

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS: A STUDY OF SELECTED SHORT FILMS ON THE 1984 ANTI-SIKH MASSACRES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the theme of fragmentation and focuses specifically on the Sikh massacres of 1984 which followed the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi when she was gunned down by her Sikh body guards. Thirty-two years down the line no perpetrators of the mob attacks and mass killings of the Sikhs have been brought to justice. The Indian sub-continent enfolds, within what appears to be the borders of a single nation, a bewildering complex of racial religious, social and cultural identities and any attempt to over-simplify the forces of division and conflict runs the risk of gross misrepresentation. More recently, the deliberated muting of the issues of justice against the Sikhs are apparent in the banning of the two latest films on the subject. In the present paper three short films have been analysed: “Injustice 1984,” directed by Jarnail Singh; “Jagjeet” (2010), directed by Kavanjit Singh and “Kush” (2013), directed by Subhashish Bhutiani. These films depict real-life stories of persons from the Sikh community and explore the impact of religious intolerance and the violence of the Sikh massacres from the perspective of the victims. It seeks to highlight concerns regarding religious intolerance, questions of identity, legal silences and deliberated muting of the subject over the past years and the need for a complex critical evaluation of the responsibility of the state and its socio-institutional bodies towards its citizens.

KEYWORDS: Religious Intolerance, Silences, Identity, 1984 anti-Sikh Pogrom, Minor Cinema, Injustice

RESUMEN *Intolerancia religiosa y adaptaciones al cine: Una investigación de cortometrajes sobre la masacre anti-Sij de 1984 en la India*

Este ensayo explora el tema de la fragmentación y se centra específicamente en la masacre sij de 1984, que siguió al asesinato de la primer ministro de la India Indira Gandhi, quien fue tiroteada por sus guardaespaldas sij. Treinta y dos años después, los culpables de la masacre en masa no han sido llevados ante el juez. El subcontinente indio se muestra, dentro de lo que parecen ser los bordes de una sola nación, como un complejo confuso de distintas razas, religiones e identidades. Cualquier intento de sobresimplificar la fuerte división que existe, conlleva el riesgo de distorsionar la realidad. Recientemente, el deliberado silencio ante los asuntos de justicia en contra de los sij son obvios: se han prohibido las dos últimas películas sobre el tema. En este ensayo, se analizan tres cortometrajes. “Injusticia 1984”, dirigida por Jarnail Singh; “Jagjeet” (2010), por Kavanjit Singh y “Kush” (2013), por

Subhashish Bhutiani. Estas películas muestran la vida real de gente de la comunidad sij, y exploran el impacto de la intolerancia religiosa y la violencia de las masacres desde la perspectiva de la víctima. Se subraya la importancia de las cuestiones de identidad, la intolerancia religiosa, los silencios legales y el mudismo sobre el tema que ha habido en los últimos años, y la necesidad de una evaluación crítica y compleja de la responsabilidad del estado y sus insituciones hacia sus ciudadanos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Intolerancia religiosa, silencios, identidad, 1984, masacre anti-sij, cine minoritario, injusticia

I

***Chaurasi: Revisiting the Past*¹**

The idea of people coming together as communities is very complex, particularly in the present world of globalisation, where mobility across the world has grown immensely. This has led to the formulation of new identities. These identities get divided into new categories (on the basis of community, caste, colour and other discriminating aspects) and a feeling of distinctiveness, accompanies the sense of belonging. The paper aims to study how identities are a consequence of a highly complicated matrix of experiencing the self as distinct. This may result from certain events and experiences of individuals who comply with particular communities, their ethnic affinities or religious allegiances. The anti-Sikh carnage in 1984 in India is one such event, when Sikh people were targeted due to the identity markers² they displayed. The assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi was followed by the mass-killing of Sikhs on the pretext that she was gunned by her Sikh bodyguards. The turban, worn by Sikhs, became a significant identity marker, which led to Sikhs being distinguished from Indian Hindu populations and other communities.

Since then, '84, called *chaurasi* in Punjabi/ Hindi, has become a standardized term, denoting the pogrom as a fixed site of memory. Often during the formal and informal gatherings of Sikh communities' people would commemorate *chaurasi*, assess the loss in terms of life and materials, and sympathise with each other. Thus, the term *chaurasi* led to revisiting the past as it semantically suggested a sense of historicity. This revisiting of the past by the community generated a sense of belonging in a shared trauma that needed to be revoked so that history doesn't repeat itself in any community.

