Partition and Pluralism: Perceiving Epistemic Terrains of Hope and Resilience in *Divided by Partition, United by Resilience – 21 Inspirational Stories from 1947*

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Abstract

Before India gained independence from Britain in 1947, when the partition was announced, the subcontinent instantly descended into riots, death, and destruction, culminating in one of the largest human waves of migration in history. Muslims in India were prompted to travel to Pakistan, while Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan were urged to return home. Approximately 15 million people were displaced or forced to relocate, with between half a million and two million killed in the consequent violence. This post-partition history includes some courageous individuals who lost everything during partition but reconstructed their existences from the ground up and climbed to the leading positions in their respective disciplines. *Divided by Partition, United by Resilience – 21 Inspirational Stories* from 1947, edited by Mallika Ahluwalia and published in 2018 by Rupa Publications India, is one such book that chronicles the narratives of 21 Indians who endured the chaos and destruction of India's Partition but managed to overcome their miseries to become living embodiments of accomplishment and excellence. Emphasising the stories' affirmative ethos, which steps beyond the tropes of loss and precarity, this article analyses how these individuals established their agency and extraordinariness vis-à-vis various epistemic tools. The article puts forth that these stories can be read as representative testimonies of diversified trajectories in the epistemological field of the Partition literature and studies. This article focuses on unlearning the monolithic perceptions of 1947 and approaching them through the lens of epistemic pluralism. The article finally argues that there are other sides that go beyond the meta-significations of partition narratives, as demonstrated by individuals who, through their tireless efforts, drew new contours of self-assertion, thereby creating diverse and dynamic epistemologies.

Keywords: Episteme, Partition, Resilience, Empowerment, Autonomy

Introduction: 1947 Partition literature and epistemic pluralism

The literary responses to and cultural productions of the 1947 Partition have mostly uncovered

the darker sides of Independence, which divided the Indian subcontinent into two nations—

India and Pakistan. Prior to the announcement of Partition, the subcontinent experienced a cataclysmic whirlwind of communal hatred, violence, rape, death, and destruction. Such gruesomeness culminated in vast waves of migration, causing one of history's most unprecedented and poignant convulsions. Urvashi Butalia notes, "Never before or since have so many people exchanged their homes and countries so quickly" (3). Approximately 15 million people were displaced or forced to relocate, with between half a million and two million killed in the violence. Notable writers such as Sadat Hussain Manto, Khuswant Singh, Bapsi Sidhwa, Anita Desai, and Salman Rushdie have pinpointed the ramifications of the 1947 Partition through their heart-wrenching portrayals of traumatised individuals, agonised memories, feelings of homelessness, and hyphenated identities. The epistemology of Partition literature, which gradually emerged from such interventions, is anchored on a critique of the dominant historiography's glorifying of Indian Independence as a political moment of national autonomy, "systematically consigning the [eventuality] of Partition to oblivion" (Ravikant 160). Writings on Partition cater to an epistemic mediation of the unspoken or undocumented experientialities of the ordinary innocent masses who fell prey to the chaotic social order of 1947 and later carried its burden in varied forms. In this context, Mallika Ahluwalia's edited collection *Divided by Partition, United by Resilience – 21 Inspirational Stories from 1947* (2018) emerges as an essential collection in the epistemic corpus of partition studies. These stories highlight snippets from the incredible journeys of twenty-one individuals who made their way through political ruptures and family devastations and then "went on to achieve greatness in Independent India" (Ahluwalia xi)—as eminent political leaders, sportspersons, award-winning artists, and famous businesspersons. The uniqueness of Ahluwalia's collection lies in its delineation of the "resilience of the human spirit" (xi) that each individual displayed in the face of extreme deprivation and adversity. The individual stories of eminent figures such as Manmohan Singh, Gulzar, Milkha Singh, and Ram Jethmalani, to name a few, constitute

alternate portrayals of the 1947 Partition, propelling readers to revisualize the historical episteme of Partition as also replete with narratives of indomitable human will and courage.

The article examines selected stories from *Divided by Partition, United by Resilience* (2018) that delineate the journeys of illustrious citizens who overcame the dispossession of Partition and accentuated the episteme of hope and reconstruction. Emphasising the stories' affirmative ethos that steps beyond the tropes of loss and precarity, this article analyses how these individuals established their agency and extraordinariness vis-à-vis their contributions to representing the newly formed India's national glory and accomplishment. The article shows that these stories can be read as representative testimonies of diversified trajectories in the "epistemological field" (Foucault xxii) of the Partition literature and studies. The thrust of this article lies in unlearning the monolithic perceptions of the 1947 Partition in terms of personal and collective trauma, socio-political beleaguerment, and mass violence, and fostering a renewed outlook on the aftermath of Partition that bespeaks the tales of triumph and autonomy through education, the arts, sports, and national politics. The article argues that the 1947 Partition can also be approached as enunciating an epistemic pluralism— the ontologically determined notion of "actively fostering a multitude of ways of knowing" (Wegerhoff et al 462). Pluralism here denotes different "knowledges, understandings, and ways of experiencing" (Pashby et al 47) any specific issue, event, or development. The momentous event of Partition is about vulnerable masses, uprooted communities, and people who rebuilt themselves and whose life stories create an enduring episteme on "success" and accomplishment (Ahluwalia xxi). It is important to note that the article does not minimise or deny the negative impact of the 1947 Partition on millions of people, but rather, through the lens of plurality, attests to "ensuring that the various sides and narratives to the Partition are also intellectualised and validated" (xvi). To be more specific, the article emphasises that other

