

THE BORDER AND PUNJABI IDENTITY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “The Border and Punjabi Identity” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.



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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The independence of India from British rule in 1947 was accompanied by a partition on religious lines. It led to the creation of Pakistan on the basis of the “two-nation theory”. This theory posited that Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations who cannot co-exist. While the Muslim population feared being subjugated by a Hindu majority in independent India, Hindus came to see the Muslims as outsiders, especially in light of the violent history of Islam’s arrival in India. This dichotomous conception of India’s social reality is often seen as a manifestation of the British policy of divide and counterpoise (divide and rule), wherein peoples were classified and divided on the basis of their multiple identities and their interests pitted in opposition to those of others.

The partition was focused on the two regions of Punjab and Bengal. As the British had already experimented with the implementation of a partition in Bengal in 1905, they were well aware of the drastic consequences if such a policy were implemented at the time of their exit. As it happened, the “excessive geopolitics” that played out in these regions, whereby geopolitical thinking triumphed over all forms of non-geopolitical thinking, led to widespread violence and migration of the people. Punjab was to be an important theatre of this excessive geopolitics.

The noun ‘Punjabi’ is defined as belonging or relating to the *region* of Punjab. As a consequence of the partition and the erection of a border through Punjab, this term has come to mean either the Indian or the Pakistani province, while the Punjabi diaspora has been regarded as a “third Punjab”. The Punjabi identity comprises multiple dimensions that include linguistic, geographical, and cultural factors. On the face of it, it is a trans-border territorial identity at the scale of a region. The territoriality of the Punjabi identity may be regarded as constitutive of the other dimensions, that is to say that the analytic unit of the region of Punjab consists of not only the territory, but also the culture and language of Punjab.

With the territorial division of Punjab in 1947, this identity too had to go through a division, as the impenetrable border came to restrict the flow of people and ideas. This

was so because the partition, which occurred primarily on the basis of religion, was both preceded and succeeded by an acknowledgement of the religious identities (Hindu-Muslim-Sikh) as being more important than other identities, such as cultural, ethnolinguistic, territorial, etc.

Before partition, Punjab consisted of the British province of Punjab along with princely states of Patiala, Bahawalpur, among others. The Punjabi identity spanned across the region in terms of language, customs, and common cultural heritage and symbols. Historically, Punjab along with Sindh has been central to the territorial conception of India, as both the names derive etymologically from the Indus River system. The usage of Punjab as the name for this region is of a relatively recent origin though.

The partition and the erection of an international border in Punjab have had a significant effect on the Punjabi identity. While in West Punjab, the hegemony of the Pakistani identity has suppressed the Punjabi identity, in the Indian federal system, although the Punjabi identity has adequate space to be expressed and realized, the partition is still remembered and lamented as an instance of grave injustice. It may be noted that while in post-partition India, secularism and federalism were the two demands that the nation made on the loyalties of the citizens; in Pakistan, the Urdu language and Islamic identity exercised parallel hegemonies. India's secularism and federalism, with all their attendant issues, have allowed the Punjabi identity to exist, while the parallel hegemonies of language and religion in Pakistan have reduced the Punjabi identity to a secondary place in people's consciousness.

After the partition, both sides have gone through different processes of spatial socialization. This is due to the different and characteristically antagonistic nation-building processes of India and Pakistan, and also due to the fact of the border. The border symbolises not only the territorial boundary between India and Pakistan, but also the memory of the partition. It plays a crucial role in the socialisation of Punjabi people and how they come to make sense of their space, of Punjab, and of their Punjabi identity. With the other Punjab effectively erased from their respective maps, a distorted spatial socialisation has been taking place for the Punjabi people.

This study aims to understand the relationship between the Punjabi identity and the border in Punjab in terms of the resilience of this identity since the region is divided by a border, and also in terms of how the border is understood and imagined by Punjabi

people. First, Punjabi identity shall be examined in a historical context through the colonial period. The second aspect will analyse the post-partition Punjabi identity that has been split between India and Pakistan. The third aspect shall cover cross-border interactions and the border poetics of Punjab. Border poetics can be defined as a set of strategies for analysing and identifying processes of border-making and border permeability in contemporary societies.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

This section reviews the relevant conceptual literature on borders and identity, and empirical literature on Punjab and the partition:

Borders: A border is a political boundary, a geographical line that divides two political entities. Though primarily falling within the domain of Political Geography, the study of borders has been an interdisciplinary enterprise conducted in the fields of anthropology, IR, political science, sociology, literary criticism and folklore. Border studies is concerned with investigating the *meanings, histories, and functions* of borders.

The meanings, definitions and typologies of borders and political boundaries have been given and clarified by a number of scholars (Prescott 1987, Minghi 1967, Donnan and Wilson 1999, Vaughan-Williams 2009, Van Houtum and Van Naerssem 2002). They elucidate categories and concepts like border, bordering, frontier, boundary, borderland, borderlanders, etc. The histories, evolution and development of borders and Border studies have been examined by Paasi (1996, 2005, 2005a, 2009), Newman and Paasi (1998), Rumford (2014), Parker and Vaughan-Williams et al (2009), Deleixhe et al (2019) and Kolossov (2005). The study of borders has over the previous century shifted from chorology, i.e., geographical causation of borders, to being a spatial science (Paasi 2005). The functions and roles of borders have been described as the production and reproduction of territoriality/territory, state power, human agency and experience, and as being instruments of state policy and territorial control, markers of identity, and discourses manifesting in different ways (Anderson 1997; Paasi 2005; Szary and Giraut 2015).

In one of the seminal works on borderlands, Baud and Van Schendel (1997: 211) state that national borders are political constructs and imagined projections of territorial power, and the specific effects of the imposition of a border on the region dissected by it requires comparative historical research of borderlands. Further, the ethnographic approaches in Border Studies focus on the human experiences of boundaries (Rumley and Minghi 1991).

Borders and Identity: The study of identity spans across disciplines. The link between territory and identity is a complex yet crucial one. A historical overview of identity as both an analytical category and a category of practice has been provided by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) in which the authors suggest that one can analyse “Identity-talks” and identity politics without positing the existence of “identities”.

