward political figures seen as complicit or ineffective.

Partition (2007)

In *Partition*, communal violence is vividly represented in the attack on a caravan travelling from India to Pakistan. Hindus and Sikhs ambush the Muslim caravan, killing many and separating Naseem from her family. The caravan scene is important because it combines violence and displacement. The road itself becomes unsafe; movement toward supposed refuge becomes exposure to death. Later, rioters gather outside Gian Singh's house demanding Naseem as revenge. Here violence invades domestic space, turning the home into a site of siege. Overwhelmed by trauma, Naseem attempts suicide, and Gian later marries her to protect her from further harm. Yet the film makes clear that communal hatred persists beyond immediate rescue. Gian, a Sikh married to a Muslim woman, becomes vulnerable to rejection and attack himself. Violence here is shown not as a temporary rupture but as something socially reproduced through memory, revenge, and exclusion.

Train to Pakistan (1998)

In *Train to Pakistan*, communal violence is epitomised by trains arriving full of corpses. When a train from Pakistan reaches Mano Majra, the army orders local men to gather wood and kerosene to burn the bodies on pyres as in figure 4.31. The ghost train is one of the strongest images in Partition cinema because it transforms a colonial technology of movement into a vehicle of mass death. The scene also reveals how ordinary villagers are forced into intimate proximity with atrocity. Initially, Hukam Chand attempts to contain or conceal the scale of violence, but bodies floating in the canal soon make concealment impossible. Most are Muslims, murdered in retaliatory violence following earlier killings of Hindus and Sikhs. Mano Majra's young men, stirred by rumour and

revenge, begin organising further attacks. Community violence thus becomes both trauma and catalyst: it injures, terrifies, and simultaneously generates new brutality.



Figure 4.31: Dead Bodies Being Burned on Pyres, Visualizing Communal Slaughter

Communal violence in these films also generates fear and terror trauma. Fear refers to acute psychological responses to situations experienced as life-threatening or uncontrollable. Such experiences produce panic, hyperarousal, confusion, and long-term anxiety, nightmares, and hypervigilance (Gerber, 2019). In *Train to Pakistan*, terror is pervasive. The arrival of mutilated bodies and the burning of corpses create a state of chronic fear in the village. The imagery of flames, water, and disfigured bodies immerses characters and viewers alike in an atmosphere of uncontrollable threat. *Partition* conveys terror through the sudden assault on caravans and the threat posed by mobs outside Gian Singh's home. Fear here is both immediate and anticipatory. Even those not yet attacked live under the expectation of violence. In *Earth*, fear is filtered through Lenny's perspective. Parks, houses, and streets become uncertain spaces where apparently trivial interactions can suddenly turn violent. The film's fractured narration and child-centred viewpoint reinforce how terror reshapes consciousness. *The Viceroy's House* represents fear within institutional and political frameworks: rumours, refugee camps, and staff conflict create an atmosphere of dread that extends from the personal to the national.

Across these films, fear is constructed through recurrent cinematic strategies: abrupt shifts in *mise-en-scène*, facial close-ups, prolonged silences, abandoned spaces, bodies, and disorienting movement. These techniques make terror both immediate and lingering. The films also show that fear reshapes moral behaviour, trust, and decision-making, turning communities into sites of suspicion and retaliation.

The selected films represent communal violence as a foundational trauma of Partition. Riots, abductions, caravan attacks, and corpse-filled trains do not merely depict history; they show how violence destroys social order, generates fear, and reproduces new cycles of trauma. However, communal violence in the selected films is not experienced uniformly. It is profoundly shaped by gendered power relations that determine vulnerability, agency, and the symbolic meaning of violence. The following subsection therefore examines how Partition trauma is inscribed differently across bodies, with particular attention to gendered forms of coercion and control.

4.4.3 Gendered Trauma

This subsection argues that the selected films foreground gendered trauma as a central dimension of Partition violence. Women's bodies are repeatedly constructed as sites of domination, revenge, and control, while men also endure forms of gendered humiliation shaped by communal identity and patriarchal power. Gendered trauma encompasses sexual violence, coercion, domestic abuse, and other forms of harm embedded within unequal power relations. Sexual assault trauma may involve rape, forced touching, harassment, coercion, or exploitation (Banvard-Fox et al., 2020), whereas domestic violence trauma operates within intimate and familial relationships through physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, as well as coercive control (Weisberg, 2019). In the

context of Partition cinema, these forms of trauma are intensified by political upheaval, where women's bodies become both symbolic and material sites through which communal revenge and patriarchal authority are enacted.

Train to Pakistan (1998)

In *Train to Pakistan* (1998), Haseena is sexually exploited by Hukam Chand in figure 4.32, whose social authority and class position make refusal almost impossible. The scene is important because it shows that trauma under Partition is not restricted to communal killing. Colonial and patriarchal power also operates through intimate exploitation. By contrast, the relationship between Nooran and Jagga, though socially transgressive, is represented as mutually affectionate rather than coercive. The contrast allows the film to distinguish between consensual intimacy and exploitative sexualisation. Yet even here, the representation invites a further critical question: does the film expose exploitation, or does it risk aestheticising female vulnerability through the conditions of its staging? This tension is central to the ethics of gendered representation in Partition cinema.