sides go beyond the meta-significations of partition narratives, as demonstrated by individuals who, through their tireless efforts, drew new contours of self-assertion, thereby creating diverse and dynamic epistemologies. Herein also lies the critical significance of Ahluwalia's collection as adding to the cultural episteme that manifests the sustained power of hope, positivity, and fortitude against political subjugation and collective trauma.

"How Will You Partition the Air?" and "Jijibisha: The Will to Survive": Writing as the medium of epistemological empowerment

While self-awareness and self-examination are "the most fundamental paradigm of effectiveness" (Covey 67), writing becomes an instrument of epistemic empowerment. It facilitates critical intellect and analytical thinking, solidifies relationships with the local value system, breaks the culture of silence, recognises ethically and socially conscious knowledge, and confronts traumatic encounters when implementing radical egalitarianism (Bano 223). The writing careers of Gulzar and Manoranjan Byapari demonstrate how they utilise writing to cultivate self-discipline and self-regulation and to articulate their individual and collective experiences. The story of Gulzar, one of India's eminent poets, titled "How Will You Partition the Air?" recounts his horrific experiences of witnessing brutal killings during the Partition days. Initially known as Sampooran Singh Kalra, Gulzar was born into a Sikh family and lived in an old neighbourhood in Old Delhi, when the Partition took place. Gulzar ruminates on "the nightmares of the riots" (Ahluwalia 62) that took a toll on the lives of commoners. Hatred and antagonism increased so horribly that neighbours and friends attacked each other. Gulzar recalls how the roads and lanes became engulfed in a frenzied fury of communal animosity, the orgy of blood, "agonizing" and "half-burnt dead bodies" (62), and people were engulfed in a frenzy of communal animosity. Memories of human cruelties stayed in young Gulzar's mind for quite a long time, eventually shaping his vision of life and sociality. Over time, Gulzar

could find no other way of outpouring the piercing trauma, but only through his writings that "helped him overcome the fears" (64). Writing ameliorated Gulzar's inner fears, purged the horrific memories, and enabled him to develop a more profound worldview on life's realities and experientialities. Gulzar's intimate and touching deliberations on disrupted childhood (in 'Bhamiri'), the fragmentation of dreams (in 'Dastak'), and a bereaved mother (in 'Ravi Paar') evince his understanding of the intricacies of human suffering during the times of Partition. As Gulzar asserts, "learning how to write had this one advantage: I could purge it out. It was a way I could cope with the nightmares. Something that had become solid inside me, had been so firmly imprinted in me, began to loosen and I could purge it out" (64).

Writing functioned as an enactment of Gulzar's repressed memories, channelling the "cognitive processes to clarify, reorganize, and generate" (Chen 115), all that he had once visualised but could never forget. Gulzar's penchant for writing got a new impetus when he moved to Mumbai to study at Khalsa College and met literary icons such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Kaifi Azmi through his membership in the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) and Progressive Writers Association (PWA). These revolutionary thinkers exposed Gulzar to taking up writing as a strident tool to connect the personal with the political. Gulzar's literary acumen got a decisive break when he got the opportunity to write lyrics for Bimal Roy's film. In the long run, he became one of the finest authors, poets, and lyricists in the country. Inspired by the PWA thinkers' intellectualism, writing emerged as an epistemological tool for Gulzar, allowing him to exercise his nuanced cognitive, psychological, and socio-culturally situated perspectives on various representations of truth and social justifications (Moshman 52). This is pertinently evidenced in Gulzar's vast body of work, which not only delineates his personal dispositions or expressions but also shows his reflection and negotiation of suppressed and neglected emotions in social life and politics. While "expressive writing appears to have great

potential as a therapeutic tool in a variety of settings" (Baikie and Wilhelm 342), the knowledge-transforming practise as outlined by Bereiter and Scardamalia (146), involves the assessment and adjustment of deterministic notions in working memory to produce a mental model of the writing that meets rhetorical objectives. Gulzar's recourse to writing thus aided him in healing from the claustrophobic feelings of the Partition days. His stories based on the various perspectives of partition not only represent epistemic empowerment, where his hope is at the centre of the capacity that elevates him towards self-actualization, achieving the highest vision of himself for the best interests of his family, community, and humanity as a whole. As evinced in his writing, hope became "the essential mindset that enables individuals to have resilience in the face of adverse circumstances" (Maholmes 2). Gulzar hoped that the partition, which separated the country, would not continue partitioning the people. According to him,

