Available Online at ESci Journals
Journal of South Asian Studies
ISSN: 2307-4000 (Online), 2308-7846 (Print)
http://www.escijournals.net/JSAS

UNCOVERING THE DIFFUSION OF PARTITION MEMORY FROM SIKH REFUGEE TO NON-REFUGEE SIKH

Shyamal Kataria
The University of Sharjah, University City of Sharjah 27272, UAE.

A B S T R A C T

Memories of the 1947 Partition have, unsurprisingly, remained far from uniform across the Indian subcontinent. Rather, it has varied (often quite drastically) depending upon who is doing the recalling and in what context they are doing so. However, the degree of 'overlap', or homogeneity, in memory of Partition between individuals increases when observed from the parameters of a particular group to the extent that we can speak of 'collective memories' of Partition. There are of course many collectives within the subcontinent and people, more often than not, identify with more than one collective at any given time. While taking this into consideration, this paper nonetheless assumes the existence of a particular Sikh refugee Partition memory and focuses upon, following this group's arrival into truncated India from the territories of perspective/realized West Pakistan, how, why, and what aspects of their memory have diffused into the consciousness of their non-refugee ethnic kin and, after a period of time, down into the consciousness of their post-event offspring.

Keywords: Sikh, Refugees, Punjab, India, Partition, Memory, Diffusion.

The Partition of India into Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan in August 1947 was preceded, accompanied and followed by a mass communal genocide of provincial and district minority populations. One of the principal theatres for this carnage was the Punjab, one of only three provinces in 'British India'[i] to be partitioned along communal lines,[ii] and allotted to the Indian and Pakistani dominions respectively. As a result of the violence, minorities were, in many cases, forced to flee from their homelands and cross over into the relative safe-haven of the dominion that 'represented' their community i.e. Pakistan for Muslims and India for non-Muslims. As such, the Sikh population of pre-Partition Punjab, which had been thinly spread across the province,[iii] became compact in its eastern segment post-Partition.[iv]

A pre-requisite for a shared memory is to have a shared experience. Certainly, this was the case for the Sikh refugees who, despite differences in their individual experiences, were uniformly subject to, or at least feared, Muslim mob attack in prospective/realized West Pakistan. This meant that Sikh refugees, as a collective, had a qualitatively different Partition experience from their non-refugee counterparts in east Punjab. Of course, they did indeed share similar experiences with the Hindu refugees too, and undoubtedly a wider 'non-Muslim refugee experience' of Partition exists as a result. However, the existence of a non-Muslim refugee experience of Partition does not deny the existence of a specific Sikh refugee experience (and with that its own particular Partition memory). Indeed, in a separate paper compiled by this author (Kataria 2016), it has been demonstrated that Sikh refugees have 'tailored' memory of Partition as distinct from the other communal interpretations so as to support the claim that *they*, as a people, suffered the most (with such suffering relating to both the level of violence endured as well as the longer-term consequences deriving from this cataclysmic event, including political, economic and cultural).

Collective memory has traditionally been understood as 'blind to all but the group that it binds' (Nora 1989, 9). However, this paper takes the line that aspects of the

* Corresponding Author:
Email ID: skataria@sharjah.ac.ae

refugee collective memory, during episodes of 'personalized interaction',[v] diffuse horizontally into the consciousness of their non-refugee ethnic kin and, after a period of a few years,[vi] vertically down into their post-event offspring.[vii] This diffusion process results in non-refugees acquiring a 'refugee-tinge' to their own, or pan-ethnic, 'event-related memory'[viii] i.e. the 'event' which prompted the refugee departure. In relation to the Sikh experience of Partition, this paper will uncover how, why and what aspects of the Sikh refugee memory diffused into the consciousness of their non-refugee ethnic kin and, after a period of time, into the consciousness of their post-event offspring. By doing so, the intention is, this paper will facilitate a better understanding of Sikh, refugee and non-refugee, behavioral patterns in post-Partition India.

How diffusion occurred: As established above, the diffusion process takes place during instances of 'personalized interaction' between refugee and non-refugee ethnic kin/post-event offspring. In the case of the Sikhs, the channels for this were not uniform but occurred through one, or a combination of, visual, verbal or traumatic forms of transmission (Freud 1955, 13; Ehlers and Steil 1995, 217-218).

The most *intense* form of diffusion that took place was probably that of visual transmission, with some non-refugee Sikh respondents admitting that mere sight of the arriving refugees *alone* provoked them to contemplate, and often even indulge in, 'retributive' violence against the largely innocent body of Muslims residing in East Punjab. Consider, in this light, the statement of Balbir Singh, a non-refugee from Ludhiana:

I remember swells of refugees coming into [Ludhiana], theirs was a plight of utter destruction…I must admit that there was a feeling among the Sikhs on this side that we should avenge them…and expel the Muslims forthwith.[ix]

The question might legitimately be raised as to how 'the sight' of the incoming Sikh refugees alone, could trigger, not only a diffusion of aspects from the refugee memory into the consciousness of the non-refugees but to do so to such an extent that it would result in localized violence against the Muslim population. When probed about the dialogues he had with the Sikh refugees during the Partition disturbances, Balbir Singh replied as follows:

Surprisingly, I did not speak to many refugees at the time, though there were many around…You see when a man has lost everything, not all wish to talk about it…but there were many times when I saw grown men carrying nothing but a small child in their arms…Now you must understand, at that time, men did not walk around [publicly] carrying their children, that is not [in] our culture…so it did not take a genius to realize that this poor man's wife was not with him and that in all probability she had been abducted or killed before reaching India…Naturally, such sights stir all types of emotion in you.[x]

Similarly, Aridaman Singh Dhillon, another non-refugee Sikh, from Amritsar, recalled that

[a] large number of trains taking…Sikhs and Hindus to India were stopped by the local [Muslim] Marauders and almost each and every passenger killed…and *those trains arrived [in Amritsar] with all those murdered people inside it*…sort of as a message [emphasis added].[xi]

These statements suggest how, by relying largely upon deductive logic in combination with a general awareness of the unfolding scenario (i.e. related reports in the printed press), it was possible for non-refugee Sikhs to appropriate, with some measure of accuracy, refugee memories largely via visual transmission alone.[xii]Nevertheless, even for those non-refugee Sikhs who engaged in this visual form of transmission, it is almost certain they would have participated in other forms of diffusion as well.