Figure 4.32: Haseena Performing for Mr. Hukam Chand in his Private Quarters

***Earth* (1999)**

In *Earth*, Shanta's abduction by Dilnawaz and the mob must be read as both communal and gendered violence. Her body is appropriated as a site of revenge, demonstrating how female vulnerability is made to bear the symbolic burden of communal hatred. The film also draws on the *fallen woman* trope, exposing the stigma and silence that often surround sexual violence. At the same time, male bodies are not entirely exempt from gendered injury: Himmat Ali's forced bodily inspection to verify circumcision shows how communal violence can sexualise humiliation and police masculinity through the body.

***Partition* (2007)**



Figure 4.33: Naseem's Locked Door symbolizing her Domestic Imprisonment

Partition foregrounds sexual threat in refugee settings. Naseem is repeatedly exposed to danger, pursuit, and vulnerability, even where direct assault is not always shown. The threat itself becomes traumatic. Domestic violence trauma appears most clearly in *Partition* through Naseem's confinement by her brothers and the physical obstruction of Gian Singh as in figure 4.33. These scenes illustrate coercive familial control intensified by patriarchal and communal imperatives. The locked room becomes a visual expression of how family authority reproduces trauma in private space. While *Earth*,

Train to Pakistan, and *The Viceroy's House* focus more on communal and political violence than intra-family assault, all four films reveal that gender shapes vulnerability, agency, and the social meaning of suffering.

Thus, gendered trauma in the selected films is both literal and symbolic. Women are vulnerable to abduction, sexual coercion, confinement, and forced migration, while men may be subjected to forms of bodily humiliation linked to identity and communal suspicion. The films therefore show that Partition trauma is inseparable from patriarchal structures that intensified violence and regulated bodies. Women's bodies become sites where national, communal, and masculine anxieties are violently inscribed.

Gendered trauma in Partition cinema is represented through sexual threat, bodily control, abduction, and domestic confinement. These films show that the violence of 1947 was not gender-neutral but deeply shaped by patriarchal and communal power. The gendered dynamics of trauma further extend into the realm of generational experience, where the effects of violence are transmitted beyond immediate victims. The following subsection explores how Partition trauma persists through childhood experience and intergenerational memory, demonstrating its long-term impact on identity formation and emotional life.

4.4.4 Child and Intergenerational Trauma

This subsection argues that the selected films represent Partition trauma as extending beyond immediate victims into childhood development and intergenerational memory. Violence, abandonment, and displacement affect not only those who directly experience Partition but also those whose identities are formed in its aftermath. Child and

intergenerational trauma refers to the long-term psychological, emotional, and developmental effects of abuse, neglect, displacement, and violence on children, as well as the transmission of trauma across generations (Rachel, 2021; Hannigan et al., 2021). Partition created conditions in which children were particularly vulnerable to abduction, loss, insecurity, and indirect exposure to communal violence. These experiences produced enduring emotional scars that often reappeared later in life.

Train to Pakistan (1998)



Figure 4.34: Young Jagga Witnessing His Father's Execution by Hanging

In *Train to Pakistan*, Jagga's childhood memory of witnessing his father's public execution has a lasting impact on his emotional and behavioural development. The scene in figure 4.34 suggests that early exposure to violence contributes to later aggression, instability, and anti-social conduct. Jagga's adult life cannot be separated from the traumatic memory that shaped his childhood. The film also includes children in refugee movement more peripherally, suggesting that while child trauma is omnipresent, it is often overshadowed by adult-centred narratives.

***Partition* (2007)**

Partition presents child trauma more explicitly. Attacks on refugee caravans result in separation, orphaning, and chronic insecurity. Vijay, the son of Gian and Naseem, suffers through maternal absence, paternal distress, and the uncertainty surrounding his family's future. His trauma is not a single event but a prolonged condition shaped by separation and instability as in figure 4.35.



Figure 4.35: Vijay Distressed at the Absence of his Mother, Naseem

***Earth* (1999)**

In *Earth*, Lenny's experience represents one of the strongest cinematic portrayals of child trauma in Partition cinema. She is emotionally manipulated, exposed to violence, and burdened by guilt after unwittingly revealing Shanta's hiding place to Dilnawaz as in figure 4.36. The fact that this guilt remains with her into old age demonstrates how childhood trauma becomes intergenerational memory through narration itself.



Figure 4.36: Dilnawaz Manipulating Lenny to Reveal Shanta's Whereabouts

The Viceroy's House (2017)

The Viceroy's House highlights structural child vulnerability through images of refugee children who appear malnourished, ill, and traumatised. At the same time, survival narratives such as that of the lone baby from Duleep Singh's village symbolise resilience amid devastation. These representations broaden the argument by showing that intergenerational trauma is not only psychological but social: families, villages, and communities are reshaped by what children witness and endure. The intergenerational dimension of trauma is crucial because it shows that Partition did not end with the generation that directly experienced it. The selected films suggest that childhood exposure to violence, displacement, coercion, and loss continues to shape emotional regulation, attachment, memory, and identity across later life. Trauma therefore survives in the family, in narration, and in inherited emotional worlds. It is transmitted not only through what is explicitly remembered but also through silence, absence, and unresolved affect.

The films show that children are not marginal to Partition trauma but central to its long afterlife. Through loss, guilt, separation, and inherited memory, childhood trauma becomes one of the main ways in which Partition continues across generations.