> Countries can be divided, land can be divided, roads can be divided, but you were dividing people, you were dividing cultures; these cannot be cut. How will you partition the air? The trees that were divided will grow again, and their shadows will fall on one side of the border in the morning, and the other side in the afternoon. There is no use in cutting shadows. (Ahluwalia 69-70)

Manoranjan Byapari's struggles to find a home of his own, depicted in the story "Jijibisha: The Will to Survive," document the pathetic story of the marginalised sections who migrated from East Bengal during and post-Partition, and then fell victim to government atrocities and neglect. Byapari belongs to 'namasudras' community—the Dalit untouchables, considered the lowest in the hierarchy of the Indian caste system. Byapari recollects that while many upper-caste people moved from then East Pakistan (now known as Bangladesh) during 1947, the lower-caste people migrated later, around the early 1950s, when the conditions further deteriorated on the other side of the border. However, arriving in West Bengal in 1953 offered no relief to Byapari and his family, as they had no means of sustenance and had to toil extremely hard to earn a meagre living. The state government treated these poor refugees as anomalies and

relegated them to a state of precarity, forcefully evicting and disgracing them. After his father's untimely death, Byapari moved out of Bengal to work as a cheap labourer in several other cities in India. Unfortunately, wherever Byapari went, he was not only harassed and humiliated, but as a Dalit untouchable, he was also mercilessly exploited by his owners. Byapari's grim experiences foreground how the lower castes and the tribal communities "continue to be subjected to discrimination, economic and social exclusion, and a stigmatised identity" (Sharma 204) under various pretexts in modern-day India. In his youth, Byapari also fell prey to the hate crimes of the police and was imprisoned for a couple of years. However, in jail, Byapari starts learning the "Bengali alphabet" (Ahluwalia 57) from a prisoner. After his release, Byapari developed a keen interest in reading books and became a voracious reader. He gets engrossed in reading books and reads when sitting under the tree or waiting for a passenger for his rickshaw, exemplifying that he never wastes time. This habit of reading is integrated into his cognitive taxonomy—his epistemic consciousness.

Epistemic consciousness "provides a distinctive conceptual resource for characterising our first-person knowledge of mind, without presupposing that self-knowledge always depends upon, or relates to, subjective experiential consciousness in one and the same way for all types of mental states" (Manson 426). Manoranjan, conscious of the epistemic importance of reading, begins to purchase as many books as he can afford, frequently visiting thrift stores where they are sold by weight. He is "entranced by the worlds and lives [books can] take him to, so different from the tough life he [has] known" (Ahluwalia 58). Epistemic consciousness enables Manoranjan to formulate a variety of explanatory questions about how the attributes of mental states impact, thwart, or contribute to self-knowledge, questions that might not emerge if he focuses exclusively on the knowing subject, as opposed to the mental states he might come to know (Manson 426). Likewise, one day, when he cannot discern the meaning of a difficult

word he is reading, "jijibisha," he asks the famous activist-writer Mahasweta Devi, who sits in his rickshaw, what this word means. Mahasweta Devi tells him that the meaning of the word is "the will to survive," and upon seeing his tenacious determination and enthusiasm for learning, she mentors him and encourages him to write a column for her magazine *Bartika*, thereby constructing the platform for Byapari's epistemic development. Byapari's tormenting experiences as a post-Partition refugee and a Dalit testify to the social and epistemic injustices heaped on the subalterns of independent India. Those in power define, control, and produce meanings and objectify knowledge for the powerless. The hegemonic structures deprive people like Byapari of garnering their "interpretive resources" (Fricker 1), which makes them incapable of making any sense of social cognition. Epistemic injustice occurs when such a sustained abrogation of cognitive capabilities leads to the denial of the "capacity" (1) of knowing and curtails the ability to speak too. However, Byapari's story is not that of someone who loses these abilities but rather of someone who develops autonomy through writing. While the publication of his essay titled "Is there Dalit Writing in Bangla?" in the journal *Economic and Political Weekly* brought him to national attention, the translation of his autobiography (*Itibritte Chandal Jiban*, 2012) into English (*Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit*, 2016) has enhanced his national prominence. Byapari is a pioneering figure of Bangla Dalit literature who traverses "the messy terrain of knowledge-making in search of epistemic and sociopolitical justice" (Lahiri-Dutt et al 5) and continues his battle against epistemic violence and the socio-cultural marginalisation of his community.

