

*Q. The Other Side of Silence as an Alternative Historiography*

History can be defined a chronicle of unique events in the life of mankind. It is not just the conserving and understanding of what has happened, but also the completeness of what is going on at present. In this way it becomes a philosophy in motion. "It was at least to be wished that all historians were philosophers, even if philosophers are not always historians" (Gibbon 107). History is an important chronicle of previous events, a vital narrative of humanity that explains the specifics of what happened to man and why. The name 'history' is derived from the Greek word 'historia,' which signifies information or an enquiry aimed to elicit truth. The concept of history has been shifting from time to time. The word "history" has many different connotations, such as "telling stories" And "studying the development of societies."

In his book, *What is History* (1964), E. H. Carr mentions, "Herodotus, the father of History, defined his purpose in the opening of his work; to preserve a memory of the deeds of the Greeks and the barbarians" (123).

The contents of the records may not be authentic. A historian's writings may be influenced by any type of prejudice, including caste, faith, personal, racial, regional, and religious bias. Political and ideological control is a crucial factor in development or fabrication of historical material. According to Dr. Johnson, "We must consider how very little history there is; I mean real authentic history . . . All the colouring, all the philosophy of history is conjecture" (qtd. in Southgate 37).

Thomas Carlyle says, "History is nothing but the biography of great men, and it is a record of human accomplishment, particularly of great souls" (qtd. in Ali 5). A single good deed by an individual has frequently brought enormous glory and renown to an entire hamlet, city, or country. Ordinary persons who go on the normal rigour of life do not figure so much in history as those who are strong powerful and intellectual with a clear idea of their destiny. Only such people have a chance to live in history, as those who live dangerously, who send out their ships to uncharted seas, and who live perpetually in a state of war (Ali 9).

History is not just the form, but the function of language that deserves considerations, not only its aesthetic but also its ideological meanings. History itself participates in the political manipulation of reality. It is not only a powerful discourse in its own right, as commanding 'knowledge' of the past, but, in its emancipator role, its core emphasis is on the language patterns of the past. Regarding Michel Foucault:

History serves to show how that which is has not always been; that

the things which seem most evident to us are always formed in the

confluence of encounters and chances, during the course of

precarious and fragile history. . . and that since these things have been

made, they can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they

were made. (*History* 11-12)

Historiography refers to the study of historical writing and the evolution of historical thought. It is a distinct branch of history that encompasses the entirety of human existence. It is exclusively political, rather than social, cultural, moral, or literary history, although it amalgamates elements of all these domains into a singular entity. This falls within the history of ideas, focusing not on specific objects but on the investigation of concepts that influenced a historian's particular perspective. In the extensive marketplace of history, historiography represents a distinct establishment that provides its own offerings (Ali 180). Historiography, or the writing of history, has just recently entered the academic domain. Prior to the nineteenth century, there is scarcely any effort to document the history of historical writing; yet, a substantial body of literature has emerged in lieu of this historical writing. The Greeks established history as a significant field of science. They are the trailblazers or innovators who transformed historical writing into a deliberate art form. The Greeks, Romans, Christians, Jews, and Arabs possess a profound historical consciousness. Aside from stories, myths, and the Puranas, India possesses no historical writing that rivals the historical literature of the West or the Middle East.

Numerous critics have criticized historical writing, asserting that historians maintain a personal bias in their narratives for pecuniary gain. The historian anticipates some biases before to

*undertaking the documentation of an event or an individual. Claire Rayner asserts that "History is the account of what historians believe transpired in the past, interpreted through the lens of their own biases and perspectives" (qtd. in Southgate 115). Michael Keith and Steve Pile note that, "No one is entirely certain of the foundation upon which they stand, the direction they are oriented, or their destination" (3).*

*Following the release of his Meta History (1973), Hayden White has garnered both acclaim and infamy as the principal advocate for the ramifications of postmodernism in historical scholarship. In this renowned book, he interrogates the fictive essence of historical writing and examines the differentiation between 'truth' and 'fiction' in both literary and historical narratives. White asserts that "historical narratives are not merely 'discovered' in their pre-existing form; instead, they are constructed and imposed upon the past by historians, who are perpetually eager to imbue that past—or its remaining vestiges—with a semblance of sense, coherence, meaning, purpose, and direction" (13).*

