



IIT ROORKEE



NPTEL ONLINE
CERTIFICATION COURSE

Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema

LECTURE 48 - DISPLACED PEOPLE, ABANDONED HOMES

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HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Garm Hava (1973)

- MS Sathyu's *Garm Hava* ushered in a storm of change in Hindi cinema's treatment of the issue of Muslim isolation in pre-Partition India.
- The film is set against the immediate post-Partition decades, showing emigration of Muslims to the newly formed nation-state, Pakistan.
- Located in Agra just after the division of India into two separate countries, *Garm Hava* does not dwell on the riots and bloodshed that followed the Partition, but Sathyu's film masterfully aims to capture the **community's internal conflict**.
- The film follows the plight of a **North Indian Muslim businessman** and his family in the **aftermath of India's 1947 partition**.

Garm Hava (1973)

- Winner of the National Award for Best Film on Integration and Best Screenplay, 1974; Filmfare Award for Best Screenplay and Best Story Writer, 1974, several International awards and cult classic status among cinema critics and lovers of artistic cinema
- In the months following Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in 1948, the film's protagonist and patriarch of the family, **Salim Mirza, is torn between moving to Pakistan, like many of his relatives, and staying in India.**
- Heartbreak is a constant in the narration. But the sound of the broken heart is muffled in the aggressive voices of politicians and religious leaders seeking to establish their own self-interest in a nation that desperately needed selfless leaders in the post-Gandhian era.



Garm Hava (1973)

- The film was controversial from its inception, as it was the first film to deal with the human consequences resulting from the 1947 partition and did not have many takers at the inception stage. Sathyu had to secure the newly founded FFC's financing for his film.
- Even during the shoot in Agra, the film was plagued by protests.
- The crowded mohallas and gallis of Agra are shot in documentary style. But the characters don't seem to occupy that dispassionate space that documentaries are known to nurture.
- The complex narrative spells a powerful engagement through the pained eyes of Salim Mirza, a Muslim shoemaker and patriarch who does not want to relocate to Pakistan.



Garm Hava (1973)

- Garam Hava was banned initially and then saw the light after protracted lobbying with the censor board. The film is basically a testament to the struggle for identity and security endured by Muslims in North India who did not wish to move from their homes after the partition.
- *Maula salim chishti, aaqa salim chishti*
Aabaad kar do dil ki duniya salim Chishti (A song from *Garam Hava*)
- Salim believes in the grace of Allah; he adores Gandhi and believes that the Mahatma sacrificed his life urging the Hindus and Muslims can live together and heal the wound of Partition. He draws inspiration from Gandhi, and continues to run his shoe-making factory in Agra. Yet he apprehends that he is becoming irrelevant.
- Is he refusing to understand the mood of the times? And is he trying to retain the idealism that has lost its relevance after the departure of Gandhi?

Garm Hava (1973)

- The film depicts the Mirza family's **gradual disintegration** and is one of the most moving depictions of India's split. It depicts the plight of the Muslims as a minority community in India after the Partition.
- *Garm Hava* is recognised for launching a new phase of art filmmaking in Hindi cinema, and it, along with Shyam Benegal's *Ankur* (1973), are regarded as milestones of Hindi Parallel Cinema, which had already begun to flourish in other regions of India.
- Earlier, in the 1960s and early 1970 decades, Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak had made a number of path-breaking cinematic contributions, portraying the post-colonial Indian scenario.
- **Kaifi Azmi**, a well-known Urdu poet and lyricist, made *Garm Hava* based on Ismat Chughtai's story. While the original plot was around a station-master caught in the cross-fire during the Partition, Kaifi Azmi infused the picture with his own experiences as a union organiser for shoe factory workers.

Garm Hava (1973)

- In contrast to the original story, where the protagonist is merely a bystander watching his friends and family migrate, in the film Salim Mirza is in the middle of the emotional cauldron, as he watches his livelihood (shoe manufacturing) and **family disintegrate rapidly, making the Partition trauma personal.**
- As film director M.S. Sathyu puts it, the fundamental purpose of the film was to highlight the human effects, not the social and economic ramifications, of a large governmental decision like the Partition of India, to which none of its victims, the people, were contented - ***“What I really wanted to expose in Garm Hava was the games these politicians play...How many of us in India really wanted the partition. Look at the suffering it caused.”***
- Kaifi Azmi and Satyu's wife, **Shama Zaidi**, collaborated on the screenplay, with Kaifi Azmi contributing the dialogue.

Garm Hava (1973)

❖ What is the film about?

