



Watan, Mulk and Qaum – Understanding the Question of Home, Homelessness and Indian Muslims in Garm Hava and Mammo

Vivek Sachdeva*

Abstract

The Partition of British India in 1947 created multifaceted problems for the people of the subcontinent. While it forced people to leave their homeland and migrate to a new country given to them on the basis of religion, it complicated the situation of those Muslims who chose to remain in India. Partition Studies has generally focused on critiquing the two-nation theory, trauma, violence, migration, memory and identity politics, mainly from the point of view of Hindus and Sikhs, who migrated during the Partition. Even though identity politics in post-colonial India is the legacy of colonialism and Partition, the concerns of those Muslims who chose to remain in India have been comparatively less discussed. Focusing on *Garm Hava* (M.S. Sathya 1974) and *Mammo* (Shyam Benegal 1994), this paper understands the alienation of Muslims in a Hindu-majoritarian India. Instead of understanding the challenges of the Partition within the framework of Western theory of the nation, this paper argues that the Partition caused a schism among watan, mulk and qaum, which is crucial to comprehend the dynamics of identities in post-Partition India. Through historicisation and narrative analysis of the films under study, the paper critiques colonial policies, delineates how Partition complicated the relationship among watan, mulk and qaum, and discusses the question of home to understand Muslims' state of 'homelessness at home' in post-Partition India.

Keywords: Home, Indian Muslims, Mulk, Partition, Qaum, Watan

Yeh fasile teri galion ke hamse tay na hue
Hazar baar chale ham,
hazaar bar rukey (The road to home, I could not take

I stumbled every time I took a step.^[1]

* Professor, University School of Humanities and Social Sciences, GGSIP University, New Delhi

The Partition of 1947 changed the map, created new nations, gave people new national identities and also resulted in “murders, arson, looting, abduction of women and mass migration” (Harrington 3). Partition caused one of the largest migrations of the twentieth century. According to Urvashi Butalia, around twelve million people crossed the border of “the newly created Pakistan” (Butalia 3). Partition Studies in India has focused on the trauma of migration, displacement, dislocation, questioning the two-nation theory and the clash of identities. The above-given couplet from a ghazal used in *Mammo*, a film by Shyam Benegal, encapsulates the untraversable gap and the feeling of homelessness experienced by the victims of the Partition of 1947. However, there is another dimension of the Partition that also deserves equal critical attention, which has been comparatively less explored. Besides understanding the pain, trauma and memory of Hindus and Sikhs who migrated during the Partition, it is equally important to understand the status of those Muslims who remained in India after the Partition.

The Partition not only changed borders and created new nations, but it also affected the status of Muslims in India. As a concomitant of the Partition and ideologies associated with it, Indian Muslims became the ‘Other’ of India as a Hindu nation(state) and outsiders in their home(land). Distrust and contempt against Muslims in a Hindu-majoritarian India can be seen as the legacy of the identity politics of British colonial rule and the communal violence during the Partition. The rise of Hindutva ideology has further widened the gulf that Nehruvian secular politics was trying to bridge. Treating Muslims as outsiders in India makes home and homeland contested categories in post-Partition India. This paper examines the question of ‘home’ vis-à-vis Indian Muslims with reference to *Garm Hava* (M. S. Sathya 1974) and *Mammo* (Shyam Benegal 1994), to understand the effects of the Partition on India as a nation-state.

The question of the Muslim minority in contemporary India is still an unresolved issue, and it continues to cast its influence in Indian society and politics even today. Thus, it becomes pertinent to engage with the question of the status of Muslims in post-Partition India. The rationale for working on these two films is that these films were made in two different historical contexts. *Garm Hava* was made immediately after the 1971 Indo-Pak War, when the Nehruvian vision of secular India existed in the popular imagination, even though Nehru had passed away by the time the film was made. The second film, *Mammo*, was made immediately after the Bombay riots following the demolition of the Babri mosque, an incident that coincides with the rise of Hindutva ideology in Indian politics. Working on these two films allows the author to understand how the concerns of Muslims in post-Partition India have been represented by two filmmakers in two different historical contexts.