¹ 84 in Punjabi is called *chaurasi*. In the present paper it denotes the 1984 pogrom

² The Sikhs grow hair and beards and wear turbans. Beards and turbans are identity markers.

Chaurasi became more significant for the Sikh than for other communities. This event marked an inerasable memory of an unforgettable past for the Sikh, who considered it full of disparaging insult for the community. Viewed as traitors and betrayers, the state considered the Sikhs as promoters of anti-national activities. (Chakravarti, 1994: 2726) They began questioning their sense of belonging as citizens in their country of birth. They felt disempowered and dissociated with the justification received from the centre for what is described as a state-led pogrom (Chakravarti, 2005: 3795). As the centre suggested that, major populations of the so-called minority group (the Sikhs) were involved in the anti-national movements. In addition, a number of rumours spread: about how the Sikhs celebrated Mrs Gandhi's assassination by distributing sweets, about how Sikhs had poisoned the water or how trains full of Sikhs were coming from Punjab to take their revenge for the death of thousands killed. These rumours sought to provide a justification for the very act of mass-violence across India. The majority groups, such as Hindus, particularly loyalists of the Congress party,³ turned to streets". They were mourning the death of the Prime Minister, toward whom they felt filial emotions. They wreaked revenge by slaying the members of the community to which the assassins belonged. Thus, men wearing turbans and beards were marked and thus, killed in every corner of the city.

In this connection, George Herbert Mead's suggestion that the social condition leads to the "self" becoming an object is apt. He lays emphasis on how structures construct the "self". He explains that though individuals are different, they are categorised in a common structure as members of a community. Rights are determined on common attitudes in the community:

The individual possesses a self only in relation to the other members of his social group; and the structure of his self expresses or reflects the behaviour pattern of this social group to which he belongs, just as does the structure of the self of every other individual belonging to this social group. (Mead, 2003: 40)

Thus, during *chaurasi*, the manner in which people were marked as different constructed the "self" as an object. Mead explains this concept in relation to children, where there is a double within the self. During *chaurasi*, the turban (or any of the five k's⁴) became a very important

³ As Mrs Gandhi was a Hindu and belonged to the Congress Party. She was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards.

⁴ The Sikhs have five identity markers: Kesh (Hair) Kara (Bangle) Kanga (comb that they keep in their turban) Kirpan (Little sword) and Kachaira (Underwear).

identity marker. The Sikh-men/families were spotted and targeted. Different behavioral patterns were visible amongst the targeted Sikhs as many people cut their hair and shaved off their beards to mingle with crowds, in order to save their lives. This event led to a “dramatic and a sudden transformation of the community” (Chakravarti, 1994: 2722) A community that was known for its valour, being targeted by the state (Mitta, 2007: 40), suddenly seemed vulnerable. Followed by thirty-one years of injustice on the legal front, evidence against the prominent leaders, (that was being continuously suppressed⁵), seem to be an attempt at weakening the surviving victims by controlling their capacity to counter organise. (Dawson, 1999: 48) The site during the pogrom was a site where “symbolic dominance” of the language through slogans⁶ acquired control over the masses. The term “symbolic dominance”, borrowed from Bourdieu, suggests how social groups used linguistic practices to acquire control over others (Bourdieu, 1991: 147). Several slogans shouted by the mob were one means of controlling the masses. These slogans charged the community as guilty of an unforgivable crime, for having killed the mother of the nation. For this, the victims were libeled and later on legal justice was denied to them. On the other hand, perpetrators moved scot-free. (Mitta, 2007: 48-49) Representations on the subject met deliberate muting, much witnessed lately, even after thirty years, with the banning of recent films on the subject.⁷

The three decades following the '84 Carnage, have been years of silence regarding the event. Very few writers, critics, poets and dramatists have written on the subject. The 1947 partition also witnessed a similar silence regarding the violence that accompanied it, but only for a decade. The sixties (1960 onwards) witnessed a never-ending flow of writings, renderings, discussions, representations and various forms of expressions through TV serials, films, creative writing, archival and academic research. On the other hand, the 1984 carnage has met a distinct muting on the subject, perhaps due to political involvement or because of the gruesome nature of violence. Mitta and Phoolka in *When a Tree Shook Delhi: The 1984 Carnage and its Aftermath*

⁵ Moreover, thirty-one years after, no leaders have been punished for their involvement as many congress leaders were involved in instigating the mob and were involved in the killing of Sikhs and the abduction of women.