*Butalia's Other Side of Silence employs the historical context of the Indian Partition as the setting for a fictitious narrative depicting individuals' experiences during the summer of 1947. She examines official Partition accounts and finds them disconcerting. Mainstream historians see Partition as a political and economic divide, however many survivors perceive it as "a division of hearts" (Butalia 8). Butalia's work*

foregrounds previously marginalized subaltern subjectivities, including those of women, children, and Dalits, or oppressed individuals. She asserts that the work pertains to "ordinary people, women, children, and scheduled castes" (11). The book presents a radical and alternative interpretation of the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, with significant consequences for contemporary conflicts.

The 1947 Partition of India, organized by a select number of English and Indian national elites, resulted in over a million fatalities. A significant migration has occurred on the Indian subcontinent. Khwaja Bharadwaj notes that "over ten million people migrated from one country to another in one of the fastest and largest migrations in human history" (39). The Indian Partition resulted in the displacement of nearly ten million individuals, with around one million fatalities occurring during this population shift. Alex Von Tunzelmann states, "the death toll ranged from 200,000 to two million, with the majority of historians and census estimates falling between half a million and one million" (228).

The Mountbatten Plan (1947) granted the Indian populace the option to affiliate with either India or Pakistan, delegating the delineation of frontiers to the Boundary Commission, chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe (Collins and Lapierre 180). The definitive transfer of authority to Indian governance was scheduled on 15 August 1947, determined by expedited assessments of the parliamentary summer recess in London and the date's personal importance (Collins and Lapierre 165). On July 18,

1947, the British Parliament enacted the Indian Independence Act, delineating the administrative protocols for Indian independence and partition. The Radcliff Line, which delineated a boundary through the territories of 88 million individuals and partitioned Bengal and Punjab, was not released until two days subsequent to India's attainment of independence (Collins and Lapierre 180). It partitioned the state of Punjab into two, allocating the Western portion to Pakistan and the Eastern portion to India. Following the partition of Punjab, Sikh leaders advocated for an independent nation (Khalistan) for Sikhs. Nonetheless, Sikhs were dispersed throughout Punjab and could not demonstrate their majority in the region. Moreover, neither Hindus nor Muslims would have consented to reside in a Sikh nation-state. Despite Muslims being the predominant population in Punjab, it was unfeasible for the entirety of Punjab, a state renowned for its resources and currently recognized as India's breadbasket, to be allocated to Pakistan (Tunzelmann 218). The border was established to 'fairly'—if not equitably—distribute the land and resources, resulting in around five million Muslims and Hindus or Sikhs being situated on the incorrect side of each border. Amritsar was allocated to India, whereas Lahore was assigned to Pakistan. Indeed, some cities in Indian Punjab, such as Jalandhar, possessed a Muslim plurality, whereas the opposite was observed in several Pakistani Punjabi cities and villages. The brutality of Partition was considered unprecedented by the British. Punjab endured the most severe consequences of



*Partition; its terrain strewn with blood and remains. Collins and Lapierre articulate the scene with eloquence:*

*It was neither a battle, nor a civil war, nor a guerrilla campaign. It was a Convulsion, the abrupt and catastrophic disintegration of a society. A single act one atrocity incited another, each horror perpetuated the next, and every massacre spawned its successor, every rumor its mimic, every horror its equivalent, till, resembling slow-motion visuals of a structure collapsing upon impact Following an explosion, the barriers of Punjab society collapsed upon one another. (284)*

*To move from one country to another and to flee the violence that had erupted in villages and cities, millions of Punjabis resorted to trains as their final option. What they anticipated would serve as a secure refuge and facilitate their transition to a new and safe residence. The train, emblematic of development, instead transformed into, as Collins and Lapierre characterize, a "rolling coffin" (298). Trains would arrive at stations in the dead of night, laden with immigrants fleeing one country for another, and were subjected to attacks, as Collins and Lapierre investigate:*