Identities in the Indian subcontinent are fluid, and their intersectionality makes them a complex phenomenon. During the British colonial period, a fundamental change took place in Indian society. The colonial period witnessed the collision between the society and history of the subcontinent and the European imagination. Different communities or ethnic groups, which shared fuzzy borders with other groups, were reimagined as independent groups, each group with its narrow nationalist interests. Re-organisation of the world (Europe), drawing maps, having fixed borders, and bringing people together based on a common religion, language or ethnicity gave them a homogeneous national identity. Consequently, the nation as a new political entity emerged. Linda Layne opines that human societies were understood as homogeneous and indestructible particles, which constitute the basis of the system of identities. The Western model was incompatible with the social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the subcontinent. Identities in the subcontinent are formed by region, language, culture and

religion, intersecting and overlapping with each other. The colonial enterprise of dividing Indian society into small, homogenous and absolute units clashed with fluid identities and people's earlier imaginations. The identitarian model fostered the imagination of a nation with such limited, finite and rigid boundaries that beyond these boundaries "lie other nations" (Anderson 16). With every new imagination of a nation, new Others were also imagined.

Playing upon the existing fault lines, the British policies succeeded in widening the gulf. As identities were crystallised and became rigid, it paved the way for communal politics in the region. The British policies, demand for separate electorates, and nationalistic imagination emerging during the colonial period changed the way identities used to operate in the region. The British (mis)understanding of religion and Indian society clashed with the local social systems. "British rule, through the identification of Brahmanical Hinduism and Islam as the two patriarchal orders with nation-wide validity, inaugurated" (Prasad 193-194) a process of construction of identity reconfiguration. The composite Indian society was reimagined and segregated into different identities and (sub)national groups. Using the divide and rule policy, "the British had manipulated and exacerbated ethnic, religious, and the tribal differences in most of their colonies to ensure their own survival in the face of resistance from emerging freedom movements" (Amritjit Singh, Iyer and Gairola xvi).

As a social and political construct, the idea of the nation became more influential as other imaginaries waned. Indian thinkers, such as Partha Chatterjee and Ranajit Guha, have disagreed with the European model of the nation. As understood by Benedict Anderson, the idea of a nation is finite with boundaries and sovereign. However, India as a country challenges the definition given by Benedict Anderson. The argument is that the Western theory of the nation does not

sufficiently capture the nuances of the Indian subcontinent for two reasons. One, India is understood as a nation with many sub-nations, and two, people's imagination in the region is not necessarily shaped by an overarching idea of the nation. Along with religion, language, culture, region and heritage also give people their identity. Identities in the subcontinent have their contact zones with other groups and many groups of people exist on the cusp of identities that challenge the rigid identitarian grid. The way society operates in the subcontinent, it cannot be understood within the homogenous frame of the nation. For example, different communities in Punjab, such as Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, share a common linguistic, literary and cultural heritage. Despite their different religious identities, these three dominant communities of Punjab have a common linguistic, cultural and geographical identity, i.e., Punjabi. Despite a common umbrella identity of Punjabi, Sikhs and Muslims imagine themselves as different qaums, which is not exactly similar to the concept of the nation. While a nation is more of a political entity, qaum is more of a cultural concept. While sharing a few common points, they are highly distinct categories. To understand the dynamics of identities in the Indian subcontinent and their relationship with the homeland and country in the wake of Partition, it is important to engage with concepts such as watan, mulk and qaum. In the subcontinent, the concepts of watan and qaum have existed in the collective historical consciousness, which clashed with the modern national imagination during the colonial period. Thus, theorising the relationship between watan and mulk vis-à-vis qaum is important to understand the dynamics of identity in India.

Partition, Identity Politics and the Schism between Watan, MulK and Qaum

The term watan refers to one's homeland or birthplace. However, the idea of watan is broader than that of home. The

relationship between home and homeland traverses from a palpable geographical territory to its emotional and cultural connotations. The polysemic word ‘home’ refers to the place of dwelling, homeland and its heritage. Home evokes the idea of a secure dwelling, whereas the meaning of homeland is wider. Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2022) are of the view that home can be a place or a set of feelings and cultural value ascribed to it, and the relationship between the two. The idea of homeland resonates with a deeper and emotional relationship with its culture, history and heritage associated with a geographical territory, contributing to one’s ethnic, cultural and national identity. In German, three different words - heim, zuhause and heimat – are used for home. “Heim more often refers to the specific location or building and heimat is often translated as homeland, connotes more affective qualities of belonging, and is often associated with a particular region” (Kunz 62). Similarly, in Punjabi and Hindustani, the word ghar and in Hindi, des are used to indicate home, the dwelling place, and at times, also the homeland. Its cultural connotations bring it closer to one’s land of birth, which is central to one’s imagination of a nation as well. Ismail Alatas discusses how the connotations of watan changed over a period of time. “Traditionally, watan was a term used to denote one’s birthplace or place of residence without any formal political connotations” (Alatas 258); but, under the influence of French ideologies, the narrow and personal concept of watan was transformed “into a concept of fatherland imbued with patriotism” (260). Thus, the idea of watan sprouts from a place of birth, and it grows wider in scope to include the land where one is born, the memory of family and ancestors, the geography associated with it and the heritage of the land.