While Gulzar embraces writing as an epistemological medium to articulate the intensities of life and power inequalities, Byapari perceives writing as a social resource adapted to communicate, negotiate, persuade, and co-construct knowledge (Tang 2067) for the Dalit community. Writing for Byapari becomes an epistemic weapon for contesting and confronting

ingrained social inequalities, advocating for Dalit rights, and exposing the gaps in the promised collective justice. As Byapari mourns Partition for robbing him of his land and identity, he nonetheless admits that "writings have allowed him to find his place in the world" (Ahluwalia 60). Gulzar's and Byapari's narratives depict their overcoming of respective deplorable conditions aggravated by Partition through their writing and love for literature. While Partition shook their roots, writing offers them a mode to reinforce their epistemic power, register dissent against the prevailing hegemonies, and express compassion for humanity. Through their writing, they have not only manifested their resilience but also demonstrated their voice against the wrongdoings of society. In short, writing became Gulzar and Byapari's mode of redefining themselves as critical intellectuals as well as illustrating how epistemic formations are crucial to the construction of individual or public identity.

"My First Memory of Fear" and "There was no compassion on anyone's face": Art/Cinema as tools of epistemic awareness

Epistemic awareness denotes individuals' comprehension of the epistemic justifications they and others use to assert various truths. It is how they are conscious of the decisions they make when deciding what constitutes fact, what constitutes plausible interpretation, and how they construct truth. This may be the case regarding their general worldview or, more explicitly, the facts being constructed in a given argument presented in any medium (Clyde and Wilkinson 172-177). In the case of Govind Nihalini and Satish Gujral, they chose cinema and art as mediums to assert and channel their epistemic awareness. Govind Nihalani's frightening memories of Partition, described in the piece "My First Memory of Fear," bring out the viciousness of communal violence that wrecked the lives of many in 1947. Born in Karachi in pre-divided India, Nihalani shares his childhood memories of living joyfully in a large joint family until the riots broke out and a frenzied drama of atrocities took over the place. Nihalani

mulls over the uncanny silence that accompanied the sudden outbursts of communal antagonism, with neighbours mistrusting and suspecting each other as enemies. The threat of annihilation was so pervasive that Nihalani felt that his "first memory of fear" stemmed from that traumatic period (Ahluwalia 125). The fear becomes a terrifying reality when Nihalani sees a man screaming, rushing towards the terrace of his house, "reeling on the ground with red blood oozing out of his back"—a "defining visual" (125) that has haunted him down the years. A few days later, Nihalani's family made their way to India, and started living in a new refugee township called Pratapnagar in Udaipur, Rajasthan. Nihalani's fascination with film drove him to take a course on cinematography. As an aspiring cinematographer, Nihalani gets a wondrous chance to meet Shyam Benegal, one of the most renowned directors and torchbearers of parallel cinema in India. This decisive turn eventually propelled him to take up filmmaking as a serious form of knowledge production and dissemination.

As a director, Nihalani made a cathartic attempt to produce the 1988 period television film *Tamas*, an adaptation of Bhisham Sahni's novel, chronicling the vulnerable plight of the Hindus and the Sikhs who fled from their homes during the Partition days. *Tamas* became a massive hit and is still enlisted as one of the most thought-provoking interventions on Partition. While Nihalani's cinematic retrospective of 1947 is regarded as a cult contribution to film studies, it more potently marks the beginning of his cinematic pedagogy, which sought to cultivate an epistemic awareness in the public consciousness. Epistemic awareness designates the notion of "awareness" of "realizing [the validity] of one's information" (Fernández-Fernández 21) and reasonably assessing the justifications of the choices and truth-claims made. So, epistemic awareness conforms to developing interpretative and rationalising capabilities in any given situation or context. Nihalani directed several films over the course of six decades, all of which were intensely powerful and dedicated to instilling cognitive criticality in the

audience. Spearheading the parallel cinema as a counter-movement to mainstream Hindi movies that aim only to entertain the masses, Nihalani endeavoured to make the public come out of their familiarised thinking and probe the ingrained problems that plague social structures. In his words, "we wanted to make a difference, we wanted to make change happen" (Ahluwalia 131). Nihalani, a migrant from Partition, thus sets a spectacular example for future generations, not only by achieving fame for himself, but also by demonstrating how cinema can be a powerful medium for showcasing and stimulating audiences, the first step towards reinforcing epistemic awareness. Nihalani appropriated cinema as a pedagogic avenue to jolt the complacent public, motivating them "to transform self and change society" (Stauffer xiii). In this regard, his life and his films intersect beautifully, delineating his ideological commitment towards facilitating critical thinking and epistemic awareness, which makes Nihalani stand as a marvellous figure of hope and commitment towards social development.