4.5 Cross-Film Synthesis

This section synthesises the cross-film analysis, demonstrating that despite formal and national differences, the films reproduce a shared structural logic in which Orientalist frameworks and colonial legacies shape the representation of trauma. Across the corpus, narrative authority, historical accountability, and the articulation of suffering remain constrained by enduring colonial epistemologies.

4.5.1 Colonial Structures and Trauma are Mutually Constitutive

This sub-section refuses the conceptual isolation of Orientalism, colonial legacies, and trauma, arguing instead that they are co-constitutive formations that mutually produce the conditions of intelligibility within which Partition can be seen, narrated, and understood. To posit trauma as an autonomous or purely experiential category is not simply insufficient but analytically misleading, as it obscures the epistemic infrastructures that organise both its representation and its meaning. Trauma in these films does not precede its mediation; it is constituted through visual, linguistic, and institutional regimes that are themselves sedimented within colonial knowledge systems. In this sense, Orientalism as theorised by Edward Said must be understood not as a supplementary discourse but as a structuring condition that governs how violence is rendered legible, attributable, and historically meaningful.

In *The Viceroy's House*, the Orientalist visual grammar does not merely frame Partition but actively redistributes its causality. The film's reliance on hierarchical composition, spatial segregation, and the centrality of colonial authority does not simply aestheticise history; it epistemologically reorganises it. Imperial violence is displaced,

diffused, or rendered administratively inevitable, while disorder is recoded as an intrinsic failure of the colonised. What emerges is not a representation of trauma but its ideological re-inscription: a visual economy that converts colonial responsibility into narrative absence. Trauma here is thus doubly produced, first through the historical event, and second through its rearticulation within a visual regime that forecloses imperial accountability.

In *Earth*, this foreclosure operates at the level of language. The persistence of colonial linguistic structures does not merely mediate trauma but actively constrains its articulation, producing a disjunction between experience and expression. The characters' attempts to narrativise violence are necessarily routed through a language already implicated in colonial hierarchies of knowledge and value. This produces not only silences but distortions: trauma becomes speakable only within the limits of a discursive system that cannot fully accommodate it. The result is not simply the failure of testimony but its epistemic capture, wherein the very act of articulation reproduces the structures that render the experience partially unintelligible.

Train to Pakistan radicalises this critique by locating the production of trauma within the banal operations of governance itself. Hukam Chand's institutional failure is not an aberration but the logical extension of a colonial administrative rationality predicated on abstraction, categorisation, and moral detachment. His proceduralism does not fail in spite of its colonial origins; it fails because of them. By deferring ethical engagement in favour of bureaucratic process, his actions participate directly in the perpetuation of violence. Here, Orientalist knowledge and traumatic production collapse into one another: governance does not respond to crisis but becomes one of its enabling conditions.

Taken together, these films demonstrate that trauma is not merely represented through colonial structures but is continuously produced by them. By insisting on this entanglement, the chapter disrupts any reading that treats trauma as an affective residue separable from its conditions of possibility, instead foregrounding its imbrication within the enduring epistemic and institutional logics of colonial power.

4.5.2 Production Origin Determines Ideological Positioning

This sub-section advances a deliberately uncompromising claim: production origin is not a contextual variable but a determining structure that conditions the ideological horizon of each film, governing both the distribution of visibility and the political intelligibility of Partition. To treat these films as autonomous cultural texts is to overlook the extent to which their representational limits are preconfigured by the institutional, national, and industrial contexts of their production. In this sense, production origin functions as an epistemic regime that regulates not only whose trauma can be centred, but also what forms of explanation are permissible. The question of representation is therefore inseparable from the geopolitical location of production, which operates as a prior constraint on narrative possibility.

Within this framework, *Train to Pakistan* appears not as ideologically neutral but as comparatively less overdetermined by external colonial epistemologies, allowing for a more direct centring of South Asian communal trauma. Its representational logic privileges local social relations and ethical entanglements, resisting the imposition of an external explanatory grid that would otherwise subsume violence under imperial rationalisation. However, this relative autonomy should not be overstated; the film remains marked by the

residual structures of colonial governance that shape its depiction of institutional response. Its critical force lies precisely in exposing, rather than resolving, these contradictions.

Earth, by contrast, occupies a structurally ambivalent position that reveals the instability of postcolonial representation. Its focus on gendered and personal loss reorients attention toward the intimate registers of trauma, yet this very shift risks displacing structural causality onto individual affect. The film's intermittent reliance on Orientalism as theorised by Edward Said is evident in its aestheticisation of difference and its framing of violence through emotionally legible, and therefore containable, forms. As a result, its critique remains partial, constrained by the very representational conventions it seeks to interrogate.

In *Partition*, this displacement becomes total. The film does not merely marginalise political explanation; it actively evacuates trauma of its historical and structural determinants, reconstituting it as a depoliticised narrative device. Violence is abstracted into the background, severed from colonial causality and rearticulated as an interpersonal or romantic condition. This is not an absence of politics but an ideological operation that neutralises accountability by rendering history narratively expendable.

The Viceroy's House represents the most explicit articulation of production origin as ideological determination. By centring British institutional experience, it reasserts imperial subjectivity as the privileged site of historical meaning, systematically reproducing Orientalist conventions that frame colonial governance as rational, constrained, and tragically burdened. The colonised, by contrast, are positioned as reactive and unruly, their trauma subordinated to the dilemmas of imperial administration.