Mulk, on the other hand, is more of an administrative term. It has connotations of country, which can also refer to a sovereign state or control. In Islamic thought, the word mulk is associated with dominion, power and control, either of God, an

emperor or a modern state. Mulk stands very close to the concept of the modern State, exercising its power over a territory and people. If one's place of birth is also the country one is a citizen of, this makes the relationship between watan and mulk organic. The concepts of watan (homeland) and mulk (country) overlap and can be used interchangeably. Sometimes, a person may become a citizen of a country different from his/her homeland, which hints towards the gap between one's watan and mulk. During the Partition, those who migrated from one country to another were separated from their watan and given a new mulk.

The concept of qaum, as understood in the subcontinent, is a complicated phenomenon. The word qaum is Arabic for tribe, people, community with a shared culture, history and heritage, and also for a nation. Muslim identity has generally been understood with reference to ummah, qaum and millat. In addition to religion and theology, culture and language have also been important components of identity in the subcontinent, and should be included in the ambit of understanding the Muslim identity. Ali Khan Mahmudabad's (2020) and Carimo Mohamed's (2021) ideas revolve around qaum, millat and watan, while Tanweer Fazal (2022) focuses on ummah, qaum and watan. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, the famous poet, contributed to political thought during the colonial rule. His ideas were crucial in giving Muslims a sense of identity. He was in favour of a collective Muslim identity based on the millat over territorial nationalism. He imagined a society based on the "Islamic principles of brotherhood and equality," which became the fulcrum of the idea of Muslim qaum.^[ii] However, Zahack Tanvir understands qaum as a constitutional category, not religious, unlike Iqbal, who used religion as the central point to define the concept of qaum.^[iii]

During the colonial rule, the demand for a separate country for Muslims and non-Muslims defined qaum primarily on the basis of religion. Ali Khan Mahmudabad is critical of Iqbal for

making religion central while linking the concept of qaum to the nation. While the concept of the nation captured people's imagination, religious identity took precedence over other factors. Commenting on the crisis perpetrated by the Partition, Andaleeb Rehman opines that during the Partition, "People had to make a choice (either by force or voluntarily) between their watan, qaum and mulk." Andaleeb Rehman's usage of qaum here differs from Zahack Tanvir's argument. The latter understands the concept of qaum in relation to modern nation-states, whereas Andaleeb Rehman's usage brings to the surface the dominance of religion while imagining qaum and demanding a separate country for a qaum. The idea of qaum based on religion became a crucial factor which fostered nationalist imagination during the colonial period and the demand for a separate country for Muslims. Thus, the term qaum is understood as a group of people or a community or a nation, watan stands for homeland and mulk is used for country and state.

The idea of the nation imagined during the colonial period changed the earlier relationship between people and their homeland. In the Indian subcontinent, people from different communities, such as Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, have been living together, sharing the same culture, language and heritage. Partition severed people's centuries-old ties to their homeland (watan) and gave them a new country (mulk), a manifestation of the new imagination of the nation (qaum). Ham-watan people, who belonged to the same land and shared a common language, culture and heritage, were separated from one another as the new idea of qaum (nation), based on their religion, took precedence over earlier imaginings. The consequent rupture among watan, mulk and qaum made home, homeland and nation contested categories. The schism between watan and mulk caused by the Partition complicated the relationship of people (qaum) with the land they belong to, which became an important factor in changing the status of Muslims in post-Partition India.

Hindustani Cinema, Partition and the Indian Muslim

Immediately after independence, Hindustani cinema carried out the agenda of nation-building. The narrative patterns, the cinematic image, and the mass appeal of cinema played a significant role in giving people the visual imagery of the new nation. Despite narrating the nation, the mainstream cinema maintained silence over narrating the trauma of Partition. But for Lahore (M. L. Anand 1949) and Apna Desh (V. Shantaram 1949), there is no other major known film on Partition made immediately after the Partition. However, there are a few films made in the 1960s, such as Chhalia (Manmohan Desai 1960), Amar Rahe Yeh Pyar (Prabhu Dyal 1961) and Dharmputra (Yash Chopra 1961), but they failed to make a major impact. The first significant film that raised a debate in the public domain vis-à-vis Partition was M. S. Sathya's Garm Hava (1973).