As far as verbal transmission is concerned, this occurred when refugees consciously evoked an oral narration of their exilic experiences for a non-refugee audience. This was not restricted to the immediate period following their arrival and, thus, was open to both non-refugee ethnic kin and post-event offspring. Though verbal transmission increased the potential scope for the diffusion process to occur, clearly the absence of a tangible visual image for post-event offspring and those non-refugees born after 1947 to cross-reference such descriptions against served to weaken the potential *intensity* of their appropriated memory. Nevertheless, those non-refugees who participated in this form were, in all likelihood, able to obtain a far more detailed and comprehensible version of the refugee memory than those who relied purely upon visual means—though as will become apparent later, refugees did not always *fully* or *accurately* describe their experiences during such verbal exchanges, nor did the non-refugees always appropriate such memories without a measure of distortion.

As with the verbal form of transmission, the traumatic transmission was not restricted to the immediate period after arrival. However, it was post-event offspring more than non-refugee ethnic kin, on account of tending to live within the same household as their refugee parents/grandparents, who, in parallel with children of Holocaust survivors (Barocas and Barocas 1979, 331; Goertz 1998, 33), encountered this form of diffusion.[xiii] Once again, it was rare that non-refugees would rely on this form of diffusion alone for developing their understanding of Partition. Yet for many post-event offspring, only after learning about the nature of their family's experience of Partition much later in their own lives, did they, in hindsight, realize the underlying cause behind such traumatic outbursts. In an interview with this author, post-event offspring Massa Singh recalled the following:

In my early childhood, my father would, many times, scream [in his sleep] the name, 'Sukhdev!', 'Sukhdev!'…we [he and his siblings] used to get quite frightened by this…it was only much later on that I learnt he was calling after his brother [who had been] burnt alive at the time of Partition.[xiv]

Although along with visual, traumatic transmission appeared to be the least accessible form of refugee Partition memory permissible for non-refugees, it was undeniable that the intensity of such appropriated memory remained quite high.

Why diffusion occurred: Having described how the diffusion process manifested itself, we now consider *why* it occurred at all. In this regard, it must be appreciated that both the Sikh refugees and non-refugees had their own set of motives for allowing this process to occur.

Refugees: While many Sikh refugees engaged in all these forms of transmission, it was only through verbal means that they *consciously* chose to evoke their memory of Partition. However, even with respect to this single form of transmission, their reasons for doing so were not uniform. They usually involved one or a combination of the following reasons.

The first reason is that they felt that evoking a memory of their traumatic experiences in conversation with those inclined to offer a compassionate ear (i.e. non-refugee ethnic kin/post-event offspring), might have therapeutic value in terms of their own psychological healing process (Hamber 2002, 86). Undoubtedly, whether or to what extent refugees engaged in a verbal transmission of their Partition memory to a non-refugee audience, if at all, largely depended upon the level of sympathy the latter granted the former. There is evidence to suggest that some non-refugees—in striking similarity to the situation faced by Holocaust survivors in Israeli society, during the 1950s and 1960s, who were condemned for going like 'sheep to the slaughter' (Zerubavel 1994, 86-87; Wistrich 1997, 17)—and, even senior statesmen, adopted a discourteous attitude towards refugees by referring to them as 'cowards'[xv] or 'pathetic people…not masculine enough'[xvi] to protect their property and land. In such circumstances, the diffusion process would have come to an abrupt halt. However, even when a sympathetic audience were available, memory was not always evoked because, as previously discussed, it remained, for some, too traumatic to recall.[xvii]Contributing to this trauma was, in addition to the memory of Partition and its associated violence, the distinct lack of justice that followed. In this regard, Rajendra Kaur, a Delhi-based refugee originally from Rawalpindi, in reply to her interviewer Meenakshi Verma, said: 'You have been repeatedly asking me why I do not want to speak about Partition. The reason is that the murderers were never caught' (quoted in *Sunday Times of India*, 20 July 1997). Indeed, it can be said that many of those adjudged to be 'responsible', whether directly or indirectly, for the carnage, actually went on to secure top governmental posts, with others even going on to be hailed as the heroes and founding fathers of the Indian and Pakistani nations respectively!

A second reason that refugees engaged in verbal forms of transmission were that, in many ways, it justified their 'sorry plight' in India and helped them gain the sympathy of non-refugees, who may have initially resented the refugees laying claim to Muslim evacuee property during the Partition period (Keller 1975, 69). Even beyond the immediate period following Partition, especially in cases where refugees had not attained the socioeconomic status in India that they felt their efforts warranted, evoking such a memory of their former lands of 'milk and honey' certainly helped to demonstrate what they were capable of achieving in the absence of an overarching 'Brahmin-*Bania* rule'.[xviii]It also placed their contemporary successes, which some other groups in India deemed that they ought to be content with, into a more sobering perspective. Indeed, few post-event offspring challenged this aspect of the refugee memory; for in many ways their self-perception (especially if they were socioeconomically

disadvantaged at the time of recall), rested upon their family's pre-Partition status.[xix]