- In "Garm Hava," Salim Mirza (Balraj Sahni) sees his **family be torn apart** as one by one the relatives leave, most of them across the border and a beloved daughter for the other world.
- The film centres on the effects of Partition on Salim's family, who decided to stay in India after the division. Amina, his daughter, is engaged to his elder brother Halim's son, Kazim. **Kazim relocates to Pakistan** in search of work. His family, on the other hand, forces him to remain in Pakistan and marry another girl there.
- He returns to India to marry Amina but is deported to Pakistan after being jailed. Amina's heart is broken for some time. Shamsad is being pushed by her family. She accepts his courtship after some difficulty at first.

Garm Hava (1973)

- Garam Hava is not a character-driven film. It is based on the **experiences that have become archetypes of the soul of India.**
- It deals with the feelings, heart-breaks, sensations, dreams, sense of loss and traumas – the human dimension of the Partition and the human sacrifice that went into the making of the two nations.
- The movie experience relies on the audience's **willingness to suspend disbelief.**
- The audience is persuaded through all the diverse elements that come together to create a cinematic experience —such as the sequencing of scenes, the staging of action, the movement or stillness of the camera, the scripted, memorised, rehearsed, measured, timed, and delivered language, the birth and nurturing of characters, the orchestration of light, and the composition of music.

Garm Hava (1973)

- The cinematic devices reflect a well-spliced, invisibly strung-together reality when used together, which leaves a lasting impression.
- This is the kind of **uncommon cinema** that serves art's fundamental purpose. **It prompts the conscience, stirs the soul, lifts the spirit, and stimulates the heart.**
- Dealing with the dignity of the Muslim as a minority in post-Partition India, and the question of the Muslim's isolation, the significance of "Garm Hava" resonates with the socio-political fabric of the different South Asian nations till date.
- **Amina's love, her longing, her naïve desire to spend her life with someone who truly loves her, is the love that cannot be curbed by man-made boundaries.**

Garm Hava (1973)

- Amina emerges as far more than a Muslim woman because of her relatability, and her **tragic humanity**.
- She is a human being whose heart is broken by fate's cruelties. After Halim fails his promise to return from Pakistan soon, Amina and her family have virtually given up on her marrying Kazim.
- Kazim returns on his own, revealing that his father had been adamant that he not marry Amina, preferring instead to marry the daughter of a Pakistani politician.
- After receiving a scholarship from the Pakistani government to study in Canada, Kazim wishes to marry Amina before leaving, but he is apprehended by police and deported to Pakistan for travelling without a passport and failing to register at the police station, as is required of all Pakistani citizens.



Garm Hava (1973)

- Amina accepts Shamshad's courtship despite her heartbreak.
- Salim's son Sikander (Farooq Sheikh) faces a string of failed job interviews, with **interviewers advising him that he would do better in Pakistan.**
- Sikander and his friends become **disillusioned and organise a protest against unemployment and discrimination**, but Salim forbids him from participating.
- Salim Mirza's brother-in-law, despite his political connections, becomes in debt as **a result of dubious business activities and decides to emigrate to Pakistan.**
- Amina is faced with the idea of losing her beloved once more, but Shamshad assures her that he will return and would not abandon her as Kazim did.

Garm Hava (1973)

- Shamshad's mother arrives from Pakistan for a visit, causing Amina and her mother to believe that Shamshad would also arrive shortly, and the couple would marry.
- Shamshad's mother, on the other hand, uses Salim Mirza's contacts to get some of her husband's money released, and reveals that Shamshad's marriage is planned with the daughter of a well-connected Pakistani family.
- Amina's family is **devastated** by her **second betrayal, and she commits suicide**. Amina (Gita Siddharth) – Salim's daughter – experiences the violence of division. Amina, who is neither legally engaged to a man nor married, but is no longer a virgin, resides in a fluid and transient third space. When Shamshad's mother confirms Shamshad's upcoming marriage to a local Pakistani politician, she firmly locks her into that third zone.
- The death of her hope and her suicide refer to the death of humane interface and failure of the possibilities of love and bonding between Indians and Pakistanis.
- The lovers' migration to Pakistan, the destiny of separation and the search for new fortune – neither Kazim nor Shamshad can come back and unite with the beloved. The divided nation with fractured independence doesn't allow Amina to live; her suicide is the ultimate tale of the trauma of Partition: the loss of the feminine amid the cowardice and conspiracy of masculinity.