Taken together, these films demonstrate that production origin does not simply influence representation but actively delimits its conditions of possibility, structuring whose trauma is legible, how it is explained, and which histories are authorised to matter.

4.5.3 The Structural Containment of Gendered Testimony is a Transnational Pattern

This sub-section contends that the containment of gendered testimony is not a representational inconsistency but a transnationally reproduced structural logic that governs the limits of narrative authority across the corpus. While all four films acknowledge female suffering often positioning it as emblematic of Partition's violence they simultaneously foreclose the possibility of women functioning as epistemic agents of that suffering. What emerges is a systematic disjunction between embodiment and articulation: women are made to carry trauma as visible signifiers, yet are denied the discursive authority to interpret, narrativise, or historicise it. This is not a failure of inclusion but a condition of it. Gendered suffering becomes narratively legible only insofar as it is contained within frameworks that preserve masculine, communal, or institutional authority over meaning-making.

In *Train to Pakistan*, Nooran's narrative positioning exemplifies this containment through affective displacement. Her presence is sustained within the romantic register, which functions to depoliticise and dehistoricise her experience by subordinating it to the trajectory of male sacrifice. The romanticisation of her voice is not an expansion of subjectivity but its restriction: it transforms potential testimony into emotional resonance, thereby precluding her capacity to articulate trauma as a historically situated condition. Her

suffering is thus rendered narratively productive only to the extent that it reinforces, rather than disrupts, a masculinised moral framework.

Earth appears to grant greater narrative centrality to female experience, yet this centrality is structurally unstable and ultimately retracts at the moment of maximal violence. Shanta's abduction marks not simply a plot point but an epistemic rupture, after which she ceases to function as a speaking subject. Her disappearance is constitutive rather than incidental: it reveals that the film can stage female suffering but cannot sustain female testimony. In her absence, trauma is rearticulated through male memory and retrospective narration, displacing her voice while preserving her as an object of narrative significance. In *Partition*, the logic of containment is refracted through the trope of protection, which operates as a narrative mechanism that simultaneously acknowledges and neutralises gendered vulnerability. Naseem's subjectivity is constituted through her need to be protected, rendering her intelligible only within a patriarchal framework that equates female survival with male intervention. Protection thus functions as an ideological technology that converts gendered trauma into a justification for masculine agency, foreclosing the possibility of autonomous female narration.

The Viceroy's House extends this structural exclusion to the level of absence, where mass violence against women is not merely marginalised but effectively erased from the central narrative frame. This omission is not accidental but symptomatic of a representational regime organised around imperial institutional perspectives, within which gendered suffering particularly at scale remains structurally unrepresentable.

Taken together, these films demonstrate that the denial of female narrative authority is not contingent but systemic, operating across national contexts as a transnational pattern of epistemic containment. Women are permitted to signify trauma but

are persistently excluded from authorising its meaning, ensuring that gendered testimony remains mediated, displaced, or altogether foreclosed.

4.6 Summary of the Chapter

Three conclusions from the cross-film synthesis in Section 4.5 sum up the chapter's analytical contribution: that traumatic experience and colonial structures are mutually constitutive rather than analytically separable; that ideological positioning is determined by production origin in ways that are quantifiable and consistent throughout the corpus; and that the structural containment of female testimony is a transnational pattern that transcends any one national cinema tradition. These results serve as the empirical basis for the argument outlined follows, which will be expanded upon in Chapter 5 to form the study's more comprehensive theoretical contribution.

This chapter has critically examined cinematic representations of the 1947 Partition of the Indian Sub-continent through the intersecting frameworks of postcolonial theory and trauma studies. It has argued that Partition films do not merely depict historical events; they actively construct and mediate collective memory by encoding violence, displacement, and psychological rupture within narrative, visual, and affective form. Through the analysis of *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Earth* (1999), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017), the chapter has shown how cinema functions as a contested site where colonial legacies, communal tensions, and layered traumas are simultaneously represented, interpreted, and sometimes reproduced.

The first part of the chapter foregrounded the persistence of colonial discourse and Orientalist structures in Partition cinema. Drawing on postcolonial theory, it argued that

colonial power is not confined to the historical moment of British rule but continues to shape cinematic narratives through administrative systems, spatial hierarchies, and representational codes. While *Train to Pakistan* subtly reflects colonial residues through bureaucratic and institutional frameworks, *Partition* (2007) and *The Viceroy's House* (2017) more explicitly centre imperial authority, often reproducing hierarchical distinctions between coloniser and colonised. *Earth* (1999), by contrast, negotiates these tensions through the liminal position of the Parsi community, showing how colonial ideologies are internalised, contested, and rearticulated in everyday social interactions. Collectively, these films demonstrate that Partition cinema remains entangled with colonial epistemologies even as it attempts to narrate postcolonial suffering.

The second part of the chapter shifted to trauma representation and argued that trauma functions not merely as content but as a structuring principle of cinematic form. The analysis identified several overlapping forms of trauma, including psychic fragmentation, communal violence, fear and terror, displacement, combat-related trauma, gendered violence, and child and intergenerational trauma. These categories are not isolated. Rather, the chapter has shown that they overlap and produce cumulative effects that shape both individual subjectivities and collective identities. Communal violence emerged as a foundational trauma across the selected films, represented through riots, massacres, abductions, refugee caravans, and trains full of corpses. These images emphasise the sudden collapse of social cohesion and the transformation of ordinary spaces into zones of terror. Fear and terror trauma operate as pervasive undercurrents, structuring behaviour through the anticipation of violence as much as through direct experience. Refugee displacement intensifies this condition by exposing individuals to loss, separation, and prolonged insecurity. Within this wider structure, *Partition* adds the distinct dimension

of combat-related trauma and moral injury, while *Earth* offers one of the strongest portrayals of memory-based guilt and psychic fragmentation.

