

Memories, Nation and its Cartographical Imagination

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Abstract: *The 1947 Radcliffe line not only resulted in the Partition of India but had permanent ramifications in the lives of the people belonging to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The change in the cartography of the state is still visible in the complicated lives and identity politics of the refugees from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Under the broader rubric of mass displacement, permanent exile and loss of life and hearth, it is pertinent to understand various political, geographical and cultural categories that have come to define the lives of the displaced communities (who are now) living in the India Administered Jammu & Kashmir (IAJK). This paper is a part of a broader study that was conducted among more than hundred Hindu and Sikh families that are now settled both in Jammu and Delhi. The visual recreation of maps of the lost home and land becomes an important exercise for the uprooted families to commemorate past memories. It is noteworthy to observe the regional sub-identities within the meta narrative of nation, national identity and nationalism.*

Keywords: *Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir, Identity Politics, Memory Maps, Cartography, Line of Control, Exile, Lost Homes.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

This paper makes an attempt to understand the broader categories of nation, nationalism, border, boundary, Line of Control. The subsequent geographical, political and cultural impact of both physical, cultural border, boundary and its ramifications on the lives of the displaced families that crossed the Line of Control in 1948 and the subsequent years. Resulting in mass displacement of communities who had to leave both their home and hearth and search of new geographical locations for habitation. As the Hindu and Sikh population of these communities are now settled majorly in the Northern parts of India. In this paper, the communities under discussion are those communities who are currently settled in Jammu and Delhi region in India.

After the Partition of India, post 1948 these displaced communities are caught in a constant flux of identity formation. This is visible vis a vis the “relative identities” that have formed due to a heightened sense of identity consciousness within the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In some cases, these sub-identities challenge the homogenous idea of a “national community” within the broader framework of Nationalism.

2. Theory:

There are several debates on formation of nation, nationalism and identity politics. There are few which are pertinent to understand the socio-political formations of identities within a region as well as nation. To begin with the famous sociologist Anderson, says that nations are “imagined political identities” that are socially constructed (Anderson 2006). This idea of Nationalism rests upon the myth of a national community, that believes, people of the same nation have a common ancestry. These imagined or mythic geographical entities do correspond to historical realities but at the same time are distorted to create a “national myth” that often serves to a “political necessity”. On the other hand, the primordialists state that nationals are biological and never changing natural creations that always existed. Further adding, that the national bonds that are built on kinship are deeply embedded into human mind (Karanou 14).

Historically the idea of the nation emerged during the French and American revolutions that is during the eighteenth century. The purpose of Nationalism as a phenomenon primarily rose as a political desire to create a connection between the idea of a “national identity” with the of the “political demand”. This was exemplified by the existence of first nations of France and America post revolutions that symbolized both political power as well as sovereignty (Karanou 15)

Here, it is important to bring out the difference between the national identity and ethnic identity. Though national identity is a modern concept, the ethnic identity is a much more ancient phenomena that points out towards an ethnic group – with a common sense of belonging as a result of several common factors such as, language, cultural practices, religion and customs. These commonalities are a product of a long historical process. Such ethnic communities also believe in the “myth of a common ancestry”. As pointed out by Eriksen ethnic identity is not always a political identity. It does not demand upon the state such as the nationalists. The nationalists, “insist that ethnic borders must

coincide with political or administrative boundaries”, (Eriksen 99) “Nation- states are seen as created by and for the ethnolinguistically and, even, ethno-religiously defined nations” (Brubaker)

Karanou claims that those ethnic groups that follow a political process often become or transition from a politicized group to nationalists that support the idea of “ethno- national homogeneity”. Thus, making this homogenous identity as one of their main goals (Karanou 15) This can be testified by the hyper- nationalism that is prevalent in the Hindu dominant “refugee” areas both in Jammu city as well as Lajpat Nagar, Delhi. Few of the ethnic community group members are the political representatives of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The myth of the national community has been discussed by several scholars. In the following chapters, one argument that finds resonance with the area under is the ethno- symbolist theory by A.D Smith and the critique of ethno-national identities by Walker Connor who elucidates on the emotional and psychological impact of the “national community” and the idea of kingship that unites groups and identities into one nation. This “identification and loyalty” to one’s nation lies in the believe of groups/ communities – that they all are ancestrally connected. This myth of common ancestry creates strong emotional bonds between the members of a nation. Thus, giving birth to a common sense of belonging to an “imagined/ mythical nation” (Connor 16).