Within Area Studies, the intersection of borders and identity has been theoretically explored by Agnew (2008: 179) who suggests that being inherently territorial, identities bind people together through the social power of adjacency. Lapid et al (eds.) (2001) have critically examined the link between borders and identity from the perspective of International Relations and have proposed an analytical triad of identities, borders, and orders (IBO) to nudge IR theory in a new direction.

The question of identity vis-à-vis border, territory, scales, nation, and state has been explored at length by Herb and Kaplan (2017) and also critically by Laine and Casaglia (2017). While discussing the ‘excessive geopolitics’ that went into the making of the partition, Chaturvedi (2005) remarks that the imperial construction and manipulation of ethnopolitical identities in India was supplemented by the systematic construction and cultivation of binary geographies of fear along a minority/majority axis. The relation between ethnic identity and conflict in South Asia has been analysed by Sahadevan (1998, 2002). A European Commission report on Border Discourse (Meinhof 2005) has examined the border communities in Europe and their changing identities.

The Punjab Border: There has been much written about the India-Bangladesh border, the Indo-China border, the Line of Control between India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir (van Schendel 2004, Ling et al 2016, Banerjee 2010) as well as South Asian borders in general (Van Schendel and de Maaker 2014, Gellner 2013, Mishra 2008, Tripathi and Chaturvedi 2020), but there is a lack of literature on the border region of

Punjab. Sekhon (2014) has undertaken an extensive study of how the fencing by the BSF has disrupted the farming activity of the people and in turn inflicted upon them multiple deprivations. The involuntary migration, as a result of war or war-like situations in the border areas of Punjab, has also figured in some literature (Sekhon and Sharma 2019), just as the forced migration that occurred during the partition has been written about from different perspectives (Godbole 2006, Ahmed 2011). At the same time, the effective border in Kashmir, known as the Line of Control, has been studied by many (Bhan and Aggarwal 2009, Gupta 2013) who take the social, instead of the political, as their point of departure.

With regard to South Asian borders, Gellner (2013) suggests that boundaries in a broader sense have always been there in South Asia and the barriers they place between different categories of people and the ways in which these barriers are transgressed or ignored have long been the concern of South Asian history and anthropology. Some scholars have examined the link between borders and conflict in South Asia (Chester 2009, Van Schendel 2007). However, the border of Punjab has been relatively neglected.

Punjabi Identity: There exists a fair amount of literature on Punjab, the Punjabi identity, and the Partition of India. Historical accounts of the region have been given by some scholars (Gandhi 2013, Grewal 2004). There are detailed explanations of the causes and factors of the partition of India and that of Punjab (Ambedkar 1945, Moon 1961, Lapierre and Collins 1975, Talbot and Singh 2000, Panigrahi 2004, Sarila 2005, Philips 2007, Sekhri 2007, Ahmed 2011, Roy 2012, Chatterjee 2019). The Punjabi identity has been explored at length both historically (Singh and Thandi 1999, Puri 1984, Oberoi 1987, Singh and Kaur 2008), and in terms of the memory of the partition and diaspora (Kabir 2004, Das 2006, Yusin 2009, Taylor 2014, Roy 2015). While some scholars have looked at the possibility of resolving the India-Pakistan issue by bringing the two Punjabs together and highlighting the common identity of ‘Punjabiyyat’, meaning ‘Punjabiness’ (Ayres 2006, Maini 2007, Maini 2011, Gandhi 2013), some others have analysed the phenomenon of separatism in Punjab (Puri 1984, Bakke 2009).

While talking about Punjabi literature, Mir (2010) claims that apart from caste/kinship and gender, one of the themes found in it is that of territoriality, a particular “spatial

imagination” that is based on the affective attachment of people with their local and natal places.

It is evident that the Punjabi identity has not been explored with reference to the Punjab border. A study of the Punjab border shall bring insights on how an artificial border impacts the identity divided by it. As the partition of India primarily consisted of the partition of the two provinces of Bengal and Punjab, the people of these two regions can be regarded as the most immediate survivors/victims of it. The processes through which the border has been socialized into their everyday lives, and the consequent impact of these on the people of Punjab, can be useful for developing the border studies paradigm with respect to South Asia. How the state and the logic of the state affect the everyday lives of the people here, and how they contemplate their Punjabi identity are issues that shall be explored.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the research shall be as follows:

1. To understand the effects of border on the Punjabi identity.
2. To examine how the border is understood by the people of Punjab.
3. To examine how the partition is remembered and understood in Punjab.
4. To examine border as an analytical category for framing identity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do Punjabi people make sense of the concept of the ‘border’?
2. How can the post-partition Punjabi identity be understood in the context of the Punjab border?
3. What are the Border Poetics employed by the people of Punjab to negotiate with the border?

These questions allow us to arrive at a postmodern understanding of this border, using the notions of “discourse and the social construction of space” (Kolossoff 2005: 613). The questions are aimed at gauging the extent to which the Punjabi identity has or has not been resilient in the face of the liminality caused by the border.

HYPOTHESES:

The study intends to test the following hypotheses:

1. Cultural and territorial identities such as Punjabi are the major factors in politics.
2. A border not only divides but also unites identities.

DEFINITIONS, RATIONALE, AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The conceptual framework for the proposed study is drawn from the domains of Partition studies, Identity Studies, and Border Studies. Oberoi (1987) explains how there are different Punjabs (Guru Nanak’s, Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s, British) and that the idea of Punjab as a territory is in fact a very vague one. But the culture and society within the region enable a Punjabi identity to exist.

To begin with, I shall borrow the following definition of Punjabi identity:

‘Punjabiyaat’ refers to a commonly held, all-encompassing view of Punjabi culture, society and being Punjabi as an individual. It thus refers both to larger structures of social or community organisation (such as kinship networks, caste identities, religious beliefs and practices, understandings of gender roles, etc.), as well as to individual Punjabi values (such as bravery, resilience, honour and heartiness). (Das 2006: 468)

Describing substate territorial attachment through the framework of ‘regionalism’, Knight (1982: 518) states that such an identity means “the awareness of togetherness among people of a relatively large area”. The Punjabi identity shall be considered as a substate territorial identity from this perspective of regionalism.