The chapter also foregrounded the gendered dimensions of trauma, arguing that women's bodies are repeatedly represented as sites of communal revenge, coercion, and patriarchal control. Sexual assault and abduction appear not only as personal violations but as political acts embedded in communal conflict. Domestic confinement and male bodily humiliation further reveal that trauma during Partition was deeply shaped by gendered power relations. Similarly, child and intergenerational trauma showed how violence extends beyond immediate victims and continues across life stages and family structures, affecting memory, attachment, and later emotional life.

A further argument of the chapter is that cinematic techniques themselves are crucial to trauma representation. Fragmentation, repetition, silence, close-ups, symbolic objects, and visual motifs do not merely illustrate suffering; they evoke its psychological effects. Through these formal strategies, the films position the viewer not only as observer but as witness to the emotional and historical reality of Partition. At the same time, the analysis has acknowledged that cinema may oscillate between ethical witnessing and the aestheticisation of suffering, raising important questions about the politics of trauma representation.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that Partition cinema operates as a complex postcolonial archive that preserves memory, reproduces or contests colonial ways of seeing, and negotiates unresolved trauma. By integrating historical context with close textual film analysis, the chapter has demonstrated that the violence of 1947 persists not

only as a historical event but as an enduring visual and cultural grammar that continues to shape representations of identity, memory, and belonging in South Asian cinema.

Chapter 5 serves as the concluding segment of the dissertation. It synthesises the central findings of the study while critically engaging their theoretical, cultural, and historiographical implications. It examines how Partition cinema not only represents individual and collective trauma but also mediates memory within the broader frameworks of postcolonial discourse. Beyond summarising the results, the chapter situates the selected films within wider debates on visual culture, trauma representation, and the politics of historical remembrance. It also identifies gaps in existing scholarship and outlines directions for future research, especially for scholars working at the intersections of film studies, trauma theory, and the enduring legacies of colonialism in cinematic narratives.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the central arguments and findings of the study, which examined cinematic representations of the 1947 Partition of the Indian Sub-continent through postcolonial theory and trauma studies. Focusing on *Earth* (1999), *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Partition* (2007), and *The Viceroy's House* (2017), the research has analysed how these films construct trauma, memory, and colonial legacies through narrative structure, character positioning, and visual form. The chapter summarises the study, presents key findings in relation to the research questions, outlines the contribution to knowledge, identifies limitations, and concludes with a final synthesis of the study's significance.

5.2 Summary of the Study

This study employed qualitative film analysis to examine how Partition trauma is represented in selected cinematic texts. It was theoretically grounded in postcolonial theory, particularly Edward Said's concept of Orientalism (1978), and trauma studies informed by Freud's work on memory and psychic disturbance. Through close textual analysis of narrative structure, characterisation, visual symbolism, and cinematic techniques, the research investigated how films construct trauma as both an individual and collective experience.

In order to provide a nuanced understanding of how cinematic form actively produces rather than merely reflects the historical experience of Partition, the study uses a thorough textual film analysis informed by postcolonial theory and trauma studies. This approach sees film as a useful tool for examining the relationship between traumatic memory and colonial representation. Rather than treating cinema as a passive reflection of historical events, the study approached film as an active site of meaning-making in which trauma is narratively organised and visually mediated. Chapter 4's analysis transcended mere film description to introduce three novel cross-film discoveries, collectively constituting the primary contribution of this work to the discipline. The subsequent sections encapsulate these observations. The analysis focused on how colonial histories, communal violence, displacement, and memory are represented within cinematic form, and how these representations are shaped by broader ideological frameworks. While qualitative film analysis enables detailed engagement with narrative and visual form, it is inherently interpretive and situated. The findings presented here therefore reflect a theoretically informed reading of the selected texts rather than a claim to exhaustive representation of Partition cinema. This interpretive positioning is central to the study's methodological approach, which prioritises depth of analysis over generalisation.

5.3 Summary of Key Findings

The analysis of the selected films indicates that Partition is represented not simply as a historical rupture, but as a condition that continues to structure memory, identity, and social relations within cinematic narratives. However, this representation varies across the four films in terms of perspective, emphasis, and ideological positioning.

First, the role of colonial structures is articulated differently across the films. *The Viceroy's House* foregrounds colonial authority through its focus on British decision-making and elite institutional spaces, thereby sustaining a hierarchical perspective aligned with imperial governance. In contrast, *Earth* and *Train to Pakistan* shift attention toward everyday interactions and local communities, where the effects of colonial division are experienced rather than administratively framed. *Partition* (2007) presents colonial influence more indirectly through military service and its long-term consequences. This variance illustrates a tendency observed throughout the corpus: a film's production origin directly influences the representation of colonial power inside it. *Train to Pakistan*, created within the South Asian cultural milieu, encapsulates colonial authority through internalised institutional dysfunction, most prominently illustrated by the character of Hukam Chand, whose dependence on colonial legal structures reveals the shortcomings of that legacy during a crisis. *Earth*, a diasporic Canadian creation, incorporates elements of Orientalist aesthetics inside a tale that critiques colonial divide. *The Viceroy's House*, a British creation, methodically reproduces Orientalist hierarchies, centring British institutional authority as the framework for narrating and comprehending Partition. This variation demonstrates that colonial power is not uniformly represented but mediated through distinct narrative perspectives.