⁶ Several slogans were shouted by the mobs when they came on the streets to kill the people. “*Khoon ka badla Khoon*” (An Eye for an Eye: khoon means blood) “*In Sardaron Gadaron ko Maro Inhon ne Humari Maan ko mara hai*” (Kill the traitors, these Sikhs, who have killed our mother)

⁷ For details: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Film-on-1984-riots-banned/articleshow/40639997.cms> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWBp39sQqGU>

provide details of the involvement of leaders of the Congress Party, particularly H.K. Bhagat, Jadish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar. Based on the affidavits and the accounts of the eyewitnesses, they suggest, “the massacre was organized by congress leaders and then executed with the collusion of the police.” (37) Amitav Ghosh projects the writer’s dilemma in writing on the subject by addressing his own inability to write on this subject for about a decade. He suggests that the writer needs to write with responsibility and any carelessness in the matter may cost life:

...a way as to endorse terrorism or repression, can add easily to the problem: in such incendiary circumstances, words cost lives, and it is only appropriate that those who deal in words should pay scrupulous attention to what they say. (Ghosh 1995; np)

Nevertheless, to say that political involvement and the sensitivity of the subject involving thousands of pending cases in the courts added to silence witnessed in the future years. At times, it becomes very disturbing for people to remember the traumatic past. Jyoti Garewal in her book *Betrayed by the State* suggests that it is very traumatic for the victims to revisit memories of trauma and how they tend to escape these sites of the past. Moreover, the struggle to return to normality (routine life) leaves no scope for them to write. (Grewal, 2007: 219)

In an attempt to return to normality, the communities go through major transformation. Of great concern is how to address this kind of a transformation of communities in times of national crisis? What would the confrontations involved be with respect to external factors (political, communal etc.) and the limitations of the insider members of the community (in the sense of how to represent and whom to address?) as a defining meta-narrative? Since the present paper studies short films, an attempt to address these questions shall be restricted to these films.

The first questions as to how to address the transformation of the community involves an analysis of the forms (categories) of transformation the communities go through. Relating to anti-Sikh pogrom in 1984, the transformation begins at the very level when minority status is distinguished from the majority populations. Some scholars suggest that the assassination of Indira Gandhi was a consequence of the attack on Golden Temple in June 1984 in order to arrest Bhindranwale, who was in a hideout at the shrine.⁸ The image of the Sikhs had already undergone a rapid transformation from faithful loyalists to traitors. The entire political rivalry between Congress and Akali Dal brought in crucial changes in politics in Punjab, thereby

⁸ For details read Mark Tully and Satish Jacob’s *Mrs Gandhi’s Last Battle*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2006.

changing the image of the Sikhs amongst the Hindu majority. A separatist tendency between the Hindus and the Sikhs was now visible and they were considering each other as enemies, no more brothers as in older times. The second important concern regarding identity was the acceptance of identity markers. Since, the divide was widening, identity markers labelled people. There was a growing intolerance for the markers and the public passed taunting remarks on the markers.

What could be the limitations while defining a meta-narrative on the subject? The limitations are both social and psychological. Neglecting the subject or attempts at silencing was also an effort to erase the past. When silences prevail and deliberate muting is evident, it projects a subversion of minority concerns in order to hide the truth from the public. Secondly, the level of trauma restricts people from speaking out and voicing their concerns as the psychological impact is immense, as discussed above. The complication for cinema at this juncture is how to represent trauma, violence, cruelty or even agony, pain and suffering, symbolically as well as factually?

All the three films, selected for the present study, “Injustice 1984” (2012), directed by Jarnail Singh; “Jagjeet” (2010), directed by Kavanjit Singh, and “Kush” (2013), directed by Subhashish Bhutiani, are character-oriented films. Each of these individual characters depicts how the community undergoes transformation. The films examine how the identity of people and their perception across the nation undergoes a transformation, by negotiation similar issues, in different cases, with different characters.