The partition of India and the creation of Pakistan can be seen as an instance of how the European concept of the international boundary as a strictly defined line was

imposed on regions in Asia and Africa where no such thing had existed previously. (Kolossoff 2005: 611, Chester 2009: 125). It was a remarkable event also because it “made the perceived gulf between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs a much starker and more violently enforced division than it had ever been before” (Chester 2009: 125). Put simply, the partition served to create not only a political border but also a mental border that divided identities. It was premised on the two-nation theory and the majority/minority axis of religious identities. However, it failed to take into account the significance of territorial and cultural identities. Borders and Identities are, it would seem, closely intertwined concepts, especially in the case of the Punjab region.

Emphasising that othering is not merely a perceptual phenomenon, Tripathi (2016: 17) contends that it is also an ontological phenomenon. A border provides a sufficient ontology for othering. By taking cognisance of the concept of identity and its relation to the border, a ‘Deleuzian Ontology’ appears apt to envisage an interdisciplinary study of borders as it not only investigates but also problematises the assumed logic of the border. Viewed from the Deleuzian perspective of Differential Ontology, “Discriminations between players are ... needed, but [they are] neither fixed nor inherently hostile” (Parker 2009: 34). This becomes an important observation as neither is the border a fixed entity, nor the identities surrounding it. Therefore, the study shall make “an analysis of the existing hegemonic and competing narratives on boundaries, ideas of identity, political and territorial loyalties or the territorialization of memory” (Paasi, 2009: 229-30) in the case of Punjab.

The state, rooted in a grammar of fixed boundaries and identities, is treated as a “given” (Agnew 2005: 440). Such conceptions hamper our capability for recognising multi-layered identities and reduce identity narratives to ‘either-or’, ‘insider-outsider’ binaries. It is therefore important to recognise such taken-for-granted notions about borders, given how they vary over time and space. Borders and identities are not fixed, but rather the identities at the margins of entities are “continuously being determined and redetermined” (Parker 2009: 18). The borders are contingent, context-based, and so are the identities.

By re-orienting a focus on the Punjabi identity vis-à-vis the border, the research will shed light on everyday discourses and practices that subvert the state-centered ways of thinking and organizing. It would highlight the narratives and identities, and the

processes that go into the making of these narratives and identities, which run counter to, sometimes challenge, and sometimes present alternatives to the narratives of “methodological nationalism” (Van Schendel and de Maaker 2014).

Thus, this research can be relevant to policy makers and students of South Asian studies alike, as by understanding the borderlands with more precision, it could help evolve a paradigm for peace in the region that emanates from the border in place of the “geography of trauma” (Yusin 2009: 459) inscribed by the border. Ayres (2006) has proposed the idea of peace through cultural diplomacy using the historically located features of the Punjabi culture, such as the inclusive Sufi tradition and the syncretic Sikh religion, the Punjabi literature that binds the Punjabi people, great poets such as Waris Shah and Bulleh Shah, etc. Mir (2010) observes that the spatial imagination of Hir Ranjha is the “habit of understanding social relationships as inherently connected to geographic spaces” (ibid: 134) and such an imagination of a ‘region’ is pivotal to narratives like Hir-Ranjha. She adds that the region “emerges in these texts less as a political geographical entity (the “Punjab” of British colonial administration) than as an imagined ensemble of natal places within a particular topography (rivers, riverbanks, forests, and mountains) and religious geography (Sufi shrines and Hindu monasteries).”

As regards the scope of the study, it covers the spatial socialisation of the Punjab border in the Indian Punjab. It focuses on the Punjabi identity during the colonial and post-colonial periods and essentially, the “territorialisation of society and memory” (Paasi, 2009, p. 226) in Punjab is examined and put into perspective. The theme of territoriality is one of the three themes (beside kinship and gender) that are critical to the notions of self and community in Punjab according to Mir (2010: 123). This theme is explored at length, as it “emphasizes the affective attachments [that] people [establish] with the local, and particularly their natal places” (ibid). The study tries to uncover how the people view themselves and their identity vis-à-vis their territorial affinity with the borderland.

METHODOLOGY:

“IR theory has too often assumed that 'a state is a state is a state'” (Hurrell 2007: 133), at the cost of the historical and sociological depth that is involved in international relations. The study of borders has drawn attention to how historical processes shape

the ordering of space. In order to capture the social realities of the borderlands, the study uses a non-positivist methodology. It relies on the Phenomenological approach to understand how the people of the borderlands view their 'life-worlds' and form 'typifications', and the Psychogeographic approach, as delineated by Stein (2013) and Coverley (2006), to understand how borders are used to differentiate between us and them, inside and outside, good and evil, and how such a differentiation becomes difficult or rather problematic when the people differentiated as such possess similar traits or qualities. The Psychogeographic lens of Guy Debord also deals with how the external geographic environment affects human emotions and behaviour. Given that political borders fall within the realm of political geography, it may be useful to consider the effects of borders on human behaviour and thinking for the case at hand.

In developing tools for analysing the territorial roots of contemporary violence in South Asia, Van Schendel (2007: 37) states that "sovereignty, territoriality and violence all take on specific forms in this region" and devises the notion of 'Radcliffian Issues' to "refer to a group of territorial disputes that emerged from the crudeness of the Partition of 1947". The study adds to this framework the issue of liminality that the Radcliffe line has left so many people in, socially, economically, politically, and psychologically, in terms of their orientation towards their identity, occupation, territory, and cognition, respectively.

Given the nature of the research, qualitative method of data collection is adopted. Historical analysis is also employed as and when required. Secondary data consists of literature on Punjabi identity and the Punjab borderland, and government reports and archives.

CHAPTERS:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the background of the study and its objectives. It includes an overview of the relevant literature and the definitions of relevant concepts and terms.

Chapter 2: Border and Identity

This chapter delineates the theoretical assumptions and the conceptual framework of the study. It explains the meanings of border and identity and their relationship with each other as per contemporary debates in Border studies and Area Studies. It elaborates the concepts like bordering, othering, ethnic identity, etc. and examines their relevance with respect to the context of Punjab.

Chapter 3: Punjabi Identity in the Pre-Partition period

This chapter examines the Punjabi identity from a historical perspective. It delineates the main features of this identity and how it was understood during the colonial period. The chapter treats Punjabi identity as a territorial identity and analyses how it can be situated among the various identities of the region.