*"...those trainloads of destitute refugees were the primary targets of assault on either side of the boundary. They were attacked unexpectedly while they*

remained in railway stations or in rural areas. Tracks were dismantled to facilitate derailment...them in front of awaiting throngs of assailants. Co-conspirators trafficked compelled them to halt at predetermined locations by yanking the emergency cord. Engineers were either bribed or intimidated into entrapping their passengers in an ambush. ..There were intervals of four to five consecutive days during which no train arrived

Lahore or Amritsar devoid of its casualties...A train laden with deceased and injured individuals arrived at the railroad station ...as blood oozed from behind the doors of each of its silent" Sections. (300)

No group could be held accountable. The victims and perpetrators included Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus. The violence would last for months, and the scars would take years to manifest; as of now, they remain unhealed.

Prior to the Partition, the Indian populace endeavoured for independence and organized a significant public protest against the colonial administration. They commenced hostilities against British authority to secure their human rights. For as long as the inhabitants of Indian lands can recall, Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims have coexisted harmoniously. Butalia states, "memories of Partition, the horror and brutality of that period, and the nostalgic recollection of an often- mythical- past, where Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs coexisted in relative peace and harmony, have constituted the foundation of the narratives I have engaged



with" (4). When the Partition commenced, the prevailing circumstances transformed, and the previously established harmony and cooperation devolved into horror, resulting in an intolerable massacre throughout the subcontinent. The populace of India was classified into various categories based on their religious affiliation. They had a sense of isolation or exclusion from their neighbours and associates. Butalia asserts: Here, beyond the River Jamuna, but a few miles from my residence,

unremarkable, tranquil individuals have expelled their neighbors from their invaded residences and killed individuals without any obvious justification.

belonged to a distinct religious community. The narratives of Partition are absent.

no longer appeared as distant: individuals from the same nation, the

the identical town, the same village, may nonetheless be segregated by political dynamics

their religious divergence, and, if fractured, could lead to dire consequences

reciprocally. (5)

The populations of India and Pakistan have perused numerous accounts regarding the matters of Partition. The conventional narrative of Partition addressed solely the political and economic dimensions of society. The prevailing historians engaged with the mainstream upper class and documented the

*Partition and its repercussions. The Partition of India occurred in August 1947. A sequence of events led to it, including the increasing rift between the Congress and the Muslim League, the discussions with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sardar Patel, along with various other developments in the political arena (Butalia 6). However, some historians have failed to endeavor to comprehend or acknowledge the perspectives of common individuals, like as women, children, and the "untouchables," who were also victims of the Partition. Butalia recalls, "what transpired for the millions of individuals who endured this period, what we might refer to as the 'human dimensions' of this history" (7).*

*The delineation of the Indian frontier compelled the populace of India to relocate to other places, resulting in their dispersion from relatives, possessions, and assets. They were unable to establish a superior settlement in their new locations. Following this enforced exile, many of them were unable to return to their homeland. They were separated by a boundary, and toxins were introduced into their minds. Moreover, certain unidentified causes affected their mindset and established their beliefs inside the framework of 'nationalism.' Nationalism is a highly complex notion. It was one of the colonizers' efforts to instigate dissension before departing from their territories. Post-colonial nations cultivate their national identity similarly to the process outlined by Benedict Anderson in his work *Imagined Communities* (1983). He characterizes a nation as "an imagined political community." "as both intrinsically*

*constrained and autonomous” (6). The nation is a construct, as citizens do not personally know one another and instead subscribe to a shared identity defined by the nation's boundaries. Homi K. Bhabha, a distinguished post-colonial critic, rigorously critiques the notion of nationalism in his acclaimed book, Nation and Narration (2000). He articulates that:*

*The linear correlation between event and concept posited by historicism, typically denotes a populace, a nation, or a national culture as an empirical sociological category or a comprehensive cultural organism. Nevertheless, the narrative and psychological impact that nationalism exerts on artistic production and political projection is the consequence of the the ambivalence of 'nation' as a narrative device. As a device of symbolic power generates a persistent ambiguity of categories such as sexual orientation, social class, territorial anxiety, or 'cultural disparity' in the process of composing the nation. (3)*