II

“Injustice 1984”: A Never-ending Wait

“Injustice 1984” is about a real life incident, the life of Gurcharan Singh, who lost his parents in the anti-Sikh violence and incurred life-changing injuries. He survived his injuries because the parents of his friend Vijay, a Hindu boy, helped him. Though he survived, he remained handicapped and bed-ridden throughout his life. He waited 24 years for justice. Visiting the courts in ambulances and wheelchairs, he finally died in 2009. Since he was the sole witness, the case was closed. He wished to live to the day when he thought, he would obtain justice. Unfortunately, he died before that; aptly put, justice delayed is justice denied. The film examines the transition in the manner the Sikh community was being treated with respect to the political situation that evolved in the Punjab in June 1984 and October 1984 following the

assassination.⁹ The individual in the film is representative of a larger community concern. There have been thousands of similar cases. In the film, the protagonist is narrating his experience to his relative. The relative has now lost all hope for justice and questions the nation's responsibility towards the Sikhs. Gurcharan's father, who was the priest in the Gurudwara, raises an objection when he is advised to move to Punjab since he remembers the experience of unsettling around the partition of India in 1947. He considers resettling in the Punjab to be another uprooting experience. Thus, the film addresses the concerns of citizenship and the sense of belonging to a particular nation on the part of minority communities.

While depicting these concerns cinematographically, the visual enactment of the event captures the life narrative of an individual character. As a technique, flashback captures the gap in the present and the past, the shift in time. The narrative opens up with the protagonist dreaming of a disturbed past, an image of the '84 pogrom, that upsets him. The dream-image is not a temporary memory but a revisiting unit, which has become a periodic revival of the past memory. The revisiting is periodical, but the impact is permanent. Thus, the dream becomes the site of memory. Violence foregrounds the entire situation. How does one represent violence? Addressing this concern, Jung admits that the form has its limitations in depiction of reality:

Cinema in particular is faced with a number of problems in the depiction of violence. As cinema is a primarily visual medium, films wanting to explore the topic have to negotiate their way between a rock of traumatic taboo and a hard place of blockbuster logic, i.e. the demands of a commercial business where spectacular and realist violence traditionally sells (Jung, 2010:13).

Negotiation between the truth and the depiction of the truth is largely determined by several external factors, such as the nature of the event, the place where the event has taken place and the larger agencies sponsoring the event. Particularly, in the case of state-sanctioned violence, the degree to which it is possible to illustrate the reality in question determines the impact on the public. Hence, the reshaping/recasting of the truth, by the director, may bring the film either closer to the event or even at times, distance it further from the event. There are possibilities that the heinous acts of brutalizing may be elevated to the level of exaggeration, while, on the other hand, reducing the impact of violence may underestimate the gravity of the impact of violence inflicted. Thus in either case it may fail to justify the reality.

⁹ In June 1984 the Indian Army attacked the Golden Temple, the Sikh shrine, which was followed by the assassination of the P.M. Indira Gandhi in October 1984.

Since, it is not possible to reproduce violence in its exactness, the use of metaphor tends to replace the act in this film. When the mob killed Gurcharan's father, the montage image of the drops of blood falling on the ground depicts the killing, as the enactment of the actual scene seems impossible. In a similar vein, the mother's rape takes place within closed doors. On the other hand, employing the child as a protagonist, substitutes the inability to depict the very acts of violence in the film. The child protagonist depicts the apprehensions and anxieties about the passing of time. Gurcharan conjoins temporality: he connects the past (the child Gurcharan), the present (the adult Gurcharan) and the future (Gurcharan's death and injustice).

However, Gurcharan's optimism towards life and the hope that he will live to obtain justice is the hope for the future, there is also a destruction of historical formations with him seeming to be stuck between nostalgia and a sense of utopian idealism. The portrayal of the child as a protagonist in cinematic form or cultural representations in online media forms "reflect the ways in which childhood is imagined and constructed...within contemporary culture." These texts emerge as "challenging perceptions of childhoods past." (Douglas, 2010: 2) Particularly childhood memories centered around a particular event become memories of trauma that contest the construction of childhood vis a vis history and its representation. The survivor's account of the past involves recalling the trauma, that may be both therapeutic and disconcerting for the subject at the same time. Thus, this narrative serves as a testimonial account of the unrecorded experience of the past.