Chapter 4: Punjabi Identity in the Post- Partition period

This chapter compares and contrasts the divided Punjabi identity and how it has been understood post-partition. It reflects upon the differences that have emerged between the two Punjabs as a consequence of the differing socialization and nation-building processes of India and Pakistan. It takes into account the presence of the border and how that has affected the people's perception of their identity.

Chapter 5: Border and the Liminal Punjabi Identity

This chapter describes the border from a Punjabi perspective. It analyses the processes through which the border in Punjab has been understood and made sense of by the Punjabi people. It considers border poetics in terms of how the border is imagined and transgressed through stories and music. It also examines how the border stands as a reminder of people's identities at different scales of nation, region, village, etc.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The concluding chapter summarizes the arguments, tests the hypotheses and presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER - 2

BORDER AND IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter delineates the theoretical assumptions and the conceptual framework of the study. It elaborates the meanings of border and identity and their relationship with each other as per contemporary debates in Border Studies and Area Studies, with a focus on concepts like bordering, othering, ethnic identity, etc. and their relevance with respect to the context of Punjab. This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part explains the scope of Border Studies and their relevance. The second part defines the concepts of border, bordering, border regions, etc. The third part considers the relation between border and identity. The last part of the chapter gives an overview of the relevance of Border Studies in South Asia with respect to Punjab.

WHAT ARE BORDER STUDIES?

The study of borders, not merely as geographical lines but also as phenomena that continuously shape human lives, spans across disciplines. Though primarily falling within the domain of Political Geography, the study of borders has been an interdisciplinary enterprise conducted in the fields of anthropology, IR, political science, sociology, literary criticism and folklore. Within Political Geography, it is predominantly concerned with the issues of territoriality and geopolitics and the concepts of sovereignty and identity, along with the processes of bordering, ordering, and othering. Scholars are interested in understanding the histories, meanings, and functions of borders around the world. Like any other theoretical concept, border too is a historical and political concept, although it is often treated as a given.

Etymologically, the meaning of border in the English language in the sense of a city or country's boundary can be traced to the 14th century, when the word border replaced the word march as meaning a geographical boundary (Online Etymology Dictionary (n.d.)). The word for border in Hindi and Sanskrit is Seema.

Borders are seemingly ubiquitous in nature, that is, they are all around us. They have been a primary concern in Political Geography. The coinage of the term “Political Geography” was aimed at showing the relationship between geographic facts and political organisation, and it later morphed into “Geopolitics”. This branch of knowledge is focused broadly around questions of political territoriality and boundary-making.

In the postmodern approach of “Critical Geopolitics”, international conflicts are understood in terms of the competing narratives or stories each side tells about itself and the other, nationalist identities are seen as constructed around popular memories that need commemoration and celebration at sites of ritual or “places of memory”, and groups invent and maintain identities by associating with particular places and the images such places communicate to the larger audience (Agnew et al 2003: 4).

Borders often serve as places of memory, where the competing narratives of incompatible identities are constantly performed and reinscribed. From this perspective, a border or boundary is regarded as an “essentially contested concept” (Gallie 1956), implying that it involves a range of disputes about its meaning and usage. The objective of the postmodern approach to border security is to resolve these disputes and “find a delicate balance among the needs of border security, the development of cross-boundary cooperation, and the interests of the central governments and border regions.” (Kolossoff 2005: 622-623)

Borders are, first and foremost, highly relevant to the idea of nation-states as they demarcate the territorial limits of a state. Borders demarcate and divide separate political entities or nation-states. It may even be argued that a nation becomes a nation-state when it has fixed borders. When considered on different scales, borders are pertinent not only to define the limits of nation-states, but also those of provinces, regions, districts, tehsils, talukas, etc. The academic interest in borders ranges from “what happens at, across and because of the borders, to nations and states, and in extension to other geopolitical borders and boundaries, such as those of cities, regions and supranational polities” (Donnan and Wilson 2012: 1).

However, defining borders theoretically (Border Theory) is as cumbersome as it is to define or understand them geographically or geopolitically (Border Studies). Donnan and Wilson (2012: 2) explain that “Once principally the focus of geography, the study

of territorial, geophysical, political and cultural borders today has become a primary, abiding and growing interest across the scholarly disciplines”. They view this study to be divided between Border Theory and Border Studies, whereby Border Theory mainly seeks answers to questions about how identity, territory, and the state are interrelated in the formation of the self and of group identification, while Border Studies are concerned with the political economies of geopolitical entities. Both these streams feed into each other. Johnson and Samuelsen (1997: 2) regard Border Theory as a part of the scope of Border Studies and claim that “the "limit" for border theory's growth is the re-inscription of the various disciplines as instances of border studies”, implying that just about any academic discipline can be seen as dealing with borders in one way or another.

Theory plays an important role in the emerging discipline of Border Studies and efforts have been made to theorise the political, economic, social, psychological or cultural meanings of boundaries (Paasi 2009). The major themes in this theorisation include de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, the role of borders in the construction of socio-spatial identities, boundary narratives embodied in the national socialization processes, and the roles of various spatial scales. It is evident that the dominant ideas in the discipline have been those of territory, identity, sovereignty and nation-making, and scales. The interplay among these concepts or ideas is the focus of border studies. In discussing Latin American literature, Hicks (1991: xxix) suggests that “border writing might be conceived as a framing of certain crucial interactions: nature and technology, humans and nature, popular culture and mass culture, meaning and nonmeaning”. The Border metaphor, therefore, is crucial to border writing. It allows us to take cognisance of divisions and interactions that occur all around us.

There are primarily two kinds of literature on borders, one leaning towards security studies and having a focus on the coercive dimensions of borders, and the other that regards boundaries and borderlands as the meeting point of cultures and communities (Deleixhe et al 2019). This may be regarded as the difference between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ borders. The former looks at borders as militarized sites whose main purpose is to regulate or prevent the flow of goods, people and ideas across them. The latter, borderlands studies, views borders as places where distinct communities interact and their differences are rendered immaterial. However, “borderlands studies and security studies have virtually no dialogue” (ibid: 643) between them and this creates a

paradoxical situation whereby “[t]he unique social environments found in borderlands appear to be both, though not simultaneously, privileged locations for the development of intense transnational social relations and hotbeds for divisive processes of othering and bordering” (ibid: 645). This appears to be one of the most fundamental contradictions in border studies.