Second, trauma is constructed through different forms of psychological experience. *Earth* provides the most sustained depiction of psychic fragmentation through Lenny's child perspective, where memory, guilt, and confusion structure the narrative. *Partition* (2007) represents trauma through moral injury and long-term emotional burden, particularly in Gian Singh's character. By contrast, *Train to Pakistan* foregrounds collective trauma through the breakdown of village life, while *The Viceroy's House*

presents trauma more selectively, often filtered through political and institutional viewpoints.

Third, communal violence and displacement are central but differently emphasised. *Train to Pakistan* and *Partition* depict violence directly through attacks, migration, and bodily harm, highlighting the material consequences of Partition. *Earth* represents violence through witnessing and emotional impact, while *The Viceroy's House* presents it more indirectly through dialogue, reports, and political developments.

Fourth, gendered pain is evident across the corpus; nonetheless, the investigation reveals a recurring pattern that beyond individual films: the systemic suppression of female testimony. In each of the four films, women's experiences of Partition violence are recognised to differing extents; yet, none of the films provides a female character with complete narrative authority to convey that experience in her own voice. In *Earth*, Shanta's abduction is observed from Lenny's viewpoint rather than from Shanta's own account, and following the abduction, Shanta is utterly absent from the narrative as a subject. In *Partition*, Naseem's weakness is framed by Gian Singh's protective agency rather than her own assertiveness. In *Train to Pakistan*, Nooran's voice is predominantly romantic and emotional rather than testimonial or political. *The Viceroy's House* omits the mass violence against women, which historians have identified as integral to the Partition experience, from its dramatic narrative. The uniformity of this pattern across four films from diverse national and cultural settings illustrates that the suppression of female testimony is not a characteristic unique to any particular cinematic culture. This represents a structural element of the cinematic tropes depicting Partition from 1998 to 2017.

Fifth, the films suggest different relationships between trauma and memory. *Earth* frames Partition through retrospective narration and unresolved memory, while *Partition* uses objects and recollection to sustain emotional continuity. In *Partition*, Gian Singh's failure to return Andrews' whistle to Margaret serves as a tangible manifestation of unresolved guilt: the whistle embodies terrible memories in a physical form, illustrating how postcolonial memory is inscribed in objects rather than merely existing in consciousness. *Train to Pakistan* emphasises immediate communal experience, and *The Viceroy's House* focuses more on political transition than long-term psychological aftermath.

Finally, the analysis indicates that trauma is shaped through cinematic form. Techniques such as fragmentation, silence, symbolic imagery, and shifting perspective structure how trauma is represented and experienced, demonstrating that film does not simply depict trauma but actively mediates it. The cross-film comparative design of this study is methodologically significant. A single film from the corpus may demonstrate that colonial systems affect trauma depiction, but only a comparison analysis across films elucidates how this influence systematically differs according to production origin. It illustrates that the suppression of female testimony is a transnational phenomenon rather than a national characteristic, and that colonial and traumatised frameworks are mutually constitutive across films with varying political objectives. These three insights can only be attained through a comparative analytical approach.

In summary, these findings indicate that the selected films do not provide a singular, cohesive narrative of Partition. They instead offer a variety of competing representations shaped by three separate analytical influences. The study demonstrates that

colonial representation and traumatic psychological experience are interrelated and cannot be logically disentangled. Orientalist visual frameworks not only coexist with pain but also actively shape the perception and attribution of Partition violence. The analysis reveals that the source of a film's production directly influences the trauma highlighted, the voice prioritised, and the political interpretation of Partition endorsed by the film. The study reveals that the structural confinement of female Partition narratives constitutes a transnational phenomenon evident in all four films, irrespective of their varying production circumstances, filmmakers, and articulated political stances. These three conclusions collectively represent the study's unique contribution to postcolonial film studies and Partition scholarship.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the selected films do not present a uniform account of Partition, but offer varied and sometimes competing representations shaped by narrative perspective, ideological position, and cinematic strategy.

The study responds directly to the research questions as follows:

RQ1: How do the selected films construct Partition trauma (individual and collective) through narrative structure, character positioning, and visual perspective?

The selected films construct Partition trauma through fragmented narrative structures, character-centred storytelling, and subjective visual perspectives. Individual experiences of memory, loss, and guilt are embedded within broader depictions of communal violence and displacement, producing a layered representation of trauma at both personal and collective levels. In *Earth*, Lenny's action of hurling a plate to the ground and enquiring, '*Can a country be divided like a plate?*' encapsulates the film's primary trauma

thesis in a singular visual and verbal instance: national disintegration is depicted as psychological fragmentation perceived through a child's bewilderment, illustrating how cinematic structure conveys political abstraction into individual psychological experience.

RQ2: How do Orientalist representational patterns (e.g., exoticisation, hierarchy, civilisational framing, and native irrationality) appear, persist, or get contested within these films' depictions of Partition?

