

**Partition Narratives on Screen: A Study of *Earth* and *Pinjar*****Dr. Neha Sharma**

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**Abstract:**

The Partition of India in 1947 remains one of the most defining historical events in South Asian history, deeply influencing its socio-cultural and political fabric. This paper explores how cinematic adaptations of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* and Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* reinterpret the complex realities of Partition through film. These literary works have long been celebrated for their vivid portrayal of communal violence, displacement, and the enduring trauma experienced by individuals and communities. Their film adaptations, *Earth* (1998) by Deepa Mehta and *Pinjar* (2003) by Chandraprakash Dwivedi, provide compelling visual narratives that humanize historical events while preserving the emotional depth of the original texts. The paper examines how these films translate literary elements into cinematic language, employing narrative techniques, characterization, and visual symbolism to convey the psychological and cultural impacts of Partition. Special attention is given to the portrayal of women, whose experiences of abduction, loss, and resilience serve as central themes in both works. By comparing the novels and their adaptations, the paper highlights the power of cinema to visualize historical trauma while respecting literary authenticity. It argues that these films go beyond entertainment, serving as cultural texts that preserve and reinterpret history for contemporary audiences.

**Keywords:-** Partition, Trauma, Cinematic Adaptation, Ice Candy Man, Pinjar**Introduction**

The Partition of India in 1947 was a pivotal event in South Asian history, leading to the creation of two independent nations, India and Pakistan. The British colonial rule in India, which lasted nearly 200 years, came to an end in August 1947, but its legacy significantly shaped the partition process. British rule in India had created deep divisions within Indian society. The British employed a policy of divide and rule, exacerbating religious, cultural, and social differences among the diverse population. The religious divide between Hindus and Muslims had been a growing concern. The demand for a separate nation for Muslims, led by the All-India Muslim League under Muhammad Ali Jinnah, grew stronger in the 1940s due to fears of Hindu majoritarianism and the desire for a Muslim-majority state.

The Indian National Congress, led by figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, advocated for a united, independent India. However, their vision clashed with the Muslim League's idea of a separate Muslim state. The years leading up to independence were marked by significant violence and communal tensions between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. The situation worsened with the partition announcement, leading to widespread riots, massacres, and displacement of millions. Urvashi Butaliya remarks, "For millions of people, Partition was not just a political event; it was a deeply personal tragedy." (Butalia 4)

The partition resulted in one of the largest migrations in history, with millions of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs forced to leave their homes to move to the newly formed nations. The communal violence and displacement led to immense loss of life and property, leaving scars that continue to affect the region's politics and society to this day. India became a secular republic, while Pakistan was initially divided into two parts, West Pakistan (present-day Pakistan) and East Pakistan (which later became Bangladesh after a war of independence in 1971). The partition's legacy remains a significant aspect of the collective memory of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, shaping their identities, politics, and relationships. Gita Vishwanath and Salma Malik rightly quote Mushirul Hassan regarding two parallel events in the history of the nation, "No other country in the twentieth century has seen two such contrary movements taking place at the same time. If one was popular nationalist movement..., the other was the counter movement of Partition, marked by violence, cruelty, bloodshed, displacement, and massacres." (Yagnik 35)

Literature has played a profound role in portraying the human stories and impact of the Partition of India in 1947. Authors, poets, and playwrights have used their creative abilities to capture the emotional, psychological, and societal upheavals caused by this historic event. These narratives humanize the historical event, portraying its impact on ordinary people, their struggles, losses, and resilience. It showcases the diverse experiences of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and others affected by the Partition. It captures the complexity of emotions, ranging from fear and trauma to hope and survival. Through vivid storytelling and evocative language, literature helps readers empathize with the characters' experiences. It fosters an emotional connection, allowing readers to comprehend the magnitude of suffering and displacement caused by the Partition.