*Butalia recounts specific stories concerning the challenges of exile, highlighting that many families were unable to return to their homes during the Partition. In the second chapter of the text titled "Blood," she recounts an incident involving her uncle, Ranamama, who resides in Pakistan and is unable to return to India due to his property and familial ties in Pakistan. During the Partition, he was unable to enter his homeland as the authorities denied his passport. He converted to Islam.*

*Consequently, he was obliged to reside in Pakistan with his wife and children. Butalia recounts that:*

*My mother undertook two arduous and perilous voyages, amidst the*

*severe sectarian turmoil, to Lahore to retrieve her family to India. The*

*It was the first occasion she brought her younger brother, Bilo, and her sister, Savita. On her second trip, she went to retrieve her mother and the youngest, Rana.*

*However, she stated that Rana declined to attend and was unwilling to permit my*

*Grandmother does not go either. He refuted the assertion that he wished to retain her.*

*the preservation of my grandfather's estate, which was registered in her name, and*

*committed to taking her to India shortly. This event did not occur. Upon the*

*The country was divided, rendering it nearly hard for individuals from*

*many communities to traverse freely within the 'other' nation. (33-34)*

*Numerous individuals are relocated to a different location or country, where they subsequently have a tumultuous existence, ultimately meeting their demise there. There was deep suspicion on both sides and, any cross-border movement was watched and monitored by the police and intelligence. Rana and his family have maintained touch for long time, although they have been*

*persistently monitored, with their correspondence being intercepted and inquiries being made. Both governments maintained surveillance on the populace's passage across the borders and endeavored to impede it. According to Foucault, the concept of 'authority' instituted a form of "Panopticon surveillance" (Discipline 198) over the populace. The governments prohibited the populace from crossing the border and erected a barrier to impede them. They may prohibit individuals from crossing the border and have consistently denied them the opportunity to engage in their familial rites or rituals. Even burial rites are not exempt from this.*

*Grand politics, communal violence and Indian caste system have played a vital role in the formation of Pakistan. Jinnah and other Muslim leaders introduced the two nation theory before the British government. They believed that the Muslims could not enjoy an equal status in the post-independence India. He and his colleagues anticipated the upcoming riots and marginalization over the Muslims there. Hence he formulated the two nation theory before the 'authority.' According to Butalia:*

*Such good relations we had that if there was any function that we had,*

*then we used to call Musalmaans to our homes, they would eat in our*

*houses, but we would not eat in theirs and this is a bad thing, which I*

realize now. If they would come to our houses we could have two

utensils in one corner of the house, and we would tell them, pick these

up and eat in them; they would then wash them and keep them aside

and this was such a terrible thing. This was the reason Pakistan was

created. (40)

The mainstream history of Indian Partition chiefly laid the problems of the upper class pre-independent Indian people. They mainly discussed only the problems of men and their actions. During the time of the Partition, the Indian women who suffered a lot of mental and physical problems and, they were separated from their husbands, children and parents. They were the perceptible victimizers of the Partition or the holocaust. As Butalia mentioned that.

Many were horrific and of a kind that, when I was younger and heard

them second or third hand, I had found hard to believe: women

jumping into wells to drown themselves so as to avoid rape or forced

religious conversion; fathers beheading their own children so they

would avoid the same dishonourable fate. (5)



*The gendered nature of the violence of Partition is seen in the fact that approximately seventy-five thousand women are reported to have been abducted and raped. The sheer magnitude of the abductions of women was such that the Indian and Pakistani governments arrived at an agreement called Inter-Dominion Treaty of December 6, 1947 and decided to 'recover' as many women as they could through the Central Recovery Operation. Social workers like Kamala Patel in Lahore and Amritsar and Anis Kidwai Delhi participated in this 'recovery' operation under the supervision of Mridula Sarabhai, a Congress activist (Butalia 114). The treaty was followed in December 1949 by a Bill called the Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Act. This Bill was introduced in the Indian Constituent Assembly and remained in force till 1957. The Central Recovery Operation recovered about thirty thousand abducted women during its existence (Butalia 130).*