The binary between seeing the border as a threat versus seeing the border as an opportunity is rooted in the human psychological processes of othering, through which the self is differentiated from the other and a form of relationality develops between the two. “The border metaphor reconstructs the relationship to the object rather than the object itself: as a metaphor, it does not merely represent an object but rather produces an interaction between the connotative matrices of an object in more than one culture” (Hicks 1991: xxix). In Border Studies, there are essentially two forms of relationality imagined regarding borders: the “cosmopolitan” and the “communitarian” (Brown 2001). The former, represented by the liberal school of thought, posits the “social contract” theory to be the basis of society but they fail to explain how one society is to be differentiated from another, i.e., how bordering occurs. Their conception of a universal, cosmopolitan, de-bordered world also comes into conflict with their defence for cultural diversity and distinct ways of life. This is so because “if we do not hold that communities in general are entitled to defend themselves [through borders], why should we hold that minority communities are so entitled?” (Ibid: 125). The liberal perspective gets entangled in this contradiction between aspired homogenization and actual heterogeneity.

Whereas the communitarian perspective differs from it over the question of the nature of identity, in that it allows a “wider latitude to difference” (Ibid: 126) than the cosmopolitan perspective. It does not distinguish between the universal/cosmopolitan ‘human’ identity and the particular, community identities, rather it regards the cultural identities as terms that already encompass our humanity: “We are not human beings who happen to be Inuit or Quebecois; we are Inuit and/or Quebecois, terms that already contain our humanity” (Ibid: 128). In other words, we are not humans who happen to be Indian or Punjabi, but being Indian and Punjabi are the defining characteristics of our existence. It recognises not only the significance and inevitability of identity but also the multiplicity of identities, including in the sense of one person having a number of identities simultaneously. In a globalising world, a balance between the two

aforementioned perspectives can be found in the “coexistence of a number of different kinds of borders and identities” (Ibid: 133).

The principle of differentiation is essentially a bordering principle. According to Hegel, individuals and states become what they are by differentiating themselves from one another (1956, 1991; as cited in Brown 2001: 129). In the international realm, this differentiation function of ‘bordering’ is performed by the border: “Beyond designating a nation state, a political entity and its jurisdictional terrain, borders attempt to define the difference between one large group’s identity from that of another.” (Castelloe 2016). The border tells us who we are, and it also tells us who we are not. In this way, borders are also a mental phenomenon. Border is indeed a very crucial concept in international relations, especially because it acts as the divide between the ‘domestic’ ‘political’ and the ‘international’ realms. It informs us as to what makes our neighbours different from us, and also serves as a site for the possible resolution of such differences.

In developing an agenda for critical Border Studies, Parker and Vaughan-Williams (2009) delineate three important dimensions of Border studies: Epistemology, Ontology, and Spatiality-Temporality. As for the epistemology, the authors claim that borders have an epistemological seduction in that they provide comfort, certainty, and security. They ask whether it is possible to define an epistemology, possibly one of viewing borders as border/body experiences, that is founded on uncertainty and avoids the seduction of the fixed border. The focus of this agenda is “how divisions between entities appear, or are produced and sustained” (Ibid: 586). Therefore, keeping in line with this view, the Punjabi identity can be understood in terms of the divisions that it signifies and contains within itself.

WHAT IS A BORDER?

Broadly, Border Studies are concerned with investigating the meanings, histories, and functions of borders:

Meanings: Before defining a/the border, the first question that arises is whether borders are real, and if so, where do they come from and how do they come about? Ontologically, the bordering principle is a binary principle. It creates a divide between

us and them, domestic and foreign, good and evil, etc. Following Hegel's ideas on logic, Trisokkas (2014) has suggested that borders have an inherent logic to them which is not debatable. Borders invariably exist in an ontological realm, regardless of the various forms they take, which means that they have a 'being' and are an integral feature of reality. Borders are essential to our perception of reality.

Regardless of whether the bordering logic is a 'Westphalian' one (that emphasises binary distinctions), or a 'Maghreb' logic (that does not exactly divide sides) (Green 2012: 578), there is an underlying logic nevertheless. This line of thought recognises that the manifestations of the concept of border may be different over time and space, and yet the category of the border underlies these variations at all times. The intensity and effects of the border may differ in different instances, and this inability to be defined is in fact a defining characteristic of the border. Following this approach, by accepting the infallibility of the logic or concept of the border, "[t]he inevitability of borders is simply assumed" (Agnew 2008: 177) in border studies.

Contrarily, this inherent logic of the border can also be debated and problematised. In the Advaita tradition of Indian philosophy, for instance, there is supposedly a unity that pervades all existence and borders may be regarded from this viewpoint as merely illusory. At the same time, recognising or acknowledging borders is not the same thing as defining or understanding them. It has been noted that "[n]ot even the tendency for borders to change regularly is an inherent characteristic of borders" (Green 2012: 575). It is thus not necessary that the border should change over time, for example, in the cases of permanent geographical features serving as borders. A border therefore contains the binary logic within itself: it exists but it cannot be easily identified, and when it is identified, it cannot easily exist. Although the ways in which borders are understood may change, the material and psychological reality that they possess and express could remain intact. Borders therefore seem to have a real existence, both psychologically and politically.

In its most lucid meaning, a border signifies binary or different entities. A border is usually regarded as the end of one entity, and the beginning of another. In this way, it defines the limits and also the form of an entity. Borders are "symbolic distinctions that crucially set apart a collective self from others" (Sibley 1995; as cited in Deleixhe 2019: 640). Geographically, borders translate into lines in the sand that divide territories

belonging to different groups. As it is the 'common territorial histories' that provide symbolic content for a sovereign state, the latter becomes predicated on the former, making sovereignty a territorial feature. Leake and Haines (2017: 964) have remarked that "in practice, state boundaries serve as sites for the performance of sovereignty". It is at the border that the perimeter and limits of territory and sovereignty are made visible.