Based on a story written by Ismat Chughtai, Garm Hava is the most critically acclaimed film on Partition in Hindustani cinema for its nuanced representation. Without showing many visuals of violence, the film depicts the human cost of the Partition. The film does not show what happened during the Partition; rather, it narrates what followed it. While narrating the aftermath of Partition, it deals with the pain and strife of Muslims in post-Partition India and the challenges before India as a young nation-state. The screenplay of the film was written by Shama Zaidi and Kaifi Azmi. Ismat Chughtai, Shama Zaidi and Kaifi Azmi give the film its ideological complexion. Ismat Chughtai is a famous feminist Urdu writer, who is known for writing on the themes of femininity, female sexuality and challenging established social norms. Shama Zaidi is a famous screenplay writer and costume designer whose mother was closely associated with Habib Tanvir, the famous theatre personality in India. Her parents were part of the progressive movement of India. Kaifi Azmi is a renowned Urdu progressive

poet. According to Somdatta Mandal, while the original story by Ismat Chughtai focuses on the station master, Kaifi Azmi:

brought in his own experiences as a union leader, for the workers of a shoe manufacturing factory, to the film. He not just changed the profession of the film's protagonist, but also placed him right in the middle of the film's emotional cauldron, as he watches his livelihood [...] making the trauma of the Partition personal, compared to the original story, where the protagonist is a mere observer. (Mandal 62)

Set in Agra, the film tells the story of Salim Mirza (Balraj Sahni), the owner of a shoe factory, who decides to stay back in India after Partition. His elder brother, Halim Mirza, a member of the All India Muslim League, had quietly shifted to Pakistan. Salim Mirza has to bear the brunt of his brother's furtively going to Pakistan. In light of the changing social, economic and political environment, he faces numerous hardships. He loses his ancestral house and also his business, his younger son is not able to find a job, his daughter commits suicide as her prospective husband betrays her, and Salim Mirza is accused of spying against India. From the personal to the social and political, the layered narrative reveals the tragic circumstances that Salim Mirza undergoes, triggered by the Partition. Forced by his circumstances, Salim Mirza is left with no other choice but to leave India for good. Accepting Pakistan as his new country (mulk) and severing ties with India, his watan, is a difficult choice for Salim Mirza to make. He is tormented when forced to choose a new country (mulk) over his homeland (watan).

The opening scene of the film is a series of still frames of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and other leaders, followed by the celebration of India's freedom and people migrating during the Partition. The montage of still

frames ends with Mahatma Gandhi being shot dead, followed by Kaifi Azmi's rendition of a poem on Partition.

“Taqseem hua mulk to dil ho gaye tukde

Har seene mein toofan wahan bhi tha, yahn bhi

Har ghar mein chita jalti thi, lehrate they sholay Har
ghar mein shamshan wahan bhi tha, yahan bhi

Geeta ki koi suntan, na Quran ki sunta Hairan sa imaan,
wahan bhi tha, yahan hi”

(As the country was divided, many hearts were broken
A storm shook every heart on both sides of the border.

Every home became a picture of flying ambers and
burning pyres Hearth became a cremation ground on
both sides of the border.

No one heeds the message of the Geeta or the Quran
Human conscience is baffled on both sides of the
border.)^[iv]

As the rendition ends, Salim Mirza (Balraj Sahni) is at the railway station to see off his elder sister, who is moving to Karachi, Pakistan, with her family. His conversation with the Tonga driver reveals that different members of his family are leaving India one by one. Amidst such testing circumstances, he delivers a message of hope and communal harmony to his workers at the shoe factory. Looking directly into the camera, Salim Mirza says that Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom shall not go to waste. He hopes that Muslims and Hindus will live peacefully in independent India. Salim Mirza addresses the audience by looking directly into the camera on a couple of occasions in the film. In another scene, Salim Mirza wishes to raise a loan to boost his business. The bank officer, who is not shown in the frame, refuses to grant him a loan. The bank

manager is of the opinion that many Muslims have left India and the shoe industry is severely hit by the Partition. Salim Mirza looks directly into the camera and says – “Jo bhaagen hain, unki saza unhe kyon di jaye jo na bhaage hain, na bhaagna chahte hain?” (Why should they be punished who have neither fled nor do they wish to flee?).^[v] M. S. Sathyu’s use of the Brechtian technique of alienation effect in the film is a way of establishing a dialectical relationship with the audience: “Marxist dialectics that becomes vital for Brecht’s use of dialectics as both characteristic of the social relations in which he lives and as a dramaturgical strategy for turning spectators into dialecticians” (Stevens 25). As Brecht himself preferred the term dialectical theatre over epic theatre, the term dialectical was useful in highlighting the contradictions to understand imperfections in a society. It became the filmmaker’s way and method of engaging with society and socio-political reality, which subtly destabilises the formalistic realism in the film and brings the audience’s attention to the then social and political situation of India. The technique helps to shake the audience out of complacency to make them think about the consequences of the Partition and the status of Muslims in independent India. M.S. Sathyu’s use of the Brechtian technique includes the audience in the narrative. Making the audience a participant stirs their conscience and prompts the nation to reflect on the inherent contradictions of the Partition, its consequences, and the challenges it poses vis-à-vis the status of Muslims in post-Partition India. The film also debunks the popular notion that all Muslims were in favour of Partition and also that they moved to Pakistan conveniently, as Pakistan was conceived as a land for Muslims.^[vi]

