

Remembering Partition: Memory, Narrative and Representation

Abstract

The paper intends to trace the journey of the Partition seventy five years later in the context of memorialization; during a time when memories of the Partition survivors have been restructured, sifted and collaborated to mutually concur, thereby reformulating collective experiences and present identities. It underscores the usefulness of narrativity in the portrayal of historical facts, whose motive and manifestation make history interpretive, subjective, and dependent on the Partition survivor's narrative.

Memory is viewed as a crucial component of consciousness and depicts experience as a succession of events in time. Many of those who were uprooted and forced to flee during the Partition remember the traumatizing events more via their memories of the past than through history as we know it. The paper focuses on the academic interest of viewing the 'Partition from below' rather than deliberating over the politics of the British Empire and underlines the human emotion, representation and sociological dimension of the 1947 upheavals. It is a micro-history of Partition memories based on an interview with a Partition survivor I interviewed in 2020. Through their story, the paper interrogates how different Partition narratives might be usefully compared to academic studies of its many facets, which depict Partition as a collective process made up of numerous shards rather than as a single event. It critically reflects on the role of memory in relation to the physical, psychological and emotional spaces and put in perspective its occurrences and resulting effects. It further examines the realities of the displacement and trauma explored through the retellings of the event and its aftermath and interweaves testimony, memory, past and the present using personal experience as a narrative thread for study. The paper further explores the possibility of memory playing a trust-building role, a reconciliation promoting role and a healing role.