Orientalist patterns are most visible in *The Viceroy's House*, where colonial authority and hierarchy are foregrounded. *Earth* and *Train to Pakistan* partially challenge these patterns by focusing on local experiences and social relationships, while *Partition* presents a more ambivalent position, reflecting both the internalisation and consequences of colonial structures. The red-carpet arrival sequence for Mountbatten in *The Viceroy's House* exemplifies explicit Orientalist encoding: the ceremonial corridor orchestrates deference, portraying Indian subjects as participants in the enactment of British imperial authority rather than as agents of their own political transition.

RQ3: How do the films negotiate postcolonial memory (including silence, testimony, and generational transmission) and what ideological work does that memory perform?

The films construct memory through narrative devices such as retrospection, objects, and repetition. In *Earth*, memory is fragmented and unresolved; in *Partition*, it is tied to responsibility and loss; in *Train to Pakistan*, it is embedded in collective experience. In *Partition*, Gian Singh's preservation of Andrews' whistle illustrates how postcolonial memory is ingrained in material objects: the whistle embodies traumatic guilt in a tangible form that the character cannot relinquish, indicating that memory serves the ideological

function of perpetuating moral injury rather than facilitating resolution. These representations shape how Partition is remembered and interpreted.

RQ4: How is Partition trauma made visible or narratively contained, and what does this reveal about psychological, war-related, and gendered traumas created at the time of Partition?

Partition trauma is made visible through visual symbolism, disrupted chronology, and affective imagery, while also being structured through narrative containment. This reveals that psychological, war-related, and gendered traumas are interconnected but represented differently depending on each film's narrative focus. The most prominent illustration of containment throughout the corpus is the structural exclusion of female testimony: in all four films, female characters endure the most extreme manifestations of Partition violence yet are persistently denied narrative agency to articulate that experience in their own voice, indicating that Partition cinema addresses gendered trauma through formal suppression rather than direct representation.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The subsequent contributions each rectify a deficiency in the current literature that the study has recognised and addressed. Each contribution identifies the relevant gap prior to stating the allegation. This study contributes to postcolonial film studies and Partition scholarship in four distinct ways.

First, the study illustrates that Partition trauma in film is influenced not only by depictions of violence but also by colonial frameworks of perception that dictate the representation of the Subcontinent and its inhabitants. This study builds upon the work of

scholars like Virdi (2003) and Sarkar (2009), who have analysed Partition cinema through nationalist and postcolonial lenses, by demonstrating that Orientalist representational structures operate not merely as underlying ideology but as the active mechanism through which traumatic experiences are constructed and assigned meaning. Colonial awareness is not merely evident in these pictures; it generates the conditions that render Partition trauma comprehensible. The contribution resides in illustrating that representational frame and psychological experiences are inseparable in the examination of cinematic trauma.

Second, the study proposes a cohesive analytical framework that concurrently employs postcolonial theory and trauma studies instead of applying them in succession. Before this work, postcolonial film analyses and trauma studies of Partition cinema were conducted independently. No prior research has concurrently utilised both frameworks and shown that the outcome is a qualitatively distinct conclusion. This integration yields a distinct original insight: that colonial representational frameworks and traumatic psychological experiences are mutually constitutive rather than analytically distinct phenomena. Neither postcolonial theory nor trauma studies independently can encapsulate this link. The simultaneous application of both frameworks illustrates that the Orientalist visual grammar in Partition cinema not only accompanies trauma but also significantly shapes its interpretation, attribution, and recollection. The methodology used in this study is applicable to the examination of the other films depicting colonial brutality, where the politics of representation and the politics of psychological experience converge.

Third, the study demonstrates that trauma is constructed not only through narrative content but also through cinematic form, including fragmentation, silence, symbolism, and repetition. The analysis of how formal techniques, the stillness of the ghost train, the

shattered plate, Andrew's whistle carry traumatic meaning contributes to the growing body of scholarship on the formal dimensions of cinematic trauma representation.

Fourth, the comparative analysis of four films from diverse national and cultural settings reveals that the structural containment of female Partition testimony is a transnational representational norm rather than a characteristic unique to any individual cinematic tradition. This discovery transcends current comparative analyses of Partition cinema by revealing a consistent pattern that endures irrespective of the film's production setting, whether within South Asia, by a diasporic filmmaker, or through a British production. The uniformity of this pattern across four films, each directed by different individuals with varying political stances and production backgrounds, represents a novel contribution to the examination of gendered representation in postcolonial cinema and establishes a distinct research agenda for forthcoming scholarship.

5.5 Constraints of the Research

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the analysis is based on a limited corpus of four films, which restricts the extent to which findings can be generalised across Partition cinema. Second, the research relies on qualitative film analysis and does not include audience reception. Third, the study focuses on cinematic representation rather than archival or historical reconstruction. As the study is based on interpretive textual analysis, its conclusions concern the cinematic construction of Partition trauma rather than definitive historical accounts of Partition events.

An additional constraint pertains to the corpus composition in connection to the study's production-origin discovery. Three of the four chosen films, namely *Earth*, *Partition*, and *The Viceroy's House*, are produced outside the South Asian cultural milieu.

The study concludes that the origin of production influences ideological positioning based on a corpus predominantly featuring non-South Asian productions identified as the most systematically Orientalist. A corpus with a higher number of South Asian productions would enable a more rigorous examination of this finding and may uncover further diversity within the South Asian production category itself.