Changing social, political and economic circumstances force Salim Mirza’s family to consider leaving India. Before Salim Mirza announces that he has decided to leave India, he goes out for a walk. The camera shows the Taj in the background while Salim Mirza wipes off his tears. Extreme long shots, showing the architectural beauty of Sikri and the Taj Mahal, bring forth the shared history

and culture of Hindustan. The tangible sites of memory and common heritage become the pivot of the collective memory of characters in the film and viewers watching the film alike. Besides narrating Salim Mirza's pain, the film also reminds the viewers that this land had been a home or watan to Muslims, who had contributed to the economy and culture of the land. In the last scene, on the way to the railway station, Salim Mirza and his family get caught up in a protest. The protestors are demanding secular politics and jobs in the country, carrying placards with the insignia of the communist party. After deciding against going to Pakistan, Salim Mirza's son joins the protest, and Salim Mirza also follows him, signifying their choosing the homeland (watan) over the new country (mulk), with all its problems and challenges. Making a statement against communalism, the film ends on the note of suggesting the vision of a secular India where the questions of jobs and employment are more important than religion-based divisive politics.

Home, nation, and migration are the pillars of the architectonics of the narrative. The film plays on the categories of watan and mulk vis-à-vis qaum through the metaphorical question of home. Made after the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war and the formation of Bangladesh, there were apprehensions that a film based on Partition might result in generating anti-Muslim sentiment or riots in India.^[vii] But *Garm Hava* is neither an anti-Pakistan nor is it an anti-Muslim film. It depicts the series of tragic events in the lives of a Muslim family triggered by the Partition and the pain of losing one's home, both literal and metaphorical. Salim Mirza struggles to keep his dying business alive after the Partition and to save his ancestral house. His ancestral haveli has been classified as 'evacuee property' because Salim Mirza's brother, Halim Mirza, did not transfer the ownership of the house to Salim Mirza before going to Pakistan. After losing the ancestral house or haveli, the homeless Salim Mirza has no other option but to look for a new dwelling in his hometown. Salim Mirza's mother's refusal to leave the ancestral

haveli, her dying in the ancestral house, and Salim Mirza's search for a new house on rent bring the idea of losing the home to the fore. Salim Mirza's becoming homeless in his hometown is symbolic of Indian Muslims losing their homes in their homeland in the wake of the Partition and increasing communal sentiment after the Partition. The film narrates the situation of all those Muslims who chose to stay back in India after the Partition. Having become estranged citizens in their own homeland, they have become homeless at home. "In September 1948, *Filmindia* magazine described Muslims who remained in post-Partition India as 'the living dead': they were 'orphans in their own land', who were paying 'for the sins of others' (i.e. the sins of separatist Muslims). *Garm Hava* represents the predicament of one such Muslim family of Agra" (Sarkar 149). The film does not even portray the tragic events of the Partition in a melodramatic fashion, nor does it digress into jingoistic nationalism; rather, the film raises a sensitive question about the status of Muslims in post-partition India in a nuanced manner. It is a narrative of displacement, alienation and homelessness in post-Partition India. It narrates the question of the Muslim minority in India, which remains unresolved even today.

Mammo (1994) by Shyam Benegal is the story of a Muslim woman's search for a home in post-Partition India. Made in the times of changing socio-political atmosphere of India, the film seams the history of Partition with the infamous Bombay (now Mumbai) riots, which had taken place immediately before the film was made. Written by Khaled Mohammed, Shama Zaidi, and Javed Siddiqui, the film tells the story of a Muslim woman, Mahmooda Begum aka Mammo (Farida Jalal), who was born in Panipat in British India. Consequent upon her marriage and the Partition of India, she became a Pakistani national. As she has been abandoned by her in-laws and has no home of her own, she hopes to find a home for herself in Mumbai, India, where her sister lives. But her hopes are thwarted by the Indian bureaucracy on account of her Pakistani national identity.