Satish Gujral's story, described in "There was no compassion on anyone's face," is another gripping tale of Partition memory and how those shaped the visions of many. Born in Jhelum, Pakistan, in 1925, Gujral witnessed the "killings, murder, rape" (Ahluwalia 158) that caused havoc on thousands of innocent people. Gujral's father, a devout freedom fighter, became disheartened by the political upheaval and decided to stay in Pakistan for nearly seven months after independence to evacuate and accompany refugees across borders. Gujral and his father rescued many families and "nearly hundred women" (158), helping them reach safe shelters. Recollecting those weekly trips from Jhelum to Jalandhar, Gujral feels that those dreadful yet intimate encounters with cruelties drove him to "give voice to those memories" (158) throughout his life. An accident in Gujral's childhood took away his audibility but intrigued him towards painting, and this passion for art uncovered a multifaceted scope to transfer his witnessed tragedies onto canvas. Gujral's motivations for his paintings stemmed

from his deep understanding of instinctual human drives towards violence and the disasters that Partition perpetrated on the ordinary mob. Art becomes the site of Gujral's depicting and resisting the savagery and viciousness that Partition had shown him. Ruminating about the losses of Partition, Gujral states, "after all these years, when I sit and wonder about was the biggest loss incurred during Partition? Money, property, home, life? No. It was the loss of compassion. I looked around and there was no compassion on anyone's face" (162). While this lack of compassion and empathy shocked Gujral, it later became a catalyst for his paintings. Art emerged as a source to convey his intricate realisations on human shallowness and instill in viewers a temperament to interrogate the evil extremities and develop feelings of fellowship and humanity. Gujral emerged as an involved artist who conceived art as a compulsive medium to foreground the bitter truths of Partition and life. Gujral used painting to convey the deception of human behaviour, and he saw art as having an epistemic agency to stimulate cognitive, affective, and empathetic processes in viewers. As he admits, "when I started to paint, it never crossed my mind that I was painting Partition, but what came out was Partition. If an artist thinks first and paints later, there will be no truth" (163). Gujral depicts the brutality of man in his paintings and selects subjects around him to convey his anguish.

While Gujral's compelling portrayals earned him national and global success, his social commitment remained unflinching for decades. Firm in choosing his "artistic vision and growth over the monetary comfort" (166), Gujral's creative engagements have been reflections of 'epistemic art'—wherein images contain "a processed higher understanding of the world: in short, knowledge" (Klinke 1). Much like Nihalani, who has employed reel as an epistemic form of social comprehension, Gujral has also championed art as fundamental to making society aware of its systemic flaws by undermining entrenched perceptions and setting forth a cumulative process of seeing and knowing. Affected by Partition's massacres, Nihalani's and

Gujral's life stories thus accentuate how individuals can, more than just rebuild personal identities, also foster potentially transformative missions and engineer art for the epistemic improvement of society. Their works duly corroborate that painting or cinema, more than providing aesthetic pleasure or entertainment, is also a socio-epistemologically valuable form of enhancing self-knowledge, disseminating "practical wisdom to operate well in our world" (Nussbaum 384), and fostering the ethical imperatives necessary for collective well-being. In so doing, these individuals elucidate a strong message of cultural hope and affirmation through their artistic productions and socially dedicated ideologies of livelihood.

"Defying Death, Scaling New Heights," and "How Long Will You Keep on Crying?": Partition violence and epistemic autonomy

In an acute sense, the history of Partition, rife with violence, trauma, and killings, reflects the epistemic loss of the uprooted individuals and the displaced communities. With the rising flares of communal violence during 1947, most of the population across the borders could barely survive the tragedy of Partition, spending the rest of their lives as refugees, unable to return to their homes or share with the larger world their perilous journeys. Only a few could brave the hurdles of dispossession and later rebuild newer versions of themselves, gaining new epistemic autonomy. The concept of epistemic autonomy denotes intellectual freedom, a capacity to develop the trajectory of one's own life (Raz 407), and the power to exercise one's own will. An epistemically autonomous person denies being subject to others' will and opinions and shapes life's choices by relying more on their "cognitive faculties" (Fricker 225). Captain Manmohan Singh Kohli's experience of the Partition horrors and making a name for himself in Indian mountaineering, chronicled in "Defying Death, Scaling New Heights," is an exemplary story of epistemic autonomy in the face of homelessness and continual hardships. Kohli was born in a small town called Haripur Hazara in the North-West Frontier Province of

undivided India. It was a "well-integrated" town in which different communities lived harmoniously until 1946, when the "killings of non-Muslims had become commonplace" (Ahluwalia 27). Dalrymple states that "across the Indian subcontinent, communities that had coexisted for almost a millennium attacked each other in a terrifying outbreak of sectarian violence, with Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other—a mutual genocide as unexpected as it was unprecedented" (n.p.). Kohli and his father's hopes of staying in the newly created nation of Pakistan were shattered as independence was followed by horrific violence in the country. The Sikhs were targeted by the Muslims in Pakistan, as Kohli frighteningly recalls one such night, in which he and his father had to leave their home and run to a nearby Gurdwara for shelter. Escaping a near-death experience, Kohli and his father could never return to Haripur and became refugees, only to be transported from one camp to another in the Abbottabad and Rawalpindi border areas. Beleaguered and dispossessed, Kohli remembers that the fear of being killed was so stringent and perpetual that the hope of crossing the border seemed a distant dream. Kohli and his father could manage to take the train to India and make it there, embarking on the perilous journey of a refugee.