Garm Hava (1973)

- Both Amina and her grandmother exist in a **space that disfigures and displaces their lived and known binaries** – their known precincts of home.
- The grandmother dies as soon as she is returned to her own 'local habitat' and Amina manages to escape herself through suicide. **Sathyu's narrative cannot stray too far from stereotypical closure for both women.**
- Her moment of death at the ancestral house (Salim somehow manages to take her there), the movement of her eyes and her quest reveal the meaning of a home – the land filled with memories, the spirited space that cannot be divided geographically.
- The havelis (ancestral house) become a part of the individuals who live in them for decades (and the haveli may also be considered as a symbol for the nation), and this is most eloquently demonstrated in the scenes with Salim's mother.
- When the **Mirzas are forced to be displaced, she fights back**, clinging to the walls and screaming that she'd rather die than leave. She later insists on sleeping on the terrace of their new lodging because she can see the haveli in the distance from there.

Garm Hava (1973)

- A sequence in which the dying woman is taken back to her home in a palki is shot to evoke her recollections of her first visit to the haveli - probably as a young bride in a palanquin decades back.
- Other characters – the Hindu friend who never fails to support Salim Mirza, the Pakistani refugees who seek vengeance, Salim Mirza's wife who tries to keep a crumbling home together while her own heart is broken, the youth who fight for their right to work, the rickshaw driver who is oblivious to deeper political currents – shape the narrative
- These are **archetypes, not specific people, but symbols of specific reactions to the violence inside one's hearts and the partition that expressed that violence in the physical world.**

Garm Hava (1973)

- Salim Mirza's **unwillingness to modernise** and build links with the newly formed shoemakers' union leads to his business failing due to a lack of patronage. His son **Baqar**, disillusioned, chooses to relocate to Pakistan with his son and wife.
- Salim's elderly mother has a stroke, and through the help of a friend, he is able to transport her to her old home for a final visit, where she passes away.
- While riding a horse-drawn carriage whose driver is a Muslim, Salim gets into an accident and gets into a fight with other people.
- The incident escalates into a riot, and Salim is injured after being struck by a stone. Salim starts working as a poor shoemaker to make ends meet now that his business and elder son are all gone.
- His physical injury in the mob violence reveals the degree of humiliation and stigmatisation he is passing through. It is like being crucified in one's own land.

Garm Hava (1973)

- Unlike Salim, his elder brother Halim Mirza is a Machiavellian – a leader of the Indian Muslim League, and despite his promise to stay in India and work with the Muslims here, he emigrates to Pakistan with his wife and son. The film depicts beautifully his narcissism as he loves to hear the echo of his own fiery speeches.
- Salim, despite losing his credibility in the community because of his brother's deeds, retains his hope in the possibility of leading a dignified life in India. However, with the changing socio-political reality after Partition, Salim experiences scorching wind – the existential, political and economic turmoil of the troubled times.
- First, it becomes exceedingly difficult to run the business. As banks and lenders become reluctant to lend money to Muslim businessmen (it is feared that without repaying the loan they would eventually migrate to Pakistan). At this moment of economic hardship Salim, instead of bowing down, Salim redefines himself as a humble, internalizing the Gandhian lesson of the dignity of labour to earn his living with self-dignity.
- Yet, Baquar – his eldest son who used to help his father in business –migrates to Pakistan. Furthermore, Salim loses the large ancestral house after his elder brother's departure. Salim keeps experiencing the pain of loss, separation and increasing marginalisation. Everyone leaves – Halim, Baquar and then his brother-in law. He experiences a lack of trust as everyone suspects him. His Muslim identity becomes a major obstacle.
- Salim is investigated on charges of espionage over his sending plans of their former property to his brother in Karachi.



Garm Hava (1973)

- The movie ends with a poem/shairi by Kaifi Azmi:
"Jo door se toofan ka karte hai nazara, unke liye toofan vahan bhi hai yahan bhi...
Daare me jo mil jaoge ban jaoge daara, yeh waqt ka ailaan vahan bhi hai yahan bhi"
- Despite the scorching wind of Partition, *Garam Hawa* ends with a ray of hope.
- For how long can Salim live in India as a tormented/unwanted entity? He too decides to leave the country with his wife and younger son Sikander (Farooq Shaikh). As the *tonga* moves towards Agra railway station (a symbolic site in the film depicting the journey towards Pakistan), the situation changes.
- There is a huge demonstration, the ecstasy of togetherness, a moment of collective struggle for justice and equality in the tormented nation. Sikander and then Salim decide to break their insulation and become part of the confluence of struggling people.
- This time the tonga does not go to Agra station; it undertakes a reverse journey, and takes Salim's wife to her own land and her home.



Thank You