She struggles against her odd fate to find a home in a world complicated by her national identity and Partition, and as a woman, she struggles in a patriarchal world after being thrown out by her in-laws. She is a victim of patriarchy, borders and identities. The dual identity given to her by the Partition creates an unbridgeable gulf between her watan (India), where she was born, and the new national identity she was given after her marriage. While talking to the young Riyaaz, her sister's grandson, she often talks about the pull of watan ki mitti (the homeland). The song, "Yeh faasle teri galion ke hamse tai na hue" (The long road to home I could not take) aptly expresses the pain of a homeless woman caught between identities and borders. "Yeh kaisi sarhadein uljhi hui hain pairon mein,/ Hum apne ghar ki taraf *uth ke baar baar chale*" (What web of borders is entwined around my feet? Every step I take, I walk back to my home.)^[viii] encapsulates her journey, circumscribed by the desire to go back to her home and the challenges therein. Her relationship with her homeland has been made complicated by the tragic turn of history and the bureaucracy of two newly formed nation-states.

While narrating the situation of a homeless woman, cutting across history, culture and politics, the film touches on the issue of the Muslim minority in India. The decade of the 1980s laid down the foundation for the new political narrative, which gained popularity in the 1990s. Privatisation of economy, beginning of consumerist culture, TV sets becoming a part of every household, telecast of serials like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Tamas, Buniyaad; political controversies like Shah Bano Case and Babri Masjid during the period of Rajiv Gandhi's tenure as the Prime Minister of India, accompanied by unstable coalition governments prepared the ground for the BJP to emerge as an alternative in Indian politics, which the people of India willingly embraced. Indian masses gradually started accepting the new political discourse emerging in the country

(Sachdeva 2015). However, the immediate cause behind making *Mammo* was not only the changing political complexion of the country, but also the infamous Bombay blasts.

On December 6, 1992, the demolition of the Babri Masjid was broadcasted on the BBC. As Menon describes, later at night, riots erupted in different areas of Bombay. Shyam Benegal responded to the new political situation and an emergent crisis in India by making a Muslim trilogy.^[ix] *Mammo* is the first film in the series. Made immediately after the Bombay riots with Partition running in the backdrop and intertextuality with *Garm Hava*, the film comments on the then socio-political crisis of India, caused by the changing political environment of the country. The use of *Garm Hava*, Gulzar's story on Partition,^[x] and by invoking Manto and Faiz, the film "raises the issue of identity politics, communal violence, two-nation theory" (Sachdeva 70) and its legacy. The film underlines the cost paid by ordinary men and women during the Partition by highlighting the "anguish of forced migration and displacement from "home/nation"" (Needham 95). It is a "narrative of dislocation and dispossession" (Datta 193) which "unobtrusively confronts the question of a land and its people torn apart by artificial borders" (Datta 191). *Mammo*, as a film, establishes an ideological and thematic connection with *Garm Hava*, hinting at the unresolved questions posed by the Partition. While watching *Garm Hava* with Riyaz, *Mammo* is reminded of her trauma of being uprooted from her homeland. She tells the young Riyaz the stories of the Partition, people's migration and the loss of human lives. In her stories, the trauma of the Partition surfaces. The film establishes an artistic connection with history and politics to initiate an ideological debate around the new idea of India gaining popularity in the wake of liberalisation, the rise of Hindutva ideology and the bomb blasts.

Conclusion

These films narrate two situations in which the question of home acquires the central position. The Partition in these two films is not seen from the point of view of those who migrated from Pakistan to India, but from the point of view of those who decided to stay in India. The film highlights the ruptures in the composite society of India. There is a conflict between their relationship with their homeland, and people's changing attitudes and the state bureaucracy. Both films narrate the challenges faced by Muslims in post-Partition India. The tension between watan and mulk caused by the two-nation theory, identity politics and Partition runs in the undercurrents of these narratives. These films narrate the stories of people who were rendered homeless at home. Instead of narrating the trauma of being uprooted from the homeland, these films narrate situations in which Muslims are alienated in their own homeland. Salim Mirza loses the ancestral haveli. He looks for a new home in the city where he was born. Mammo, who was born in India, is given a new national identity and becomes an outsider in her own homeland or watan. After being rendered homeless, both Salim Mirza and Mammo struggle to claim a home in post-Partition India. Salim Mirza and his son claim their home by joining the protest; Mammo claims her home by subverting bureaucracy and producing a fake death certificate. Their condition becomes analogous to the state of homelessness, a state of exile at home, experienced by Indian Muslims. Generally, exile in the context of the Partition is understood in terms of homelessness, displacement and alienation experienced by those who migrated during the Partition; these films narrate the state of homelessness and alienation experienced by people at home. In this context, the state of exile is understood more in social and psychological terms than in territorial terms, which gives people a sense of being undesired, unwanted and alienated. It is more about denying people their 'home' and the subsequent feeling of alienation at the hands of power structures or groups. The concept is not absolute; it is relative and context-specific.