A third reason, and in contrast to the previous point, is that recounting their experiences gave Sikh refugees a sense of superiority over those native to the territory of truncated India. This suggests that they did not wish to be *solely* viewed as victims of persecution (Robbins 1956, 317). In this regard, refugee accomplishments in post-Partition India, whether in commercial pursuits or in politics, appear all the more remarkable when one considers their destitute status on the eve of Partition. Sarna who, apart from having served as head of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, became a highly successful industrialist in post-Partition India, proudly recalls the character displayed by the Sikh refugees after Partition and places 'their' positive traits in stark contrast those of the non-refugee Sikhs:

We [Sikh refugees] are more entrepreneurial, more religious minded, we don't believe in begging, we never asked anyone for anything…*It was sheer hard work and will that got us through [their destitution following Partition]*…we got absolutely no help from the government…*1984 was 26 years ago, yet ninety percent of them are still relying on hand-outs!*…We came here with nothing, maybe one or two per cent top managed to transfer their assets since nobody knew this was going to be a permanent arrangement [emphasis added].[xx]

However, though post-event offspring seemingly appropriated such memories largely intact throughout the period from 1947 to the present, co-ethnics have tended to selectively appropriate only those aspects which highlight 'Sikh' traits of business acumen and hard work rather than what is perceived to be caste, region[xxi]or refugee-specific ones.

he fourth reason for refugee engagement in the diffusion process is far more sinister, namely to covet non-refugees to exact on their behalf, or at least assist them in getting, revenge against 'the Partition culprits' in the east.[xxii]In the immediate period following their arrival, their memories of their exile, undoubtedly seem to have contributed to the genocidal violence and ethnic-cleansing of the Muslims in East Punjab. It also appears to be the case that certain refugees evoked such memories, albeit significantly re-molded in shape, in attempting to incite anti-Hindu violence during the Khalistan movement. Surinder Singh Grewal, a non-refugee who admitted to 'knowing people' (fellow Jats) that took part in the militancy, maintains that;

Jats are more temperamental in nature than other Sikhs, so I suppose you could say we are, in the main, more prone towards answering the call for the protection of our *dharma*…*they [his Jat Sikh militant friends] got financial backing from the Bahamas [colloquial term for members of the, predominantly refugee, Khatri caste]…they [the Bhapas] would tell them that the Sikhs were forced out of the most prosperous parts of Punjab in 1947* due to Muslim terrorism on the one side *and Nehru's and [Mohandas] Gandhi's actions on other, even after they [the Congress leaders] had sworn to us [Sikhs] that Partition [of India] would only take place over their dead bodies*…and on top of what had happened in Delhi after Indira's assassination, and what was happening all across Punjab with all this state terror and fake encounters…were not the Sikhs within their rights to return the favor?[xxiii]

Non-Refugees: As with the Sikh refugees, there were a large number of potential motives that led the non-refugees to become involved in the diffusion process.

The first motive is that there was a natural desire on behalf of the non-refugees to sympathise with victims sharing their ethnic, in this case religious, identity. Stories pertaining to the beards of Sikh men being trimmed off, their gurdwaras and religious texts being desecrated, certainly made many non-refugee Sikhs aware that, but for living in a majority non-Muslim area, it could easily have been them or their families that had suffered such barbarities. The subsequent events of 1984, in particular, the Delhi pogroms, in which there were numerous incidents reminiscent of the Partition violence, contributed towards the diffusion process occurring to a heightened extent.[xxiv]Urvashi Butalia, in *The Other Side of Silence*, conceded this:

It took the events of 1984 to make me understand how ever-present Partition was in our lives, too, to recognize that it could not so easily be put away inside the covers of history books. I could no longer pretend that this was a history that belonged to another time, to someone else (2000, 5).

A second motive, alludedto previously, was that many non-refugee Sikhs sought to 'use' this Sikh refugee memory to justify, and galvanize support for, their contemporary material goals.[xxv] In fact, the sinister exploitation of refugee suffering by non-refugee Sikhs and Sikh socio-political bodies aiming to drive Muslims out of East Punjab at the time of Partition was noted by Communist Party of India[xxvi]publications:

All refugee camps must be run by joint committees of patriotic parties and individuals. They must be prevented from becoming centers for communal pro-riot and anti-Government propaganda…*We appeal to the refugees to exercise restraint and not fall victim to the machinations of those who are trying to use their plight to continue and extend the disorder to every province* [emphasis added] (*Save Punjab, Save India* 1947, 14).

When refugees came straining from Rawalpindi with their tales of woe and horror and the unspeakable atrocities committed on the minorities there, the Akali leaders used them to rouse the spirit of retaliation among the Sikh peasants. They sent refugees to each one of the Gurdwaras and through them and their own agents, they spread the poisonous idea of retaliation against Muslim (Dhanwantri and Joshi 1947, 8).

It is unsurprising, therefore, that during this period the rate and depth of diffusion appeared to have been pronounced. However, it would be misleading to suggest that non-refugee Sikhs sought to appropriate the memories of their refugee ethnic-kin for the *sole* purpose of securing material gains.

In addition, and more crucially from the point of view of this research, many Khalistanis, whether post-event offspring or non-refugee ethnic kin, appear to carry Partition-related grievances akin to a Sikh refugee Partition memory. Ranjit Singh Srai, a Khalistani Sikh whose ancestral village is in Jalandhar district, east Punjab, makes the following observation:

In what is now the land in Pakistan, Sikhs had some very profitable land which they had converted from barren land into fertile…and agriculturally productive territory and these lands were virtually exclusively Sikh lands and obviously, they were just in one, in one strike, the Sikhs were removed from their own territory, you know…and *we were never compensated for that* [emphasis added].[xxvii]

By speaking in terms of 'we', despite the fact that he cannot, at an individual or familial level, claim to have suffered economically as a result of Partition, Srai has clearly appropriated aspects of the Sikh refugee suffering resulting in, what this paper terms to be, a 'refugee-tinged' pan-Sikh memory of Partition.