Kohli pursued his education in Delhi and, in 1954, was commissioned into the Indian Navy. While successfully carrying on his job in the navy, Kohli also embarked on a new quest to know more about India. As a refugee "without a clear base in India," Kohli was "told that he could choose to list any city as his hometown" (Ahluwalia 34). Grabbing this as a potential opportunity to explore the less traversed parts of India, Kohli chose Pahalgam in north-west Kashmir, and a visit to this place intrigued him enough to drive him to the adventures of trekking and mountain climbing. Kohli's turn to mountaineering evinces his development of an autonomous stance as an epistemic subject in which he relied more on his cognitive-epistemic competencies—rationality, awareness, inquiry, and observation (Goldberg 289). His

inquisitiveness to know and become aware of India lies at the root of this epistemic development. From 1956 on, Kohli joined one expedition after the other, leading naval treks to the steep mountains of Nanda Kot and Annapurna, braving treacherous conditions, heavy snowfall, and avalanches. Kohli's determination finally had its glorious triumph in 1965, when he, along with nine others, set a world record by setting foot on the highest peaks of Mount Everest. Honoured and awarded for this achievement, Kohli's contributions did not cease here. Instead, he channelled his epistemology to promote "responsible adventure tourism" and set up the "Himalayan Environmental Trust" to prevent ecological degradation (Ahluwalia 36). As a refugee, who lost his home, identity, and episteme during the Partition, Kohli's tale of becoming a national mountaineer not only embodies his gaining of epistemic autonomy but also his displaying a socio-ecological responsibility in amalgamating his love for mountains with the causes of environmental conservation and eco-tourism. "Mountains became a way of life" (Ahluwalia 36) for Kohli, with Ahluwalia offering him an epistemic authority that the horror and displacement of Partition had been taken away. Thus, Kohli's story is about choosing one's path based on cognitive abilities and courageous selfhood—autonomy required for being resilient despite enormous adversity and upholding "fundamental epistemic responsibility" (Mudd 153) towards oneself and the external society.

Milkha Singh's narrative in "Milkha Singh, How Long Will You Keep on Crying?" also recounts the brutal impact of the communal violence of Partition on the Sikhs who lived in the western part of the Indian subcontinent. Much like Kohli, Milkha's story is about religious persecution and estrangement from the homeland. Milkha remembers that the inter-religious violence that Partition triggered could never have been imagined by communities living cohesively in pre-divided India. Those were the times when marriages and festivals were celebrated collectively, as it was Partition that produced a "new, congealed and highly

exclusive sense of Hindu/Sikh in India and Pakistan" (Pandey 2037). After losing his parents and siblings at the hands of an enraged Muslim mob, Singh made a painstaking journey to Ferozepur by train and then reached Delhi with the help of the army. Terrified and destitute, Milkha, like many other refugees, had to fight for meagre food and survival in the shaky camps on Delhi's outskirts. Singh's precarious existence can be interpreted as an example of epistemic loss, which refers to the loss of knowledge and knowledge-related practises that limit epistemic self-determination. Partition stripped Singh of his social, cultural, and familial epistemologies, throwing him into extreme poverty. However, as fate would have it, Singh remarkably made his way to the Indian army, eventually being able to establish epistemic autonomy. In one of the internal army track meets, Singh's "athletic talents were discovered" (Ahluwalia 145), and then, as widely known, "the next decade and a half of Milkha's life is a story of determination and the power of the human spirit" (Ahluwalia 145). Whenever asked about the reasons behind such a unique success story, Singh emphasised that "his story is not one of overnight or easy success" (Ahluwalia 147), instead, it had been full of insurmountable hurdles and challenges. In the laborious journey to find an episteme of his own, Singh dauntingly relied on his cognitive resources—strict devotion to physical training, unflinching hard work, and an impeccable desire to win. Singh accentuated, "We have to resist our problems [. . .]. I feel if there is one lesson from my life, it is that I suffered many problems, but I overcame each one of them" (Ahluwalia 145). This reliance on one's willpower and propensity to establish one's worth constitutes one's epistemic autonomy (Matheson and Lougheed 2) and acts as a substantial impetus towards imbibing a sense of epistemic responsibility towards others.