It is interesting to note, the fact that these national communities/ groups are a culmination of a modern phenomenon which is often masked by the creation of this common “national identity”. Wherein the ancient ethnic memories both material and immaterial are often distorted, manipulated and coerced to serve the process of this political creation. On observing various ethnic national groups, one finds that these groups are under a process of constant evolution both socially as well as politically (Connor 16) Another social anthropologist Gellner who points out the role of various political institutions rather than “human agency” in identity formations resulting in the creation of nation and national culture. He says that though the creation of nation was a historical need, but nations came into existence during the process of modernisation and industrialisation. On the other hand, Connor believes that the phenomenon of Nationalism cannot be explained purely by rationality since it has a strong emotional base. Ethno- conflict scholars such as Donald L. Horowitz and Rogers Peterson argue that, “instrumentalist explanations that focus on the creation and use of national identities by the elite for particular political goals are inadequate to explain the intensity of conflicts involving ethno-national identities” (Karanou 18).

3. DISCUSSION:

3.1 Geographical Borders and Cultural Boundaries: In common parlance we often come across the term border and boundary being used interchangeably. Many scholars use the term “Border” to represent a territorial line that is an external geographical division meant to separate states and regions. “Boundary” on the other hand, signify internal cultural and social differences that are not represented by physical division lines. Boundary as a term is often used to, represents homogeneity. They signify identity, a place of belonging and particular culture (Slavec 16).

On the other hand, borders could separate or independently support region/s with in a particular state, expansion of a current state, or a claim made by ethnic community to separate from an existing state and join their co-ethnics in an adjoining state. In the case of the state of Jammu & Kashmir both the border and the cultural boundary has been shifting post- 1948. The Radcliffe line that delineated India from the newly formed nation state of Pakistan forms the International border (IB). There were two wars that were fought in 1948 and 1971 over the territorial claim to Kashmir between India and Pakistan. But it was only after India -Sino war of 1962 that the Line of Control came into existence. L.O.C is a ceasefire line that came into existence after the mutual agreement of both Indian and Pakistan government. The border separating the Indian and Pakistan territory, is one of the few international boundaries that is heavily fenced and floodlit that even in the night it is visible. The well-lit International Border with security lights has a distinct orange hue that can be even viewed from the International Space Station. In one of the photographs that was published by the NASA earth observatory, apart from the cluster of city lights at Karachi one can see the contiguous border running along the Himalayas and the Arabian Sea.

Such geographical borders are an outcome of political creations that aim at delineating different political units or entities. As pointed out by James Z. Schwartz the physical demarcations of borders fail to contain the influence of culture, language and practices (Schwartz 184). This can be witnessed in the languages spoken in Kotli, Mirpur, Bimber, Muzaffrabad and the similarity of cultural practices on both sides of L.O.C. Many scholars have argued that the relation between cultural boundaries and geographical borders often creates a “unique third country” thus resulting into a dynamic relation between the centre and periphery, where “borderlands are a complicated zone of cultural and physical confrontation and accommodation where interaction shapes policy” (Salafia 4).

3.2 Memory Map of Mirpur city and the story of Displacement of C.P Gupta:

This section makes an attempt to understand how a first-generation survivor escaped the carnage of 1947. His attempt in (re)constructing the “image” of a permanently lost region through memory that is now completely lost after the construction of Mangla Dam.

Since most of the cartographical locations in Mirpur city changed after 1947. The locations and markers that first generation survivors often recounted were from their vivid recollections of their past and visual memories. One of the most vivid imagery recreated from a 'mental map' that I found belonged to the collection of Mr Chander Prakash Gupta (C.P Gupta), who is currently residing in Jammu city. He recreated from his memory the whole western side of Mirpur city where he lived till November 1947. It is intriguing to register, minute specificities that are marked on the map, such as different kinds of *Pulli* (narrow wooden bridges) that internally connected Mirpur city, *Khad* (empty flat space), seasonal *Nallah's* (open drains) and locations of various temples and shrines. Though he has not received any formal training in arts, his portrayal of the city and minute details reflect his artistic bend of mind. He perfectly recreates the drawing through his narrativization of Mirpur city and its landmarks.

The account of C.P Gupta was as vivid as his recreated image of Mirpur city. His narrative was marked with vivid recollections of dates, kilometres travelled and the landmarks they crossed while being evacuated from Kotli by the Indian Army. He left from Mirpur when he was seventeen years old. Before people expatriated from Mirpur city, he says that, "we were house arrested for three months in our own city. Coming back from his reverie and detailed recounting of past, he hangs the framed "memory map" of Mirpur city to its designated spot that is the wall of his living room.