Deleuze agrees with Spinoza's view of an entity (state, region, identity, etc.) as a body with internal or external movement (Parker 2009: 26). The analogy of a state resembling a human person concedes that the border would be the physical limit of its body, with the limits of the territory defining the limits of the body. It should be noted that in the present times, "[t]he physicality of the sovereign has been symbolically transferred from the monarch to the state territory" (Bartelson, 1995, p. 98; as cited in Agnew, 2005, p. 439). In this way, 'the state' with its four essential features of population, territory, government, and sovereignty, is given the ontological status of an individual person of classical liberalism, just like Herbert Spencer gave this status to 'the society'. This view takes for granted the existence of states with their respective boundaries. The sovereign state is thus seen to exercise authority internally and externally, as if it was a person (Agnew, 2005).

The way to study borders, then, is to ensure that the context is taken into consideration as "every political boundary is located in a material, ideological and historically contingent context" (Paasi, 2009, p. 222). In arguing against a general theory of borders, Paasi advocates 'conceptualizations', instead of fixed ideas, that are flexible heuristic devices open to re-conceptualisation. Contextuality is thus important to the study of borders, how they come to be, and what they come to mean.

The first element of context is geography. According to Newman and Paasi (1998: 189), "Many studies have dealt with issues of definition, distinguishing boundaries and borders from frontiers, boundaries from borders, borders from borderlands and political frontiers from settlement frontiers." In epistemological terms, frontier is a cognitive concept which means the border between what is known and not known. In geographical terms, the word frontier connotes a border between two countries. Its usage comes from the reference to western US which was yet to be colonised by the European 'settlers' in the 19th century. While this usage has a colonial undertone, as it

regards the frontier to be the line dividing the European colonies in America and the land beyond which was imagined as a wilderness inhabited by 'Indians' and had to be tamed, settled, and civilised. The proper meaning of frontier is that it refers to the geographical features of the earth which act as barriers between two or more regions. These features bound the people, so to say.

The frontier approach to border studies allows us to see borders as geographical and topographical landscapes, instead of as fixed lines on the sand. Instead of understanding the border as a division between two entities, this approach makes an entity out of the border itself. This entity is then regarded as a borderland, border region, or border-scape, an area that mediates between the two divided entities. "The precise correspondence between nation, state and territory that was once assumed is being challenged through concepts such as border regions, borderlands and border landscapes" (Wilson and Donnan 2012: 10) as these regions problematise the binary logic of the border. Another term, Border space, is used to refer to a socio-geographical area of the most active interactions and conflicts between economic, cultural, legal and political systems of neighbouring countries.

Histories: "Whether the origins of borders are to be found in the walls of the first Sumerian cities 4,000 years ago or in the boundaries invented by European sovereigns with the signing of the treaties of Westphalia that marked the end of the Thirty Years' War and the start of a quest for territorial stability on the [European] continent, borders appear as arbitrary figures that embody a range of functions." (Szary and Giraut 2015: 4). Although the origins of political borders are uncertain, often the US-Mexico border is regarded as the "birthplace" not just of Border Studies, but also of the latter's methods of analysis (Johnson and Samuelsen 1997: 1). This is so because this particular border had and has been the focus of a significant number of empirical studies. And, also, because this border can be said to have inherited the legacy of the frontier of the 'New World'.

Theoretically, it was F. Ratzel with his 'Politische Geographie' (1897) who first studied territorial boundaries academically. It was followed by works like George Curzon's 'Frontiers' (1908) in which the author claims to have organised five Boundary Commissions in India, and states that an academic inquiry of frontiers appears to "embrace all history, the greater part of geography, and a good deal of jurisprudence"

(Ibid: 10). It is propounded that while the sea, deserts, rivers and mountains serve as natural frontiers, artificial frontiers owe their origin to the complex operations of race, language, trade, religion, and war. Curzon also quotes a passage from Willam Cowper's poem, 'The Tashk' (Ibid: 12):

“Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed
Make enemies of nations who had else
Like kindred drops been mingled into one.”

According to Curzon, rivers are not natural divisions, because they are often inhabited by the people of the same race on both banks. In this way, “the Indus was not a natural frontier to the Punjab, because Indian peoples, as distinct from Pathans or border men, inhabit the further as well as the nearer bank of the river” (ibid: 24). Thus, not the Indus River but the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush mountains have been regarded as natural frontiers of India. The desert or ‘Registan’ of Sistan, on either side of the present Iran-Pakistan border, has also served as a natural frontier of India. Curzon also recounts the Roman Limes as fluctuating border lines which did not necessarily mark the border of the Roman empire.

Boundaries and their meanings are historically contingent, and they are part of the production and institutionalization of territories and territoriality (Paasi 1991). The field of Border Studies has also been called ‘Limology’ because it is concerned with borders as the liminal spaces among states or societies. Liminality refers to the state of being neither here nor there, the in-between.

“To justify territorial claims and annexations, governments and politicians have usually needed a rationale” (Kolossoff 2005: 607) and the concept of the border provides the rationale for drawing and re-drawing territorial boundaries. The earliest approach in border studies is that of ‘historical mapping’ of the evolution of boundaries and it grew from the case studies of boundary demarcation in the aftermath of the first World War. With this approach, it was concluded that “it was not possible to establish or reach ‘natural’ boundaries matching physical limits like mountain ranges, or large rivers, nor

to set boundaries perfectly coinciding with ethnic delimitations.” (Ibid: 611). This knowledge of historical mapping and typologies of boundaries was applied for the allocation of colonial possessions of Europeans and in this way “the European concept of the boundary as a strictly defined line was imposed on regions in Asia and Africa that had never known it before.” (Ibid).

This is not to say that the ontology of borders did not exist in Asia prior to the imposition by Europeans, but only that the view of delimiting territory by fixed borders gained currency, especially with the advent of the cartographic technology. While the Peace of Westphalia had enabled the people of Europe to come to terms with their respective territorial loyalties, South Asians had always been aware of and reverential towards their territory, denoted through terms like ‘matrabhoomi’ (motherland), ‘desh’ (homeland/country), etc.

After this approach came the Functional approach which examined how borders functioned as instruments of regulating cross-border flows. It was then followed by the Political Sciences approach which considered the borders as a given reality. Then appeared the geopolitical approaches which focused varyingly on territory, identity, social relations both past and present, and the perception of the border. From among these, the ‘Policy-Practice-Perception’ approach suggests that borders are “an important symbolical marker of ethnic and political identity.” (Kolossoff 2005: 625). They are to be regarded as social constructs which mirror the social reality of a region. In this way, the Border metaphor serves as a ground for demystifying collective identity.