Over the years, Milkha Singh's epistemic autonomy empowered him to recuperate from the ingrained trauma and nightmarish memories of Partition. During one of the sports meets in Pakistan in 1960, Singh revisited his native village, met his childhood friends, and purged

himself of all the negativity that Partition had imposed on him. Singh's regained selfhood, which reflected his cognitive awareness and epistemic development, inspires his life story. While Singh and Kohli represent "individuals who adapt to extraordinary circumstances, achieving positive and unexpected outcomes in the face of adversity" (Fraser et al. 136), their auras become perpetual through their social contributions. Later in his life, Singh set up a charitable trust to aid the children of disadvantaged sections and "fallen soldiers" (Ahluwalia 147) by taking up the responsibility of their education, food, and healthcare. Singh's benevolence stemmed from his epistemic realisation "of the vagaries of fate" (Ahluwalia 147). Singh's epistemic autonomy describes how individuals have "the capacity to rebound from adversity" and can emerge as "strengthened and more resourceful" for society (Walsh 4). Kohli and Singh count on their cognitive capabilities related to mountaineering and running, respectively. They emphasise their inherent positive will power, mediating those to consolidate resilience and exhibit "the potential or manifested capacity" to adapt to outside disturbances that threaten the survival or functioning of normative livelihood (Masten 187). As national heroes in the fields of mountaineering and sports, Kohli and Singh evince that willpower, awareness, and a determined spirit can serve as enormously powerful tools in achieving and exercising epistemic autonomy, and accomplishing social wellbeing.

"We had no land, the whole of Divided India" and "Telegram: Father Killed. Mother Safe": National politics and epistemic duty

Lal Krishna Advani's experiences of Partition depicted in "We had no land, the whole of Divided India" unfold a unique narrative of a Partition refugee whose resilience and dedication to instill patriotism in the youth of this country are admirable and inspiring. Advani's association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) since the pre-Independence days, his participation in India's freedom fight against the British colonisers, and his unswerving

commitment to the nationalist causes manifest his heroism and indomitable passion despite the challenging situations that he faced in the post-Independence days. Advani, a Sindhi by birth, belonged to a well-established family in Karachi, undivided India. An active participant in the RSS by 1942 and highly energised by its doctrines of the country's emancipation from the oppression of foreigners, Advani, like many of his other contemporaries, had never anticipated the bloodthirsty saga of Partition that would accompany Independence. As a member of the RSS team, Advani, while living in Karachi, led "teams of volunteers to discourage people from leaving homes and migrating east" (Ahluwalia 13). Unfortunately, his speculations about an undivided India were soon warped as communal hostilities engulfed Karachi, and he had to flee his ancestral homeland, on September 12, 1947. In his autobiography, Advani later shared that, unaware of the tumultuous days ahead, "all he knew was that he was leaving his family behind, as well as his childhood experiences of Clifton Beach and Manora Island, as well as an idea of Sindh that was based on an 'ethos of religious harmony, pluralism, mutual tolerance, and peaceful coexistence'" (Ahluwalia 14). Advani's dream of a free and undivided India was nullified, and what followed in post-Independent India, especially after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, was atrocious for the RSS members. To retaliate for Gandhi's killing by Nathuram Godse (an RSS member), many RSS 'pracharaks' were arrested and detained without trial. Advani, one of them, was also incarcerated under harsh conditions in Alwar Central Jail. Even after his release, Advani spent months underground, hiding his identity from the state authorities and the police.

However, imprisonment and suppressive measures could never decimate Advani's resilience, instead, those hardships formulated decisive turns in his life. Partition, displacement, and hardships thus fostered in Advani a challenging demeanour—that of participating in active nationalist politics. Under the political mentorship of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, Advani

took his "first step in what was to become a long political career ahead" (Ahluwalia 15). For Advani, politics appeared as an epistemic tool through which he could rediscover his new selfhood and obtain an avenue "to guide or direct [the] intellectual conduct" (Goldman 116) of the larger masses. A spearheading figure behind the scripting of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Advani's devotion and contribution to the "national political landscape" (Ahluwalia 16) are testimonies to his politically responsible citizenry. Advani became India's Information and Broadcasting Minister in 1977 and the Home Minister in 1998. Only in 2002, after "a six-decade-long journey" (Ahluwalia 17), Advani became the Deputy Prime Minister of India. Advani's rise and political activism resonate with his firmness and staunch sense of epistemic duty to the country. Epistemic duties pertain to developing appropriate cognitive attitudes and urging one to form opinions based on evidence and rationalism (Feldman 363). Witnessed to and impacted by the subcontinent's divisive political history, Advani's epistemic duties have been to promote mass awareness through his political campaigns, motivate youth to join politics, and contribute to the nation's development by embracing various ministerial positions. Advani's compliance has been to politically educate the masses—an epistemic duty he fulfilled by serving the nation. As an uprooted Partition refugee, he firmly believed that "[he] had no land of our own, or, rather, the whole of divided India became [his] land" (Ahluwalia 17), and his lifelong political activism has reflected his love and duty for India.