Some notable literary works are *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, *Tamas* by Bhisham Sahni, *Ice-Candy Man* (also published as *Cracking India*) by Bapsi Sidhwa, *Azadi* by Chaman Nahal, *The Other Side of Silence* by Urvashi Butaliya and many more. *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh depicts the impact of Partition on a Punjabi village, highlighting communal tensions and human suffering. *Tamas* by Bhisham Sahni explores the violence and chaos during the Partition through the lens of a riot-torn town. *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa narrates the story of a young girl from Lahore, offering a child's perspective on the chaos and horrors of Partition. She remarks in this book, "Partition didn't merely mean the division of a country but also the shattering of dreams and families." (Sidhwa 83)

The depiction of India's Partition in literature and cinema transcends mere historical recounting; it delves into the emotional, psychological, and socio-political dimensions of this traumatic event. The narratives of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* and Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* are emblematic of this multidimensional portrayal, providing nuanced perspectives on identity, displacement, and survival. Partition was not merely a geopolitical event but a deeply personal catastrophe that tore apart families, communities, and cultural bonds. These literary works emphasize how the violence, displacement, and fractured identities stemming from Partition reverberate through individual lives, particularly those of women, who were often reduced to symbols of communal honor.

In cinematic adaptations like Deepa Mehta's *Earth* and Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar*, the filmmakers reinterpret these stories by visually capturing the emotional and cultural ruptures of the time. The visual medium allows for an immersive exploration of themes such as forced migration, religious intolerance, and the breakdown of human relationships. Through evocative cinematography, period-specific set designs, and powerful performances, these films translate the abstract horrors of Partition into emotionally resonant narratives. They serve as poignant reminders of the human cost of political decisions, urging audiences to reflect on the enduring impact of historical trauma. As cultural artifacts, these adaptations contribute to the collective memory of Partition, bridging generational gaps and fostering cross-cultural dialogues. They underscore the role of art in preserving history, reminding us that the stories of the past continue to shape contemporary identities and inter-community dynamics.

*Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Pinjar* by Amrita Pritam are two poignant literary works that vividly depict the human experiences and emotional turmoil during the Partition of India in 1947. Bapsi Sidhwa, a Pakistani novelist of Parsi descent, offers a gripping narrative through the eyes of a young girl named Lenny, living in Lahore during the Partition. The story unfolds against the backdrop of communal violence and the upheaval caused by the Partition. Lenny, who is disabled and observant, narrates the events she witnesses, including the growing tensions between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Sidhwa's novel delves into the trauma, chaos, and loss experienced by individuals caught in the midst of the Partition's violence. It portrays the innocence shattered by communal hatred and the poignant human stories of love, survival, and betrayal.

Amrita Pritam, a renowned Punjabi writer and poet, penned *Pinjar* in 1950, which later became a classic in Punjabi literature. The novel revolves around Puro, a Hindu girl abducted by a Muslim man named Rashid during the Partition riots. The narrative focuses on Puro's struggle for identity and freedom as she navigates the complexities of love, loss, and societal prejudices. Pritam's *Pinjar* explores themes of displacement, trauma, and the plight of women in a society torn apart by communal violence. It highlights the resilience and inner strength of its protagonist, portraying the impact of the Partition on individuals' lives and identities. She remarks, "The tragedy of Partition is the living, walking death of millions of people." (Pritam 112)

Both novels offer compelling insights into the emotional and psychological turmoil experienced by individuals and communities during the tumultuous period of the Partition. Through their narratives, Sidhwa and Pritam capture the human dimensions of the tragedy, portraying the resilience, pain, and complexities of the era, leaving a lasting impact on readers by depicting the intimate human stories against the backdrop of historical events.

In both the novels the trauma, loss, and resilience of individuals affected by the Partition of India in 1947 are vividly portrayed through the characters' experiences and emotions. Through the eyes of Lenny, a young girl with polio, the novel *Ice Candy Man* captures the turmoil and trauma experienced by civilians amid escalating violence. Lenny's innocence is shattered as she witnesses the horrors of communal riots and the breakdown of societal norms. The narrative reflects the loss of innocence among the characters, especially children, who are exposed to brutality and hatred beyond their comprehension. The trauma they endure shapes their perceptions of the world. Despite the chaos and brutality, the characters exhibit resilience. Lenny's narration showcases how people, especially women, find ways to survive, adapt, and support each other in the face of adversity. Sidhwa portrays the bonds formed between individuals from different communities during this tumultuous period, highlighting moments of empathy and solidarity amidst the violence.