A third motive was the retrospective value attached to the appropriation of Sikh refugee collective memory by non-refugees. Though Sikhs were by all accounts 'the principal aggressors in eastern Punjab', by attaching their memory of Partition to that of the refugees it was possible for non-refugees ethnic kin to claim that 'they', as a pan-collective, were victims of Partition (Brass 2006, 22). In this way, they were able to retrieve a politically-usable Partition narrative as a consequence. Thus their own brutalities could be understood, if not condoned, as retaliation to the communal war *started* by the Muslims. In his book, *The Destiny of the Sikhs*, Sohan Singh Sahota, a non-refugee Sikh, suggests this when referring to the Partition violence across Punjab:

The Hindus and Sikhs acted in retaliation only. Although in spite of this I do not approve of the conduct of those Hindus and Sikhs who committed similar acts against the Mohammedans. Such acts were a gross violation of the Sikh code of conduct and a reversal of the high moral traditions set up by their forefathers. *But to a certain extent plight of their co-religionists coming from West Pakistan and the harrowing tales of atrocities committed upon them, provoked them beyond all limits to retaliate with equal bruteness because they thought and rightly too, that this would chasten the Muslims in West Pakistan and save their co-religionists from the further fury of the rioters. It did have a sobering effect on them no doubt* [emphasis added] (1971, 86).

Despite appearing at first to condemn the actions of Sikhs and Hindus in East Punjab, after placing their acts within the wider pan-Punjab context, Sahota steadily moves in the direction of 'understanding' their actions, towards actually justifying them.

Balbir Singh, who admitted to helping drive the Muslims out of East Punjab during the Partition disturbances, attempted to use not only Sikh refugee Partition memory to retrospectively justify his actions but also drew upon his wider knowledge of the plight of non-Muslims both in the rest of Pakistan and the entire Muslim world even. When asked whether the killing of Muslims in East worsened the plight for the remaining non-Muslims in West Punjab, Balbir Singh remarked with some eloquence:

In all honesty, I've heard this argument before, and I see little merit in it…if we did not *retaliate* in the east, do you honestly think Muslims would have ceased attacks on the Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan?...[No]…They would have interpreted it as our cowardice, and in fact would have attempted to drive us out of the east too…because they wanted the whole of Punjab for Pakistan, not just the west…You see it is inherent in the Muslim psyche to exterminate non-Muslims…*look around at all the Muslim nations in the world, can you think of any one of those*

places in which the minorities are living in dignity?...So let's say for argument's sake that the non-Muslims of West Punjab suffered a reaction for what the Sikhs and Hindus were doing in the East…if that is so, then why were non-Muslims butchered mercilessly in Sindh, Baluchistan, NWFP, Kashmir and Bengal?...What was their crime?...Not one of them [non-Muslims] ever raised their hand against their Muslim neighbors in those areas yet they were massacred…So you see Muslims, led by Mr. Jinnah, never intended to let minorities be in Pakistan [emphasis added].[xxviii]

What Aspects Diffused: Having described *how* and *why* the diffusion process occurred, it now needs to be considered as to *what* aspects of refugee memory were actually evoked by the Sikh refugees and, from this, *what* the non-refugees actually appropriated. It can be confidently assumed that memory seldom diffused itself intact between refugee and non-refugee. The former tended not to recall, nor the latter appropriate, the memory in a full or accurate manner.

Refugees: Even for those refugees who had been consciously engaged in the diffusion process, many simply failed to evoke a complete or accurate verbal depiction of their Partition memory. There are a number of reasons for this.

It appears, first, that many refugees simply did not have the necessary words or literary capabilities to accurately describe their Partition experiences. For instance, Lakshman Singh Duggal, an Amritsar-based refugee originally from Rawalpindi, makes this statement:

In many ways it is difficult for me to describe the pain we felt at that time….leaving our homes, our belongings, everything we had worked for, for generations…but you see it wasn't just our homeland, it was our holy land too…we lost so many shrines…but perhaps more painful than the loss of our shrines even, was the dishonoring of our womenfolk…abducted, never to be seen again…You could lose a limb, an eye, but nothing can come close to the pain you feel by losing a daughter, sister or a wife to a Muslim…it's this kind of pain that will eventually eat away at a man, at an entire family even…*The pain we felt I don't think I can put into words* [emphasis added].[xxix]

Second, many refugees, wittingly or unwittingly, skewed their Partition narrative. So, for instance, it appears that certain aspects of their memory, such as the extent of their economic prowess in West Pakistan, were often exaggerated out of sensible proportion. At the same time, especially during contextual conditions in which their Punjabi identity consciousness had experienced a mini-revival,[xxx]certain refugees attempted to neutralize the culpability of Muslim Punjabis in the Partition violence. This is shown in statements such as this: 'when I talked to some of the survivors they said that the *Muslim orders had been indoctrinated by people who had come from UP and Bihar*' [emphasis added] [xxxi] or that, 'most of the people had their lives saved by people from the other communities...it wasn't all violence...in fact, *we were helped by Muslims across the border*' [emphasis added].[xxxii]

A third reason many refugees failed to evoke a complete or accurate verbal depiction of their memory, was that many actually purged particular aspects from their memory. This included certain memories—such as those surrounding the abduction/rape of their womenfolk, themselves converting temporarily to Islam [xxxiii] or disguising as a Muslim to escape death[xxxiv]—that were 'too traumatic to recall' or considering detrimental to their image in the eyes of non-refugee ethnic kin and post-event offspring. In the event that refugees did not purge such gruesome aspects from their evoked memory, it was quite probable that the non-refugees would do so on their behalf when selectively appropriating the refugee memory.