Functions: The first and foremost function of a border is distinction. In the view of Deleixhe et al (2019: 639), “borders created States as much as States created borders”. Borders define the territorial extent of a state and give a particular state its distinct identity. Broadly, the functions and roles of borders have been described as the production and reproduction of territoriality/territory, state power, human agency and experience, and also as being instruments of state policy and territorial control, markers of identity, and discourses manifesting in different ways (Anderson 1997; Paasi 2005; Szary and Giraut 2015).

As markers of identity, borders play a fundamental role in protecting and securing territory and identity. Weak borders can lead to weak or unstable identities and vice-

versa. In discussing the complex changes that borders constantly undergo, Szary and Giraut (2015: 3,8) provisionally define the term ‘borderity’ as “the multiple rules and experiences of what a border can be”, and specifically as “any technology of spatial division or socio-spatial division”. As they “propose considering borderity as both an individualized and a collective relationship in the making of a differentiated and individualized border” (ibid: 11), they add that “borderity has to be considered by using an analogy with territoriality. Territoriality refers to both what ‘makes territory’ for a given space, and the individual and collective relationships with space that are developed through various appropriation practices and processes.” (10).

The most pertinent function of borders with regard to this study is the framing of the “dominant notions of who and where the ‘enemy’ of the state is” (Vaughan-Williams 2009: 3). Thus, most importantly, the border enables us to locate and identify not only our own selves but also the enemy and the threat that it poses. It allows us to strengthen our identity as “[t]hese representations of the enemy-other are created through geopolitical boundary narratives, which describe distinctions between categories of people and reify those distinctions by symbolically inscribing them onto the space of the earth” (Abbott 1995; Paasi 1996; as cited in Jones 2012: 64).

BORDERED IDENTITY: LINKING BORDER WITH IDENTITY

The dictionary provides two meanings for the word identity: the fact of being who or what a person or thing is, and; a close similarity or affinity. The first has the individual as its frame of reference, while the second the collective. It is argued that “culture and identity have come to occupy a new prominence in the latest wave of border studies” (Wilson and Donnan 2012: 11). This is so because borders are the limits of culture and identity, and beyond them exist different cultures and identities or the absence of these. The border therefore consolidates and represents our identity and culture, with both these terms here referring to our individual and collective identities respectively.

Albert et al (eds.) (2001) have critically examined the link between borders and identity from the perspective of International Relations and have proposed an analytical triad of identities, borders, and orders (IBO) to nudge IR theory in a new direction. The IBO paradigm advocates that Identities, Borders and Orders are intertwined concepts and should be studied as such. As for the relation between identity and border, it suggests

that asking which causes which is like asking whether the chicken came first or the egg. Human relationality is inherently territorial, while “Identity is always about difference, [and] borders are about maintaining difference” (Brown 2014:129). If a term was to be coined such as ‘bordentity’, it might become possible to conceive of the relation between border and identity because an identity can only be defined by its border, and a border by the identities it divides.

The shortcoming of Border Studies is that “All of these approaches to borders and frontiers have been complicated by various attempts to understand and express identities” (Wilson and Donnan 2012: 2). The question of identity has proved to be the most challenging in resolving the question of the border. This interest in the intersection of identity and boundaries has been a consequence of, among other things, “the revival of ethno-regional movements, dislocation as a consequence of migration, forced movement or exile, or displacement in response to the imposition of a foreign culture by colonization” (Bammer 1994; Welchman 1996; as cited in Newman and Paasi 1998: 187). With respect to the Punjab border, all these factors of ethno-regional identity, forced displacement, and imposition of foreign culture by colonization are relevant.

The study of identity spans across disciplines and the link between territory and identity is a complex yet crucial one. A historical overview of identity as both an analytical category and a category of practice has been provided by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) in which the authors suggest that one can analyse “Identity-talks” and identity politics without positing the existence of “identities”.

Within Area Studies, the intersection of borders and identity has been theoretically explored by Agnew (2008: 179) who suggests that being inherently territorial, identities bind people together through the social power of adjacency. According to Kolossov (2005: 615), “Territorial boundaries are one of the major elements of ethnic and political identity ... [and therefore,] if there is no stable political identity, there are no stable boundaries, territory, no stable state, or political unit in general”. Further, the question of identity vis-à-vis border, territory, scales, nation, and state has been explored at length by Herb and Kaplan (2017) and also critically analysed by Laine and Casaglia (2017).

While discussing the ‘excessive geopolitics’ that went into the making of the partition, Chaturvedi (2005) remarks that the imperial construction and manipulation of

ethnopolitical identities in India was supplemented by the systematic construction and cultivation of binary geographies of fear along a minority/majority axis. The relation between ethnic identity and conflict in South Asia has been analysed by Sahadevan (1998, 2002) to explain trans-border linkages and internal differences of ethnic identity and their role in conflicts. A European Commission report on Border Discourse (Meinhof 2005) has examined the border communities in Europe and their changing identities over time due to interaction.

While discussing the concepts of identity, place, space and borders, King (2019: 334) contends that:

The synergies between these concepts are intense: identities are ‘placed’ and places have their own (contested) identities; identities are also about fluid borders (between ‘them’ and ‘us’); whilst the relationship between space and place is interlocking in the fashion of a Russian doll—spaces are made up of places which in turn contain micro-spaces and so on.

National identity does not necessarily always match ethnic/regional identities, and a state with a weak national identity cannot defend well its boundary and territory (Kolossoff 2005: 617). O. Marcard (ibid) describes political boundaries as ‘scars of history’. A scar is simply a visible manifestation of a past injustice. In the case of Punjab, the border represents the scar not only of the partition but also of the historical memory of violence that Punjab bears. The Punjab region has been the entrance to India from Central/West Asia and afar. The city of Kabul has been regarded as the Gateway to India, and over the last one thousand years, Punjab has been the recipient of both migrants and invaders from the west.

Moreover, it is at the border that the collective memory and anger of the people are represented. As Vaughan-Williams (2009: 3) explains, the concept of the border of the state “orients the convergence of people with a given territory and notions of a common history, nationality, identity, language and culture ... [and] is central to the production of citizen-subjects whose identity derived from citizenship provides a series of convenient answers to difficult questions such as Who am I? Where do I belong? What should I do?” In order to answer these questions, we inevitably have borders appear in our minds. Therefore, it is important to understand how the border regions are imagined and understood in India or South Asia.