In the novel *Pinjar* by Amrita Pritam Puro's abduction by a Muslim man during the Partition represents the larger experience of women who faced abduction and displacement during the communal violence. Pritam portrays the emotional and physical suffering of Puro, symbolizing the anguish of countless women affected by the upheaval. Puro's struggle to reclaim her identity and find a sense of belonging in a fractured society illustrates the profound personal losses suffered by individuals torn away from their roots and cultural moorings. Pritam portrays Puro's resilience and inner strength as she navigates the challenges posed by her circumstances. Puro's determination to rebuild her life despite immense suffering reflects the resilience of those affected by the Partition. Puro's journey becomes a symbol of hope and survival, representing the strength of individuals who endure trauma and devastation. Both novels depict the profound impact of the Partition on individuals, showcasing their resilience in the face of overwhelming trauma and loss. Through compelling storytelling and vivid characterizations, Sidhwa and Pritam capture the human spirit's ability to endure, survive, and seek solace amid the chaos and tragedy of history.

Partition became the most alluring theme for cinema. There are many examples of films based on the event of partition. Many of them are *Kashmeer* (1951), *Garam Hawa* (1973), *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Tamas* (1998) and *Gadar-Ek Prem Katha* (2001). This research paper is a study of two movies based on the theme of partition. These movies are *Earth* (1998) and *Pinjar* (2003).

#### **Earth: A Cinematic Adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man***

*Earth* is a 1998 film adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man*. Directed by Deepa Mehta, the movie is part of her Elemental Trilogy, preceded by *Fire* and followed

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by *Water*. Set in Lahore during the Partition of India in 1947, the film skillfully captures the emotional turmoil and societal upheaval through the lens of various characters.

The film unfolds against the backdrop of escalating tensions and communal violence between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in Lahore. The story is narrated from the perspective of a young Parsi girl named Lenny, who is disabled, akin to the novel's protagonist. The film vividly portrays the communal tensions and violence that erupt during the Partition, depicting the chaos and horror faced by ordinary people caught in the crossfire of religious and political conflicts. It explores the impact of the Partition on personal relationships, particularly the inter-communal relationships and friendships that are tested and torn apart by the political upheaval. The film highlights the experiences and struggles of women amidst the societal upheaval, focusing on their resilience, sacrifices, and the vulnerabilities they face during the turbulent period.

#### **Characters and Performances:**

**Lenny:** Played by Maia Sethna, Lenny serves as the observer, offering insights into the unfolding events and the emotional journey of the characters.

**Ayah:** Played by Nandita Das, Ayah, a beautiful Hindu woman, becomes a central figure whose life is deeply affected by the Partition's violence.

This movie received critical acclaim for its powerful storytelling, performances, and its portrayal of the human impact of historical events. The film sparked controversy and was banned in some regions due to its depiction of sensitive themes related to the Partition and its aftermath. Deepa Mehta's direction and the cinematography capture the period's ambiance and turmoil, transporting viewers to the era of the Partition. The film's soundtrack, composed by A. R. Rahman, complements the narrative, enhancing the emotional impact of the story.

*Earth* stands as a compelling cinematic adaptation that effectively captures the essence of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel, providing a poignant and thought-provoking portrayal of the human stories and societal impact amidst the chaos and tragedy of the Partition.

#### **Pinjar: Cinematic Adaptation of Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar***

*Pinjar* is a 2003 Indian film directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi, based on the novel of the same name written by Amrita Pritam. The film offers a powerful and emotionally charged portrayal of the Partition of India in 1947, focusing on the experiences of individuals, particularly women, amidst the communal violence and its aftermath.