The adult Gurcharan's handicapped body suggests an image of abrasions dealing with the everyday struggle to avail oneself of justice. The cinematic form thus provides a visual image, a re-enactment of the event with all kinds of complexities with regard to the matter of representation. In this connection, while studying the holocaust, Brian Winston raised a similar concern, that is apt here too:

There is really no word or means to capture totality of the event...For some, it is beyond not only word and the realistic image, it is beyond imagination. (Winston, 2012: 106)

Thus, how does one capture the true image? Moreover, cinematic image requires not just the depiction but also performance. Mass violence on a huge scale involves issues of witness and evidence as a central concern. The biographical depiction of mass violence as in "Injustice 1984", revolving around the sole witness, personalizes the large-scale violence despite the fact

that it is representative of a larger community. The child protagonist becomes the epitome, a victim of such an experience that his life is reduced to nothing but a sheer fight for justice that he never receives.

III

“Kush”: the Depiction of Violence and the Child Protagonist

In another film “Kush”, directed by Subhashish Bhutiani, the protagonist is a small child about 10-11 years old. A group of about thirteen children is returning from a school picnic in the suburbs of Delhi when the news of the Prime Minister’s assassination has spread. One Sikh boy is amongst the group of children in the bus. The police and the mobs of people, largely comprised of members of Congress Party, begin searching for Sikhs in order to kill them. The schoolteacher makes daring efforts to save the child. The boy cuts his hair on his way back, in the bus, just before the point when the mobsters stop their bus and search to see if any child displayed identity markers that would identify the child as a Sikh. Somehow, strategically, they escape the mobsters. The teacher saves the child, escorts him to his house to find his parents already killed by the mobsters, while teacher and boy were wondering about the reaction of the parents on viewing the child with his cut hair.

The film is remarkable both from a technical point of view and thematically. With children as the central focus, “Kush” shows that children have a unique sensibility and the protagonist Kush choses to cut his hair only to save the life of all his classmates with him in the bus. Hair being extremely significant for the Sikh, Kush’s sacrifice seems futile while the audience await to figure out his father’s reaction, but what opens up to them, is a gruesome reality, of the killing of his parents in their own house. Like the previous film undertaken for this study, the protagonist is the victim of the ’84 carnage. The anticlimax of the film takes the audience to a score of guesses as the panning (of the camera) stops, having found the dead bodies of his parents. The camera revolves around the house to find the legs of the parents; the upper parts of the bodies are not revealed, covered behind the door in the frame. The camera zooms closer to Kush and the teacher. Kush stands still at the sight of his dead parents. Thus, the individual child depicts the plight of several other children in the community.

The film begins with a young schoolteacher playing with children and eventually gathering them together to board the bus as it is time for them to return. The children are naughty

and share nasty jokes with each other. Moving from a joyful, atmosphere, the film gradually becomes tense and serious. It records the eventful transition similar to that in the life of the city and its people. Tension builds up as the bus proceeds and the police search for Sikh men and children. The boy hides in the luggage rack and escapes the police. All the classmates collaborate with the child. Moving forward, they halt at a place as the bus is out of order. This is a small shopping complex with only two to three shops. One of these shops is a butcher's and the children gather to see the beheading of a hen. Kush then cuts his hair with a small knife, after his classmate accuses him of having put their life in danger. The beheading of the hen is metaphoric of a community reduced to powerlessness and brutally butchered.

The breakdown of the institutional machinery visible during the pogrom, when the police and politicians rendered support to the mobsters, depicts that the nation-state fails to protect its citizens. The separatist trends visible between people of different communities living together in one country demarcate each other on a communal basis. Such differences do not make sense in democratic countries. Habermas questions the nature of the political and the rights of the citizens in a secular society. Quoting Carl Smith, he asks why the political cannot be impersonal and remain aloof from establishing any relation with religion:

...why shouldn't *the political* find an impersonal embodiment in the normative dimension of a democratic constitution? And what would this alternative mean for the relation between religion and politics in societies like ours? (Habermas, 2011;21)