The study's assertions regarding ideological positioning pertain to the films' functions as cinematic texts rather than the intentions of their directors. A production study that includes filmmaker interviews, production histories, and reception data would enable the evaluation of those claims within the comprehensive context of each film's creation and reception, thereby establishing a foundation for differentiating between intentional ideological reproduction and that which is structural.

Qualitative cinema analysis facilitates an in-depth examination of narrative and visual components; however it is inherently interpretive and reliant on context. The results presented here are derived from a philosophically informed analysis of the selected texts, rather than asserting to fully encapsulate Partition film. This interpretive approach is essential to the study's methodology, prioritising thorough investigation above sweeping generalisations.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

The study's three first findings each provide distinct avenues for future investigation. Future work should directly derive from these conclusions instead than regarding the study as a broad examination of Partition cinema. Future research could extend this study by examining comparative representations of Partition across Indian,

Pakistani, British, and diasporic cinema. Further work could focus on gendered representation, particularly the role of women's bodies in mediating violence. Audience reception studies, especially within diasporic communities, could provide insight into how Partition narratives are interpreted. Comparative analysis between cinematic and literary representations may also offer further understanding of how trauma is constructed across media. The discovery of mutual constitutivity that colonial representational frameworks and traumatic experiences are conceptually intertwined suggests a wider comparative research topic. Investigations into Algerian, Kenyan, or Irish cinema, created in the context of colonial disruption and its consequences, could evaluate the applicability of the mutual constitutivity finding across diverse colonial settings and cinematic traditions, thereby enhancing a comparative postcolonial film studies that extends beyond the South Asian paradigm.

The discovery regarding production origins yields a precise and testable research inquiry: does the correlation between production context and ideological stance apply to films created about other instances of colonial partition not included in this study? Subsequent research may investigate a more extensive corpus of films concerning the 1947 Partition, encompassing Bollywood, Pakistani, and diasporic productions, to ascertain whether the gradient of Orientalist encoding identified in this study from South Asian to diasporic to British production remains consistent across a broader spectrum of texts.

The discovery of transnational female testimony poses a significant research inquiry regarding whether the structural suppression of female voices is perpetuated or challenged when women direct films. Future research may explore Partition films directed by women in South Asian, diasporic, and international contexts, assessing whether female directorial agency modifies the representational conventions identified or if those

conventions persist irrespective of the director's gender. This study would enhance both postcolonial film studies and the wider feminist film scholarship focused on the connection between authorship and representation.

5.7 Final Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Partition cinema constructs trauma through both historical experience and representational frameworks. Across the selected films, trauma is shaped not only by violence and displacement but also by the narrative and visual strategies through which these experiences are organised. The research reveals that these films present diverse, and at times conflicting, interpretations of Partition, illustrating not only differences in ideology, narrative emphasis, and cinematic style but also the national and cultural perspectives from which each film is articulated.

Three novel conclusions arise from the cross-film analysis, representing the study's contribution to knowledge. Colonial representational structures and traumatic psychological experiences are interdependent: the Orientalist visual grammar in Partition cinema not only accompanies trauma but also shapes the attribution, comprehension, and recollection of Partition violence. The dialogue between Mr. Rogers and Mr. Singh in *Earth* exemplifies this vividly: when Rogers claims that Indians will certainly 'slash one another's throats' in the absence of colonial control, he is not only articulating a political viewpoint. He frames Orientalist logic as the interpretive lens for understanding communal violence, so normalising the political violence of Partition as a consequence of Indian irrationality rather than colonial administration. Colonial perception creates the circumstances that render Partition trauma comprehensible. The country of origin of a film affects the trauma emphasised, the perspective that holds narrative supremacy, and the

political viewpoint on Partition it conveys. The contrast between Mountbatten's red-carpet celebration in *The Viceroy's House* and the police station photograph in *Train to Pakistan* visually represents this spectrum: one exemplifies colonial power as a magnificent show, whereas the other illustrates it as a nuanced bureaucratic process. The collective cinematic memory of 1947 does not constitute a communal repository. The field is contentious and structured by the geography of production. The structural enclosure of female Partition testimony constitutes a transnational representational pattern that endures across all four films, irrespective of their varying production settings, directors, and articulated political stances. Shanta's kidnapping on *Earth*, observed via Lenny's perspective, exemplifies this trend: the most egregious instances of gendered violence in the corpus are conveyed from the viewpoint of an observer rather than the voice of the victim. This discovery establishes the issue of gendered witness as a primary concern in Partition film studies, rather than a peripheral one, with significant implications for the examination of gendered representation in postcolonial cinema at large.

This study enhances the analytical lexicon for scholars at the intersection of postcolonial film studies, trauma studies, and Partition historiography by illustrating that colonial representational frameworks and traumatic experiences are mutually constitutive, that the origin of production dictates ideological positioning, and that the structural suppression of female testimony is a transnational phenomenon. Although scholars like Said (1978) and Caruth (1996) have laid the theoretical groundwork for this study, neither postcolonial theory nor trauma studies independently suffices to capture the complete intricacy of Partition cinema. Partition trauma is not merely depicted in cinema; it is generated by film, and the processes of that generation are inextricably linked to the colonial representational paradigms under which the films were created. The integrated

framework developed in this study extends beyond Partition cinema, providing scholars of any cinema produced post-colonial rupture with a methodological model to analyse the intricate entanglement of representation politics and the politics of traumatic memory.

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