Unlike the official prototype of a map, which is codified and is defined within a system of interpretation in which various signs and symbols present signify or are attributed a standardized meaning. A meaning that is more or less similar in any official reproduction of a geographical space, C.P Gupta's "memory map" is a testimony to "counter geography" and "counter cartography". While extrapolating from the works of Lusia Passerini on visual memory, she says that mental maps help to "focalize memory". The visual memory itself is never static, it exists within the mobility of both body and mind. The mental mapping of a geographical region is often produced in a shared space and is an outcome of a dialogic self. It is not only mapping of a space but also of time, where an individual travel from a remote past to a different future. "Acts of mapping could be considered as acts that assign new meanings to places and movements as human beings move through time and space among different environments and develop new needs, or simply grow up" (Passerini 25). These "mental maps" that are seen in a constant dialogical conversation with both its creator and the community for which they are being produced often become a part of next generations popular memory. For example, every year since the time Jammu & Kashmir state has taken cognisance and few initiatives to commemorate the people who died during 1947. For almost five to six decades the state government of J&K didn't take any concrete steps to make the refugees or displaced people from PAJK more inclusive within the larger social fabric of the Jammu region. The state's policies, commemorative statues or memorials are a result of the initiative and consistent pleas of concerned people and representatives of displaced communities within the state machinery. C.P Gupta's memory map of Mirpur city is a regular feature in J&K's most circulated Daily newspaper. Thus, C.P Gupta's memory map finds resonance in the popular memory of Jammu region. The map is not only a reproduction of a bygone past, but it is a tangible memory that resonates with many first-generation survivors belonging to Mirpur region. The reproduction of the map along with half page article in a daily newspaper, rescues the memory of Mirpur from the abyss of forgetting. Since, the old Mirpur city no longer exists, as the city and its adjoining areas got submerged in the waters of Mangla Dam, which was constructed between 1960- 1965. Majority of the population that remained in Pakistan Administered Jammu and Kashmir known as "Azad Kashmir" in Pakistan was given work permits by the Pakistani government to work in Britain. Many of the first generation, women who were left behind post displaced and were either abducted or married to the men in "Azad Kashmir" also migrated to Britain. The journey of these people settling in Britain is re iterated in many of the oral records that were documented post 1947. The areas of Bradford, Birmingham, Northern areas of England have a huge majority of population that belong mainly to the areas of Dadyal and Mirpur, now a part of "Azad Kashmir".

It is only through memory maps and narratives the image of old Mirpur is recreated through the first-generation survivors and their oral narratives that are passed down to the subsequent generations.

4. FINDINGS & CONCLUSION:

One could observe how mapping has helped people belonging to displaced communities to preserve the memories of the past in a tangible form.

Such tangible memories become instrumental in proving "claim" to a new geographical location in lieu of the "memory map or plan of a lost home". This was also a government policy as Under the Rehabilitation Act initiated by the government of India, the evacuee's property or piece of land was allotted to a displaced family in lieu of a map of the house which was either accepted or rejected by the government officials. Only those families whose maps/ plans of their previous houses (till 1947) were accepted by the government were allowed to live in the evacuee property. The memory map becomes a living testimony of a 'ghost city' as in a city that no longer exists on the geographical landscape of either India or Pakistan as evident in one of the above discussed sub-sections that enumerated on the "memory map" drawn by C.P Gupta. His map also finds resonance with the emotions and memories of displaced people. People who were unable to provide a tangible form to their intangible memories of displacement.

Thus, the act of memorialization is embedded with both remnants rather the process that entails the preservation of past memory as well as memory that coerces the “wrongs of history”. A traumatic past that led to mass displacement of fourteen million people and death of two million people – one of the worst holocausts known in the history of South Asia.

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13. The term mental map was coined by cognitive phycologist Edward C. Tolman in 1948. He devised this theory while conducting an experiment between rats and maze. “A cognitive map (sometimes called a mental map or mental model) is a type of mental representation which serves an individual to acquire, code, store, recall, and decode information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in their everyday or metaphorical spatial environment. The term was later generalized by some researchers, especially in the field of operations research, to refer to a kind of semantic network representing an individual's personal knowledge or schemas”. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_map.
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