Like Advani, Manmohan Singh's journey to India was due to the communal troubles and outrage during Independence. Singh was born in the village of Gah, in the Jhelum district of West Punjab. The harmonious relations that characterised this region's social fabric started disappearing as news of an anticipated partition was disseminated among the common masses. Singh remembers how his grandfather, along with other male Sikhs and Hindus, were "butchered" (Ahluwalia 3) by Muslim fanatics. His uncle communicated the news of his

grandfather's death through a telegram: 'Father killed. Mother safe' (Ahluwalia 3). The news of this brutal killing shocked Singh's father. Before announcing Partition Day, Singh's father moved his family to the Haldwani district of Uttar Pradesh, fearing more deaths. Later, however, they relocated to Amritsar, where Singh started his education in college and then at Panjab University. For a young 14-year-old boy who "had only seen three places- Gah, Chakwal, and Peshawar—this was his first opportunity to see more of India" (Ahluwalia 4). Singh's family then possessed minimal financial resources. Though the initial years proved challenging, Singh continued his studies with unshakeable devotion and perseverance. His impressive academic performance and results won him a short-term scholarship to the prestigious University of Cambridge. Later, Singh went to Oxford for his doctoral degree in Economics, after which he joined the United Nations and eventually served the country in various positions. Singh became the Chief Economic Adviser in the Ministry of Finance in 1972, the Reserve Bank of India Governor in 1982, and the Head of the Planning Commission from 1985 to 1987.

Singh's intellectual abilities and striving for excellence made him rise to "greater heights both within the country and internationally" (Ahluwalia 8). Despite the odds, his achievement of epistemic glory earned him a spot on the "list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World" (Ahluwalia 8). What makes Singh's success a much-appreciated one is his multifaceted contribution to promoting and alleviating the Indian economy in 1991, when it faced a macroeconomic crisis. As finance minister then, Singh saw it as his responsibility to liberalise the economy and reverse its decline. Hailed as "one of the main architects of India's modern economy," Singh thus successfully honed his epistemic skills and "goal-oriented cognition" (Tee et al. 305) to accomplish a more significant duty towards the collective growth of the nation. Driving the nation to think and shape itself according to the demands of "modern

capital markets" (Ahluwalia 8), Singh's contribution is phenomenal in terms of the social mobilisation of the common Indian masses. In 2004, Singh became the Prime Minister of India, completing two consecutive terms. As Advani used politics to infiltrate and spread his accomplished epistemology, Singh, on the other hand, constantly demonstrated his devotion and servitude to India, the country that sheltered him during Partition. Advani's and Singh's journeys and their informed roles in national politics testify that while the "breakdown of social and institutional arrangements that ordinarily anchor human lives" (Lifton 14) can dismantle individuals, it can also be a triggering source of social optimism and dutifulness. In short, these stories of triumph exhibit that "if we can understand what helps some people to function well in the context of high adversity, we may be able to incorporate this knowledge into new practice strategies" (Fraser et al. 1999: 136), thereby making society more accommodative and efficient.

Conclusion

Ahluwalia's collection of these stories highlights the intimate and subjective experiences of ordinary people who had their most difficult days as refugees, displaced migrants, victims, and witnesses to Partition violence. The select stories dealt with in this paper represent those "who achieved public success" (Ahluwalia xvi) even after suffering the horrors of Partition. These individuals rebuilt themselves and contributed to the nation's collective development differently. Few became ideologically committed writers and filmmakers, while others endorsed national sports and politics. It must be noted that many others included in this collection whose stories we could not cover in this paper also took to "a wide variety of professions" (Ahluwalia xvii) and developed new epistemologies of hope and affirmation for themselves and the country. In rebuilding lives and constructing a new postcolonial India through their contributions to art, literature, sports, cinema, and politics, the stories of these individuals in Ahluwalia's collection confirm an alternative version of Partition historiography,

"that of hope and rebuilding" (Ahluwalia xvi). This particular volume can be understood as a practise in creative observation, or "slow looking," which serves as an endeavour intended to explore various methods of comprehension via the analysis of characters. The act of engaging in slow looking, with the intention of integrating meticulous examination and attentiveness, has the potential to challenge established disciplinary beliefs and highlight different epistemologies through various means (Mol 80-83).

Stories of this kind have a massive significance in enunciating that a traumatic event like that of Partition can never be underpinned in monolithic terms but must be revisited and reread through the lens of plurality, in which varied forms of knowledge production and representation exist beyond the singularized narratives of trauma, pain, loss, and devastation. This article attests to this critical aspect of Partition's historiography: that the individual and cultural epistemologies that entailed this event have been varied and manifold. In other words, the history of Partition is thus not merely about shattered families and broken individuals but more crucially about those who "sustain[ed] competence under pressure and [displayed] the capacity to recover from trauma" (Greene et al. 77), inculcated strategies to deal with degrading circumstances, and formulated new epistemologies as models of "social work practice" (Fraser and Galinsky 265) and profound resilience.

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