These two films critically engage with national debates and unresolved question of the Muslim minority in two different social, historical and political contexts. M.S. Sathyu's *Garam Hava* begins with the hope of communal harmony in independent India, an idea central to the Nehruvian vision of India; whereas Shyam Benegal's *Mammo* responds to the failure of the Nehruvian vision. Under the consolidation of the right-wing ideology, the Bombay riots were seen as the "beginning of the end of the Nehruvian vision of a modern, secular, welfare state" (Pandey 6). *Mammo*'s problematic relationship with the modern nation-state and her state of homelessness is rooted in the history of the Partition. The issue of the Muslim minority in India became an important question to reflect on in the wake of the riots. Moving away from the 'historian's histories,'^[xi] *Garam Hava* and *Mammo* narrate the Partition from the point of view of ordinary people. These films remind the audience that, along with international borders that divide two nations, there are internal borders along communal lines that continue to divide people along communal lines in independent India. "*Mammo* is a film that demonstrates how the Partition is not yet over. The survivors are still dealing with its fall-out as the two nation-states, India and Pakistan, play out their political tensions in a manner that heartlessly ignores the lives of individuals caught in the literal and metaphorical crossfire" (Bhaskar and Allen 311).

The communal tension running in the undercurrents of Indian politics, civic life and complicated identities is the legacy of the Partition, which asserts itself time and again in the political rhetoric of the country, in the performance of nationalism on streets, during communal riots and while displaying hatred against Muslims, in subtle and blatant forms. The Partition cannot be understood as an episode that happened once and got over; rather, it is an incessant narrative with its corollaries in the history, culture and politics of contemporary India. It becomes an ongoing event which acquires different forms at different moments.

Instead of solving the problems, the Partition created a new set of challenges that continue to bother India even today. Partition “did not resolve questions of citizenship, identity, language, culture, and belonging for diverse groups” (Amritjit Singh, Iyer and Gairola xiv); rather, it has made the relationship of Muslims in a Hindu-majoritarian India ambivalent. The “national ideologies of perceiving Pakistan as an enemy state and supported by a state-sanctioned selective memory” (Mohanram 7) facilitate associating all Indian Muslims with Pakistan, an enemy state. Those who were uprooted from their homeland (watan) and migrated to India during the Partition were given a new country (mulk). No doubt, they were called sharnartha and refugees by people, but they were accepted by the State and became its citizens through the principle of domicile.^[xiii] Whereas those who were born in India and chose to stay in India, thinking that India was their homeland (watan), became estranged citizens and the perpetual Other of a Hindu-majoritarian country. The migrants lost their watan, but they were given a new mulk; while the Otherized Muslims in India did not lose their watan, yet they are denied their mulk. They become easy targets of hatred and anger, reducing them to disenfranchised citizens of India. Thus, making watan, mulk and qaum as contested categories in post-Partition India at multiple levels. “Post-Partition, the political context for Muslims had completely inversed. Amidst allegations of vivisectioning the country and suspected on account of their loyalty” (Fazal 5), they become easy targets of hatred. Their loyalty to the country is easily doubted. Salim Mirza in *Garm Hava* exemplifies this tendency.

The attempt in this paper has been to understand the status of Muslims in India, their state of homelessness and their struggle to find a home for themselves. The rupture between the categories of watan and mulk is the result of the conceptual and epistemic violence during the Partition. In light of the above, both films are narratives of alienation, ostracisation and resistance. It is the chasm between home and homeland, and the state of homelessness that these films negotiate with. The

questions raised in these two films are relevant even to contemporary India. These films sensitise the audience about the constant Otherisation of Muslims, the human cost of the Partition and bring to the surface the challenges posed by the two-nation theory and identity politics. The divisive politics over religious identities, communal riots, and hatred for the Other constitute the legacy of the Partition, which continues to haunt India even today. As they are alienated in their homeland and their relationship with their watan is estranged, their condition of homelessness and its pain are aptly expressed in another couplet (sheyar) of the same ghazal used in Mammo.

“Na jaane kaun si matti watan ki matti thi Nazar mein
dhool jigar mein liye gubar chaley” (How strange the love
for homeland is!

A speck of dust in the eye, a cloud in my heart I carry)^[xiii]

End Notes

- i. Translated by the author
- ii. Pan-Islamism and National Identity During the Colonial Period: Mohammad Iqbal • PolSci Institute
- iii. Opinion | Qaum Is A National Identity, Not A Religious One | Opinion News - News18
- iv. Author’s Translation
- v. Author’s Translation
- vi. Shamsul Islam builds an argument that there was support for an undivided India among Muslims during the British times. Shamsul Islam, *Muslims Against Partition of India* (New Delhi: Pharos, 2018).
- vii. For details, please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RCpz7MKN-4>
- viii. Author’s translation
- ix. The trilogy includes Mammo, Sardari Begum and Zubeidaa.
- x. It is a story that Mammo tells Riyaz a story of Partition to share her experiences of Partition. This story is originally written by Gulzar and has been used in the film.
- xi. It refers to Gyanendra Pandey’s use of the phrase in *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*.