A fourth reason, although quite rare, was that some refugees were guilty of disingenuously fabricating specific aspects of their evoked narrative. Kulveer Singh Cheema, a non-refugee Sikh from Amritsar, remarked that:

Many abducted [non-Muslim] women were disowned by their families when they were retrieved [from Pakistan], not just because they had been touched [euphemism for rape] by Muslims but because these [refugee] families had told tall-tales to others of how their daughters had become *shaheedi* by jumping into wells or burning themselves alive.[xxxv]

Non-Refugees: As mentioned earlier, non-refugee ethnic kin and post-event offspring often failed to fully or accurately appropriate the refugee memory that they were exposed to. Again, it is possible to cite a number of reasons for this.

First, many non-refugees who encountered the diffusion process—either through its visual, verbal or traumatic forms—were often exposed to a broken or even incomprehensible narrative. They consequently felt impelled to re-arrange such traces, 'fill in the gaps', or 'read in between the lines', so as to form a logical,

and perhaps even consistent, Partition narrative. Though this may actually have helped the non-refugee retrieve something close to the original refugee memory as manifest in the mind of the evoker, it is apparent that there remained considerable scope for distortion.

Second, to ensure the creation/maintenance of a 'victim narrative' and the upkeep of their community's *izzat* at large, non-refugee Sikhs sought to, where necessary, skew the refugee memory that they were exposed to. For instance in the book, *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab 1947*, compiled by Gurcharan Singh Talib and commissioned by the Shriomani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, states with regard to the issue of forcible conversions:

Most Hindus and Sikhs preferred death to the shameful surrender of faith and died, sometimes fighting and at other times with great tortures, at the hands of the sadist religious zealots of the Muslim League. Such women as could not be abducted or dishonored generally escaped this shame by immolating themselves [emphasis added] (Talib [1950] 1991, 81).

Though it is undeniably the case that many non-Muslims, including women, did indeed martyr themselves to escape 'dishonor' at the hands of Muslim marauders,[xxxvi] to say that *most* did is a patent distortion. For example, a review of evidence regarding the Partition massacres shows that, in almost all cases, the proportion of women abducted or forcibly converted far exceeded the amount that was said to have taken their own lives.

Another instance of what appears to be a skewing of the narrative is this following statement regarding the Partition violence by Dr Paramjit Singh Ajrawat, a post-event offspring of a Khalistani political disposition:

The Hindus and Muslims instigated communal violence, with Sikhs becoming the victims. My mother's aunt was burnt alive by Muslim mobs in her village of Nangal Sadhan. *Sikhs were burnt alive in Delhi by Hindu and Gujjar mobs*. And I must point out that there was significant Hindu violence against Muslims in India as well [emphasis added].[xxxvii]

Though it is conceivable that Ajrawat appropriated the refugee memory of his elder family members intact, it is far more likely that his contemporary Khalistani political stance actually shaped the memory accordingly[xxxviii] so as to overstate the culpability of Hindus in the Partition violence and understate, if not completely ignore, that committed by the Sikhs.

A third reason that non-refugee ethnic kin and post-event offspring often failed to fully or accurately appropriate the refugee memory that they were exposed to, once again has to do with supporting the building a Sikh 'victim narrative'. Here, non-refugees sought, when deemed necessary or desirable, to use refugee memory to 'shift the parameters' of their own Partition memory. In this regard, non-refugees adjusted both the timeline of the Partition violence and its geographical area to suit the argument that Sikhs were ultimately the victims and not the victimizers;

In terms of the timeline of Partition violence, while both the Pakistani state narrative and wider academic studies of the Partition violence tend to focus on events proximate to or *after* 14/15 August 1947, non-refugee Sikhs have been able to alter the 'start-point' of the Partition violence to March 1947 so as to permit the appropriation of memory from the Sikhs displaced during the Rawalpindi and Multan massacres (Brass 2003, 88). By doing so, and bearing in mind that large-scale anti-Muslim violence in Punjab did not commence *until* mid-August 1947, Sikhs (and Hindu Punjabis also) have been able to justify their acts in the East as a reaction to the virtual civil war that the Muslims had unleashed months prior.[xxxix] On occasions when the Pakistani state narrative has cared to acknowledge the March 1947 disturbances (e.g. in a report entitled *The Sikh Plan in Action*), it was viewed as 'retaliatory action' for the act of 'aggressiveness' launched by the Hindus and Sikhs. For this purpose, reference has been made to Master Tara Singh's infamous outburst of 'Pakistan *Murdabad*' outside the Punjab Legislative Assembly and the subsequent anti-Muslim League protests in Lahore on 4 March 1947.[xl] The Sikh retort here is to either suggest the Lahore protests were 'perfectly non-violent' prior to being 'fired on by the Muslim Police', or yet again adjust the timeline by pushing back the start point of the Punjab violence to take into account the Hazara massacres of December 1946 (Talib [1950] 1991, 68). However, since Hazara was in NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), it was clear to many Sikhs that this event could potentially be construed as inapplicable to the timeline of 'Punjab' Partition violence. Consequently, some have formulated views that bring Hazara firmly into the Punjab sphere, as shown in the following:

Hazara is this [east] side of the Indus, they are not Pathans.[xli]

Hazara is not properly speaking a Pathan area; *it is Punjabi-speaking* and not Pushtu, and in its political character takes more after the Punjab, to which it is cognate than to the rest of the Frontier Province, which is trans-Indus in respect of geography (Talib [1950] 1991, 52).