The story is set against the backdrop of the Partition, depicting the upheaval and chaos caused by the communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. The narrative revolves around Puro, a Hindu girl abducted by a Muslim man, Rashid, during the violence. The film follows Puro's harrowing journey as she grapples with her abduction, her attempts to return to her family, and the challenges she faces in the process. *Pinjar* delves into the human tragedy of the Partition, showcasing the emotional trauma, loss, and the plight of individuals who became victims of the communal violence and its aftermath. The film focuses on the

resilience and agency of women during times of adversity, portraying their strength in the face of immense challenges and societal pressures. Puro's struggle to find her identity and sense of belonging after being forcibly separated from her family highlights the emotional turmoil faced by many individuals displaced during the Partition.

#### **Characters and Performances:**

**Puro:** Played by Urmila Matondkar, Puro's portrayal earned critical acclaim for the depth of emotion and strength she brought to the character.

**Rashid:** Played by Manoj Bajpayee, the conflicted abductor, adds layers of complexity to the character, exploring the human aspect of a man caught in the midst of political and communal tensions.

*Pinjar* received praise for its powerful storytelling, performances, and its sensitive portrayal of the human impact of historical events. The film garnered several awards and nominations for its direction, performances, and thematic relevance. The film captures the period's authenticity, effectively portraying the ambiance and chaos of the Partition era. The film's soundtrack, composed by Uttam Singh, complements the narrative, enhancing the emotional depth of the story. *Pinjar* stands as a poignant cinematic adaptation, faithfully portraying Amrita Pritam's novel and offering a moving depiction of the human stories and emotional turmoil amid the turbulent backdrop of the Partition.

The cinematic adaptations of *Ice-Candy-Man* (titled *Earth*) and *Pinjar* have contributed significantly to audiences' understanding of the Partition's historical complexities and the human experiences intertwined with this tumultuous period. Deepa Mehta's *Earth* provides a vivid visual narrative of the communal strife and chaos during the Partition. It effectively captures the historical backdrop, showcasing the violence, fear, and the societal ruptures that marked the era. Whereas Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar* delves into the personal struggles and tragedies of individuals affected by the Partition. It offers a nuanced portrayal of the human tragedies, displacement, and the emotional turmoil experienced by the characters.

Both films humanize the historical events by focusing on individual stories and emotions, evoking empathy from audiences. They offer a lens into the personal struggles, resilience, and sacrifices made by ordinary people amidst extraordinary circumstances. Both adaptations prominently feature women protagonists and their resilience amid the chaos. They shed light on the often-overlooked experiences of women who faced abduction, displacement, and societal pressures during the Partition. These films serve as educational tools, providing a visual and emotional understanding of the Partition's complexities and its impact on communities. They contribute to preserving historical memory and fostering discussions about the shared history of India and Pakistan.

The enduring impact of these adaptations lies in their portrayal of the cultural and societal fabric that was torn apart during the Partition. They continue to resonate with audiences, prompting reflections on the importance of communal harmony and the

repercussions of historical divisions. The films create an emotional connection with audiences, offering a more personal and empathetic understanding of the Partition. They humanize history, allowing viewers to engage with the past on a deeper, more empathetic level.

### **Conclusion**

The cinematic adaptations of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* and Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* serve as powerful cultural texts that bridge the gap between history and human experience. By translating literary narratives into compelling visual stories, the films *Earth* and *Pinjar* illuminate the personal and collective trauma of India's Partition in ways that resonate deeply with contemporary audiences. Through evocative storytelling, strong character portrayals, and symbolic imagery, these adaptations capture the complexities of displacement, loss, and resilience. The exploration of gendered experiences, particularly the struggles faced by women, underscores the enduring relevance of these stories. The filmmakers' interpretations do not merely retell historical events but create immersive emotional experiences that connect viewers to the past while inviting reflection on present societal issues. These cinematic works extend the life of the original literary texts by fostering dialogue about Partition's historical and cultural legacy. They highlight how art, whether through literature or film, can preserve memory, inspire empathy, and contribute to a deeper understanding of shared histories. As enduring works of historical reflection, *Earth* and *Pinjar* continue to shape cultural memory and identity, ensuring that the stories of Partition remain relevant across generations.

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