- xii. Radhika Mohanram argues in her chapter that domicile became a criterion to give citizenship in India after independence. Radhika Mohanram, 'Specters of Democracy/The Gender of Specters: Cultural Memory and the Indian Partition', in *Revisiting India's Partition: New Essays on Memory, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Amritjit Singh, Nalini Iyer and Rahul K. Gairola (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2016): 3–20.
- xiii. Author's Translation

Works Cited

- Ahmed, Ishtiaq. *Pre-Partition Punjab's Contribution to Indian Cinema*. Aakar Books, 2022.
- Alatas, Ismail F. "Circumlocutory Imperialism: Watan in the thoughts of Syed Shaikh bin Ahmad al-Hady." *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, vol 12, no. 2, 2005, pp. 247-297.
- Amritjit Singh, Nalini Iyer and Rahul K. Gairola, "Introduction: The Long Partition and Beyond." *Revisiting India's Partition: New Essays on Memory, Culture, and Politics*, edited by Amritjit Singh, Nalini Iyer and Rahul K. Gairola. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2016, pp. xxiii – xxxv.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.
- Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Penguin Books, 1998.
- Datta, Sangeeta. Shyam Benegal. Roli Books, 2008.
- Daiya, Kavita. *Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender, And National Culture in Postcolonial India*. Temple University Press, 2008.
- Fazal, Tanweer. "Ummah, Qaum and Watan: Elite and Ordinary Constructions of Nationhood among Muslims of Contemporary India." CAS Working Paper Series, CSSS, JNU. [tanweer-paper.pdf](#)
- Harrington, Lousie. "Crossing Borders in Partition Studies and the Question of the Bangladesh Liberation War." *Postcolonial Text*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2016, pp. 1-16.
- Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen. *Islamicate Culture of Bombay Cinema*. Tulika, 2009.

- Kunz, Katherine. *Contested Home: Asylum-Seeking in Switzerland and the Politics of Belonging, Place, and Religion*. Deutsch Nationalbibliothek, 2025.
- Linda Layne, *Home and Homeland-The Dialogics of Tribal and National Identities in Jordon*. Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Mandal, Somdatta. *Bollywood, Tollywood and Beyond: Literary Essays on Indian Films*. Pencraft International, 2021.
- “M. S. Sathyu: 'Garm Hava' Was Stuck With the Censors for 11 Months Sidharth Bhatia” Available on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RCpz7MKN-4>. Accessed on Sept. 12, 2023.
- Menon, Meena. *Riots and After in Mumbai: Chronicles of Truth and Reconciliation*. India: Sage Publications, 2012, p. xxxv.
- Mohanram, Radhika. “Specters of Democracy/The Gender of Specters: Cultural Memory and the Indian Partition.” *Revisiting India's Partition: New Essays on Memory, Culture, and Politics*, edited by Amritjit Singh, Nalini Iyer and Rahul K. Gairola. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2016.
- Needham, Anuradha D. *New Indian Cinema in Post-Independence India: The Cultural Work of Shyam Benegal's Films*. Routledge, 2013.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Prasad, Madhav. *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Rehman, Andaleeb. “India versus Pakistan: How quickly we have forgotten that ‘they’ were once ‘us’”. Daily. April 24, 2017. Accessed on Jan. 17, 2025. <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/india-pakistan-partition-bangladesh-watan-qaum-mulk-16825>.
- Roy, Rituparna. *South Asian Partition Fiction in English: From Khushwant Singh to Amitav Ghosh*. Amsterdam University Press, 2010.
- Sachdeva, Vivek. ‘Identity Politics and the Muslim Other.’ *Brukenenthalia-Romanian Cultural History Review*, vol. 5, 2015, pp. 965–973.

- Sachdeva, Vivek. *Shyam Benegal's India: Alternative India*. Routledge, 2020.
- Sarkar, Bhaskar. *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition*. Orient Blackswan, 2010.
- Stevens, Lara. *Anti-War Theatre After Brecht: Dialectical Aesthetics in the Twenty-first Century*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.
- Tusha Mittal and Alishan Jaffri, 'Driving Muslims out of "Devbhoomi."' Caravan, (August 2023). www.caravanmagazine.in.