In terms of the geographical area, and following on from the above point, it appears that depending on what administrative level one chooses to focus upon largely determines whether or not a community can be legitimately regarded as victims of the Partition violence. Clearly, if the non-refugee Sikhs were to focus upon Partition violence at the level of their district,[xlii]or Punjab east of the Radcliffe Line, then it would be quite absurd to consider themselves, directly or indirectly, victims of the Partition violence. However, by widening the geographical area to a Punjab-wide[xliii]or even subcontinental[xliv]level, and hence incorporating the memories of the Sikh (and perhaps other non-Muslim) refugees in the process, then suddenly it would appear that it was the Muslims who had started off the chain of killings.

A fourth reason, and as alluded to earlier, was that many non-refugees purged certain aspects of the refugee memory upon appropriation. In demonstration, statements made by refugees suggesting a degree of self-blame, whether at an individual or communal level, with regards to Partition and its associated violence—such as 'we treated the Muslims badly, that is why they hated us' or 'if we had allowed the formation of the Muslim League ministry none of this [violence] would have happened'—were readily purged by the non-refugees.

CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be said that the diffusion process between Sikh refugees and non-refugee Sikhs did indeed occur, and so, through all three means of transmission—visual, verbal and traumatic. This diffusion process resulted in the latter sub-group acquiring, with degrees of intensity, a 'refugee-tinge' to their own memory of Partition. Indeed, it can be said *that the Sikh refugee memory served as the very lifeblood for the non-refugee ethnic kin's own Partition memory*, for without appropriating aspects of the former, the latter would not only be devoid of sufficient 'usability' but, in fact, could well serve detrimental towards the realization of pan-Sikh political/material goals. It is evident that both Sikh refugees and non-refugee Sikhs had their own set of motives both for *why* they participated in this process and *what* they chose to evoke or appropriate during such exchanges. Clearly, during periods when the contemporary interests of both refugees and non-refugees seemed aligned, the diffusion process took place at a greater rate and depth. It is also reasonable to assume, that for the non-refugee Sikhs who were most involved in this diffusion process, namely those living in areas of high refugee concentration, Partition as an event occupied a far more prominent position in their contemporary consciousness than it did for others. Consequently, in areas where refugee presence was sparse, not only was there less scope for the diffusion process to take place and thus a far weaker 'refugee-tinge' to the Partition of memory held by such Sikhs.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, I. (2004). Forced migration and ethnic cleansing in Lahore in 1947: Some first person accounts. People on the Move: Punjabi Colonial, and Post-Colonial Migration.

Barocas, H. A., & Barocas, C. B. (1980). Separation-individuation conflicts in children of Holocaust Survivors. Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 11(1), 6-14. doi: 10.1007/bf00946270

Brass, P. R. (2003). The partition of India and retributive genocide in the Punjab, 1946-47: Means, methods, and purposes 1. Journal of Genocide Research, 5(1), 71-101. doi: 10.1080/14623520305657

Brass, P. R. (2006). Victims, heroes or martyrs? partition and the problem of memorialization in contemporary Sikh history. Sikh Formations, 2(1), 17-31. doi: 10.1080/17448720600779828

Butalia, U. (2000). The other side of silence: Voices from the partition of India: Duke University Press.

Census of India (1941) Punjab: Tables by Khan Bahadur Sheikh Fazl-i-Ilahi (Vol. 6): Government of India Press, New Delhi.

Census of India (1951) Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh & Delhi Part II-A: General population, age & social tables by Lakshmi Chandra Vashishta (Vol. 8): Government of India Press, New Delhi.

Connerton, P. (1989). How societies remember: Cambridge University Press.

Copland, I. (2002). The Master and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947. Modern Asian Studies, 36(03). doi: 10.1017/s0026749x02003050

Current References. (2009). Voltage References: IEEE.

Dhanwantri, & Joshi, P. (1947). Bleeding Punjab Warns. Bombay: People's Publishing House.

Ehlers, A., & Steil, R. (1995). Maintenance of Intrusive Memories in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Cognitive Approach. Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy, 23(03), 217. doi: 10.1017/s135246580001585x

Freud, S. (1955). The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud (J. Strachey ed. Vol. 18). London: Hogarth Press.

Goertz, K. (1998). Transgenerational Representations of the Holocaust: From Memory to "Post-Memory". World Literature Today, 72(1), 33. doi: 10.2307/40153531

Hamber, B. (1998). The Burdens of Truth: An Evaluation of the Psychological Support Services and Initiatives undertaken by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. American Imago, 55(1), 9-28. doi: 10.1353/aim.1998.0002

Kataria, S. (2015). 'We suffered the most': Sikh refugee perspective on Partition. The South Asianist, 4(2).

Kataria, S. (2017). Re-territorialisation of persecuted identity: Sikh refugee contribution towards ethnonational conflict in Indian Punjab. The South Asianist, 5(1).

Keller, S. L. (1975). Uprooting and social change: The role of refugees in development: Manohar Book Service.

Klein, K. L. (2000). On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse. Representations (69), 127-150. doi: 10.2307/2902903

Nemiah, J. C. (1996). Breuer, Josef and Freud, Sigmund (1895/1995), Studies on Hysteria. In James Strachey (Ed.) The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.London: Hogarth Press, Vol.2, xxxvii, pp. 1–335. American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis, 38(3), 234-237. doi: 10.1080/00029157.1996.10403343

Nora, P. (1989). Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire. Representations, 26(1), 7-24. doi: 10.1525/rep.1989.26.1.99p0274v

Oberoi, H. (1994). The construction of religious boundaries: Culture, identity, and diversity in the Sikh tradition: University of Chicago Press.

Robbins, R. (1956). The Refugee Status: Challenge and Response. Law and Contemporary Problems, 21(2), 311. doi: 10.2307/1190506

Sahota, S. S. (1971). The Destiny of the Sikhs: New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.