The aftermath of the assassination took a personal shape and people (mostly people of the Congress party) reacted to revenge the death of their "mother". Indira Gandhi's son Rajeev Gandhi was sworn in as the next Prime Minister and the country joined the son in his mourning. Public sympathizing with the assassinated is natural but on the national front, the purpose of the civil war that erupted was not against "assassinations" but shaped as personal revenge against a particular community. The universal significance of the aftermath remained missing; it had taken shape as a very personal attack on Indira Gandhi, an attack on the Hindu community. During the field work for this project, one of the widows in Tilak Vihar colony passed a comment that she was equally pained by Indira Gandhi's death and thirty-one years down the line, she wishes the assassin hadn't committed this heinous crime, which resulted in such mayhem. Moreover, the police had also supported the mobsters by allowing them to continue beating people. When some

Sikh men approached the police for help, the police instigated the mobsters to beat them further. (Chakravarti, 1994: 2724)

IV

“Jagjeet”: Community Transformation and Vulnerability

The film “Jagjeet” starts with two policemen bullying Jagjeet at a roadside *dhaba* (inn). Jagjeet is waiting to collect ‘rotis’ but the policemen intervene and offer to collect *rotis* out of turn. They somewhat project, how the chivalrous community had been reduced to silent “nobodies”, powerless and meek, so that the Sikh people may not “dare” to stand for justice anymore.¹⁰ In “Kush”, the police officers detained two innocent Sikh men. With great difficulty, the teacher had hidden Kush, the protagonist, in the luggage stand so that he did not get spotted. Thus, the question as to what is the responsibility of public institutions like police etc. in safeguarding an individual’s life/ rights needs an examination. People in institutions display individual preferences and corrupt practices by complying with the ruling party. The role of these institutions in a democratically organized society needs interrogation. Are they free from religion, region, caste and politics? What kind of training has the system been delivering to these institutions? They seem to be under the control of larger political bodies and have failed to disseminate their duties neutrally and impartially.

Moving from the beginning, straight to the end, the film “Jagjeet” shifts focus from an exterior setup, from the outdoors and moves indoors, inside the house. In the last scene, the camera focuses on Jagjeet’s son, a little child about 8 years old, who witnesses the psychological neurosis of his father. He is an unnoticed victim even amongst the survivors. The survivors continue to face a kind of guilt for having survived, at a time when their relatives and friends faced mass murder. Jagjeet’s best friend locked their house from outside. The house was in the

¹⁰ The Sikh community was known for its chivalry and the basic foundation of their religion is based on the notion of “Sarbat Ka Bhala” “Wellbeing for all”. They were those people who fought for justice according to the principles of the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh “Raising the sword for justice when injustice prevails is a pious and a just act”. In 1984, the police threatened and killed the Sikhs. The film “Jagjeet” begins with the portrayal of Jagjeet, the protagonist, being bullied by the police. The police make fun of him and he is depicted as a weakling.

inner side of the street, while the friend's house was in the front. The reason why he and his family were killed by the mobsters. Jagjeet was conversing on the telephone with his friend when the mob came to attack him. Jagjeet listened to the happenings in his friend's house on the phone and the entire episode of the killing of his friend's family has a deep effect on him. There is a sense of amnesia in Jagjeet post the '84 pogrom. He underwent memory loss, stayed irritable and agitated, at the same time; he was also a victim of fear psychosis. Safina Uberoi narrates her experience of recording the stories of the survivors, how they wished they had died:

I remember these stories from women who'd survived but wished they had died when they were raped. ...[in the camp] for children from the area ...there was this little 5-year-old child who'd always draw with a yellow crayon and she had scars on her hand. I eventually found out that she had held her father's hand as he burnt to death with a tyre around his neck. For me the day when she started using other colours was the day when I felt this child could grow up.... I don't deserve to be the one whose father was not attacked. I don't deserve to be the one whose house was not burnt to the ground. But when you see that people around can pull their lives together over a year, it's an amazing display of the strength of the human spirit. It's not that that child had a happy ending, but that she could still grow up. (Uberoi, 2002: np)