Save Punjab save India: Statement of the Punjab committee of the communist party on the present Punjab situation (1947). People's Publishing House.

Schacter, D. L., & Squire, L. R. (1996). Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind and the Past. Nature, 382(6591), 503-503.

Talib, G. (1950). Muslim league attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab 1947. New Delhi: Voice of India.

Tandon, P. (2001). Punjabi saga: 1857-2000. New Delhi: Rupa Co.

Wistrich, R. S. (1997). Israel and the Holocaust Trauma. Jewish History, 11(2), 13-20. doi: 10.1007/bf02335674

Zerubavel, Y. (1994). The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors. Representations, 45(1), 72-100. doi: 10.1525/rep.1994.45.1.99p0210j

Notes

1. 'British India' refers to the territory of the Indian subcontinent that was under *direct* British rule during the Raj.

ii. The other two provinces of British India to be divided in 1947 were Bengal and Assam.

iii. As per the 1941 census, the Sikhs, holding 13.22 per cent of the population of British Punjab, were so thinly dispersed that they failed to command a majority in any one of the 29 districts of the province (*Census of India* 1941, 41-45).

iv. The Sikhs, who prior to 1947 failed to command a majority in any one of the 29 districts of the British Punjab, actually became a majority in four out of remaining thirteen districts and the largest group in another one (*Census of India* 1951, 298-299).

v. It must be stressed that such instances of 'personalised interaction' range from a relatively short exchange toward a series of interactions throughout a prolonged period of time. It is also quite likely that the non-refugees appropriate refugee memory from more than one subject.

vi. In the immediate post-event years, diffusion can only occur horizontally as those offspring born in this period remain too young to appropriate their parents' exilic memory.

[vii] Post-event offspring include the children and grandchildren, as well as potentially *all* subsequent generations (providing they are aware of their familial history) stemming from the refugees.

[viii] Though, strictly speaking, non-refugee ethnic kin born after the exilic event and post-event offspring cannot be *truly* said to have a memory of it, it is clear that they can still hold an understanding of this event which, following the diffusion process, becomes so emotionally charged that it resembles 'actual' memory itself.

[ix] Interview with Balbir Singh. Ludhiana, 1 September 2010.

[x] Interview with Balbir Singh. Ludhiana, 1 September 2010.

[xi] Interview with Aridaman Singh Dhillon. Amritsar, 14 September 2010.

[xii] It should be noted however, that owing to the fact many of these refugees were quickly rehabilitated into mainstream Indian society—whether through attainment of evacuee property, land grants or employment—their 'visually' destitute status only remained apparent for a few months, or at most a few years, after their arrival. Therefore, this visual form of diffusion only occurred horizontally: that is to say across into their co-ethnics as opposed to downwards to their post-event offspring.

[xiii] 'Several among the younger generation have a family history of Partition memories transmitted to them by their grandparents. Interestingly, such transmissions have mainly occurred in moments of delirium, fever or disorientation, but seldom as a conscious act of sharing the past or narrating an event' (Verma 2004, xiii).

[xiv] Interview with Massa Singh. Amritsar, 20 September 2010.

[xv] Speaking with reference to the Hindus and Sikhs evacuating north-western Punjab following Muslim-led massacres against them, Dr Lehna Singh Sethi MLA, suggested in April 1947, 'For a minority to quit like this is both suicidal and unwise, in fact this [is tantamount] to cowardice' (*The Tribune*, 10 April 1947).

[xvi] HeeraLal quoted in Verma 2004, 47.

[xvii] Hukam Chand Hans, Facts Finding Officer for the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, wrote in one of his reports that: 'Many young Hindu and Sikh girls were forcibly abducted in the March [1947] disturbances…*Generally by instinct of nature, Hindu [and Sikh] witnesses are reluctant to narrate the harrowing tale of woe of suffering suffered by their womenfolk*. About three hundred beautiful young girls and ladies were subjected to carnal dishonour and abducted in these tragic events' ('Memo: Haranpur Village, Jhelum District, Disturbances', Fact Finding Branch, Ministry of Relief & Rehabilitation, Government of India, New Delhi, 12 April 1948, Acc No. 1415 [Prof Kirpal Singh's Manuscript Collection, Khalsa College, Amritsar], 23-24).

[xviii] 'Brahmin-*Bania* rule' is a synonym among certain Sikhs for the unofficial 'Hindu rule' emanating from New Delhi.

[xix] According to Daniel Schacter, a 'sense of ourselves depends crucially on the subjective experience of remembering our pasts' (1996, 34).

[xx] Interview with Paramjit Singh Sarna. Delhi, 21 August 2010.

[xxi] Sikhs from Majha*doab*, a territory which fell largely on the Pakistan side of the Radcliffe Line, tend to consider themselves superior to their co-religionists in east Punjab (Oberoi 1994, 43).

[xxii] One eye-witness stated in the aftermath of the March 1947 disturbances in Rawalpindi and Attock districts, that: 'I went to the camps in which the refugee of various villages had been stationed and enquired from the leading persons of those places as to what had happened to them. *Women and children with tears in their eyes and sobbing throats surrounded me and asked me through their silent looks to convey to their countrymen and community the lot which has befallen them at the very hands of their own neighbours with whom they had…peacefully lived together for centuries*' [emphasis added] ('Statement of Joginder Singh to ShiromaniGurdwaraParbandhakCommittee regarding Rawalpindi and Attock District Disturbances', 24 March 1947, Acc No. 1457 [Prof Kirpal Singh's Manuscript Collection, Khalsa College, Amritsar], 2). Though it is not certain that the 'women and children' in this case necessarily wanted non-refugees to seek revenge, it is very likely that they would have drew some solace from subsequent expulsions of Muslims in the east.

[xxiii] Interview with Surinder Singh Grewal. Ludhiana, 2 September 2010.

[xxiv] The 'memory' of historical events is attractive, not so much for its own sake, but rather owing to its relevance in the present (Klein 2000, 129).

[xxv] Clearly such 'usability' of refugee Partition memory was not restricted to the Sikhs. With one Hindu Punjabi refugee recalling how, soon after the Partition of India, a young Marathi newspaper editor from Poona (or Pune) had come into his office advocating the cause for a 'Hindu India': 'He asked me if I was a Punjabi or a UP Tandon, and when I told him where I came from he became very eloquent. *He talked at length and with feeling about the injustice to the Punjabis*, for whom, along with the Marathas, he had great respect. They were the fighters of India, who had taken the shock of every invasion and were the last to be overcome by the British. Right through history the Punjabis had kept their entity, faith and customs, but today for the first time they lay broken. The land that had been theirs since the dawn of history, the flat fertile soil between the rivers, was no longer theirs, and no one, except some abducted women, remained behind…*"It is strange" I said to him, "that I as a Punjabi should feel less strongly, and less express*

my feelings, than you from so far away". "Yes, I do feel very strongly". And he walked out' [emphasis added] (Tandon 2001, 378-379). This demonstrates that, when non-refugees have rational grounds to do so, the rate and depth of the diffusion process can be so extensive that they may become more affected by the refugee memory than the refugees themselves. As it turned out the editor Tandon was referring to was none other than NathuramGodse, the gentleman who went on to assassinate Gandhiji.

[xxvi] During this period, the Communists were among very few political bodies in India that were willing to highlight incidents of atrocities perpetrated *against* the Muslims. However, having supported the balkanization of India only weeks earlier, the Communist Party of India held little credibility in the eyes of most non-Muslim Indians.

[xxvii] Interview with Ranjit Singh Srai. [Phone Interview], 29 May 2011.

[xxviii] Interview with Balbir Singh. Ludhiana, 1 September 2010.

[xxix] Interview with Lakshman Singh Duggal. Amritsar, 12 September 2010.

[xxx] This is particularly so in the case of refugees living in parts of India outside Punjab i.e. New Delhi (Bhag Singh quoted in Verma 2004, 66).

[xxxi] This statement was made by a Delhi-based surgeon originally from Lahore, Dr JagdishChanderSarin (quoted in Ahmed 2004, 120).

[xxxii] Interview with KuldipNayar. Delhi, 29 August 2010.

[xxxiii] 'Memo: Raipur Thana Maini Village, Shahpur District, Disturbances', Fact Finding Branch, Ministry of Relief & Rehabilitation, Government of India, New Delhi, Acc No. 1415 [Prof Kirpal Singh's Manuscript Collection, Khalsa College, Amritsar], 92-93.

[xxxiv] 'Statement of Sobha Singh regarding Lyallpur Disturbances', 28 March 1948, Acc No. 1405 [Prof Kirpal Singh's Manuscript Collection, Khalsa College, Amritsar], 110.

[xxxv] Interview with Kulveer Singh Cheema. Amritsar, 17 September 2010.

[xxxvi] 'Memo: Akalgarh Town, Gujranwala District, Disturbances', Fact Finding Branch, Ministry of Relief & Rehabilitation, Government of India, New Delhi, 12 April 1948, Acc No. 1415 [Prof Kirpal Singh's Manuscript Collection, Khalsa College, Amritsar], 5; 'Memo: Talwandi Village, Gujranwala District, Disturbances', Fact Finding Branch, Ministry of Relief & Rehabilitation, Government of India, New Delhi, 26 April 1948, Acc No. 1415 [Prof Kirpal Singh's Manuscript Collection, Khalsa College, Amritsar], 29.

[xxxvii] Interview with Dr Paramjit Singh Ajrawat. [E-mail Interview], 30 October 2010.

[xxxviii] According to Paul Connerton, 'present factors tend to influence—some might want to say distort—our recollections of the past' (1989, 2).

[xxxix] According to an article in *The Sunday Tribune*, 6 April 1947, by this stage firmly advocating the partition of Punjab: 'What has happened in the Rawalpindi and Multan divisions and in other parts of the province has compelled the minorities to think of partition as the only solution [for] their miseries and sad plight. It is an unfortunate solution which may lead to fratricidal feuds later on, but who is to blame? The League has given a call for the civil war'.

[xl] 'The Sikh Plan in Action', 1948, Acc No. 1518 [Prof Kirpal Singh's Manuscript Collection, Khalsa College, Amritsar], 8-9.

[xli] 'Interview with Ajit Singh Sarhadi conducted by Dr HariDev Sharma', Delhi, 22 June 1973, Acc No. 653 [Oral History Collection, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi], 47.

[xlii] On the issue of communal relations in Punjab, the then Governor, Sir Evan Jenkins, remarked: 'I need hardly remind you that in a district where one community is an overwhelming majority, a heavy moral responsibility rests upon that community, the members of which should regard the minorities as under their protection' (*The Tribune*, 9 January 1947).

[xliii] In demonstration of this, the then Maharajah of Patiala, Yadavindra Singh, in a letter to Nehru dated 10 November 1947, seemingly justifying non-Muslim led attacks against the Muslims across east Punjab, said: 'People *in this part of the country*…have undergone terrible sufferings, and they strongly feel that beyond a certain stage non-communalism assumes the force of cowardice' [emphasis added] (quoted in Copland 2002, 692).

[xliv] In this case, the non-refugees would identify with their 'non-Muslim' religious identity rather than Sikh, and hence incorporate into 'their' memory the Direct Action sparked 'Great Calcutta Killings' in July/August 1946 and Noakahli/Tipperah in early October 1946.