This feeling of guilt for the survivors continues throughout their lives. Similarly, in the film, Jagjeet's son is a victim of what his father goes through. The last shot, a 45 second clipping, captures the expressions on the face of the child. The extreme close-up of the boy's face, capturing the child's smile, not as result of happiness but indicating the innocence and an impact on the child as a victim. The after-effect of violence continues for generations. The face is silent, smiling, yet sad; grim, yet thoughtful. The innocence of childhood connects to the utter silence around him. The visual close-up of the face articulates the pain and its prolonged after-effects, and the inability to express them in words. The beginning shot is complimentary to the panning of the camera that zooms around the room as the child is alone and keeps playing with the ball. Scared of father coming home and shouting at the child, his mother warns him and asks him to change his school uniform. The ball goes under the cupboard that covers the window from where a glimpse of his friend's house is visible. On moving the cupboard, Jagjeet gets upset. The very act of covering the window is like a forced attempt to forget the past. Ironically, the traces of the past never leave Jagjeet, they hover around him and the child is the victim of this past. Though in the shot, the child is a silent victim, yet, while collecting narratives of the survivor children,

Veena Das observed how violence becomes an everyday routine for them:

The violence of the riots has changed the nature of the world for the children. They were no strangers to violence. Sometimes a child would lift up his shirt and show the injury inflicted by a drunken father, an angry schoolmaster, or an irate employer. It was as if the body was a picture of the wounds incurred by the child in dealing with the adult aggression in daily life. (Das, 1989; 290)

Thus, the child-protagonist depicts the plight of the nation-state that brings its future generation to such degradation.

Conclusion

These documentaries are different from the traditional documentaries having a voice-over or a commentary. (LeBlanc, 2009: 3) The documentaries selected in the present study are in a self-narrative mode, involving performance and self-representation. Interestingly, some important aspects under consideration could be who the spectators are. Is there an emphasis on representation, resistance, gaining sympathy, or bringing out the truth or all of these elements? Jung's contention, based on Murray Smith's study on focalization and empathy/sympathy, regards the role of the spectator as crucial. He suggests that

... focalization often entails a shift of empathy. To describe these processes in detail, Murray Smith's model of cinematic narration is extremely helpful. Smith argues that cinematic narration creates a "structure of sympathy" for the spectator, which involves recognition, alignment, and allegiance. Recognition amounts to basic understanding of figures to be recognized and identified as narrative agents. Alignment is defined as "the process by which spectators are placed in relation to characters in terms of access to their actions, and to what they know and feel," and allegiance pertains to the moral and ideological evaluation of characters by the spectator (Quoted in Jung, 2010: 22)

All three short films are representative using different techniques and settings. "Injustice 1984" and "Jagjeet" are self-representative as the directors belong to the community. They use internal focalization as a mode in which the spectators can relate to internal feelings as well as to the effect of violence on the characters from an insider's point of view. On the other hand, "Kush"

employs external focalization and the director proclaims a universal concern focusing on the child protagonist as the central figure. In “Injustice 1984” a sense of resistance accompanies the plight of the protagonist, while “Jagjeet” deals with fear and desire as the after-effect of the event and “Kush” is representational, as the protagonist is creating empathy amongst the spectators. These short films focus on the people who “are missing”. Deleuze’s idea of minor cinema suggest that minor cinema enables people’s existence as it “represents” people. Minor cinema focuses on the private as political where the “private element can thus become the place of a becoming conscious, in so far as it goes back to root causes, or reveals the 'object' that it expresses” (Deleuze, 1989: 224). Thus, the films selected for the study are representative of a highly complicated matrix of ‘experiencing the self’ in the light of a particular event that serves as an example to the world so that such events do not repeat themselves in any manner whatsoever.

BACKGROUND TO THE SUBJECT

In 1984, two Sikh bodyguards of the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, assassinated her on the morning of 31st October. This followed mass killings of people belonging to the Sikh community in Delhi and several other places across India. The most affected areas were Bokharo, Kanpur and Delhi. This communal violence continued for three days from 31st October 1984 to 4th November 1984. Though thirty-one years have passed, no perpetrators of the mob attacks and mass killings of the Sikhs, have been convicted. The Sikhs are of Indian origin and may have converted mostly from Hinduism. However, a sizable Muslim influence is also visible in them. The Sikhs and the Hindus were considered brothers in the past; the eldest boy of the family would become a Sikh and provide protection to the needy. The marriages would largely be amongst people of mixed families and would not be restricted to Sikhs alone. The children of the Sikh would marry the children of Hindu families, and vice versa. The separate identities of Sikhs in society emerged only after the advent of the British in India and mostly towards the time of partition. It was around the early '80's and late 90's that the separate identity of the Sikh as distinct and different from Hindus strongly established itself.

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