BORDERS AND SOUTH ASIA

South Asia has different kinds of borders. There exist both hard, militarized borders and soft borders that allow easy mobility across them. In discussing the borderland lives in 'Northern South Asia', Van Schendel (2013: 266) remarks that "Modern borders share many characteristics, and yet they defy easy categorization". This is applicable to Indian borders as well. The shared characteristics of modern borders may be regarded as the 'universal' logic of borders, and the defiance to categorization is due to the difference among them. The boundaries of the mind, as well as their concomitant interdictions, are exemplified in the diversity of religions, languages, cultures, etc. through the multi-layered identities that they produce. However, the emergence of delineated political borders after (and to some extent, prior to) the partition, based on certain prioritized identities, reveals a major change in the way that boundaries are now understood in the region.

Physically, the natural borders of South Asia are found in the frontiers exemplified by the Himalayan and Hindu Kush Mountain ranges. From the Battle of Kikan in the 7th century to the Battle of Jamrud in 1837, we have been protected by these natural frontiers from invading forces. Regarding the former, Majumdar (2015: 3, 174; as cited in Balakrishna 2021: 21) remarks:

[T]he Bolan Pass was protected by the brave Jats of Kikan or Kikanan. The long-drawn struggles of the Arabs with these powers ... mark their steady but fruitless endeavours to enter India ... The hardy mountaineers of these regions, backed by the natural advantage of their hilly country, offered stubborn resistance to the conquerors of the world [emphasis added].

The 'conquerors of the world' reference, though used here for the Arabs and Islam, can be applied similarly to earlier forces such as that of Alexander of Greece and the later ones like the Mughals. The rivers Sindhu and Brahmaputra along with the Indian Ocean are usually regarded as the maritime frontiers of India or South Asia. However, as noted earlier, their prominence with regards to defence is less than that of the mountains.

In explaining the border walls of India and the border fencing on the India-Bangladesh border, Jones (2012: 69) comments that "[t]he events of 9/11, and the subsequent

terrorist attacks in India, allowed the rhetoric of the global war on terror, which frames the fight against terrorism as an effort to eliminate evil from the world, to be mapped onto these perceptions of Bangladesh [and Pakistan] as a traditional, irrational, barbaric, and evil place.” While the linkage of India’s border security with the global war on terror is a valid one, it must be noted that India’s war on terrorism is much older than that. Securing India’s borders has been a concern for centuries now. Given that the “cultural boundaries delimiting an area with a similar identity do not always match formal (de jure) borders” (Kolossoff 2005: 620), it is pertinent that our discourses recognise the cultural borders and frontiers accordingly.

As noted by Wilson and Donnan (2012: 4-5), “[c]hanges in individual and group loyalties, associations and identities have fuelled the new politics of identity, in which the definitions of citizenship, nation and state vie with gender, sexual, ethnic, religious and racial identities for prominence if not preeminence in new national and world orders”. However, the purpose of this study is not to go into the domain of identity politics or to project one kind of identity over another, but merely to understand the Punjabi identity and its relationship with the concept of the border. Given the histories of violence and conflict that borders are usually identified with, South Asian borders “invoke a sense of insecurity and desolation [which] is one of the reasons why our study of borders majorly remains centred to themes related to security and border management. This confinement restricts our study of borders” (Tripathi 2021: 12). Thus, while exploring the possibilities of cooperation across borders on the basis of a shared identity and culture, we must remain cognisant of the security dimension as the predominant element of borders.

The partition of 1947 is remembered as an event that left South Asia with fixed borders. It divided the Punjab region of India which was close to the western frontier of India. However, before this border could be erected, a mental border had been first conceived which later enabled the partition and Punjab’s division. In Golwalkar’s (1939: 13) words, South Asia has been facing a “long unflinching war continuing for the last ten centuries”. This ‘war of centuries’ perspective enables us to examine the bordering processes historically.

CONCLUSION

This chapter elucidated the conceptual strands of border and identity and briefly explained the link between the two. Border is a multidisciplinary concept and holds particular significance in Political Geography and Area Studies. It defines the limits of a territory in terms of sovereignty, jurisprudence, population, resources, and nationality. In this way, it determines national identity and is an essential feature of the “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994). It is intricately linked with identity, especially with respect to spatial socialization of identity formation and the social power of adjacency.

However, identities and borders do not always overlap and this sometimes leads to complex identity structures that lay astride borders. Such cross-border identities are prominently found across South Asia and they play a critical role in the ‘two-level games’ of the countries of this region. They are relevant not only for regional cooperation but also for issues such as migration, conflict transformation, terrorism, etc. While borders are supposed to be fixed, impenetrable barriers, the increasing flows as a result of globalisation problematise this perspective, as does the Indian philosophical tradition of Non-dualism (Advaita Vedanta).

Therefore, it becomes imperative to examine the bordering processes in South Asia vis-à-vis the multifarious identities that exist here. Punjab has historically been regarded as a frontier region of the Indian subcontinent and with the imposition of the border in 1947, its identity has undergone many changes. The mental border of partition was based essentially on the minority-majority axis of fear on the lines of the “communal” divide between Hindus and Muslims and the following chapters will explore the role of this mental border in the formation and problematisation of national and sub-national regional identities of India and Pakistan, with a focus on the Punjabi identity.

CHAPTER - 3

PUNJABI IDENTITY IN THE PRE-PARTITION PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

“A proud Punjab makes India proud. There is no one in India who would not have eaten wheat that was grown in Punjab. This land is a land of givers, and has stood up firmly whenever the need arose to serve India. Punjab has left no opportunity to showcase successful examples for the country whenever needed.” (PM Narendra Modi n.d.: 52)

This chapter deals with the exposition of the Punjabi identity, in terms of the language, religion, culture and geography of Punjab. It aims to understand the Punjabi identity as a sub-state or sub-national regional identity with regard to the pre-partition period.

DEFINING PUNJAB

The name of the Punjab region is of Persian origin. It came into use during the rule of the Mughals who ruled over parts of India between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. It literally means Five-Waters (Panj-ab), referring to the five rivers of the region. These five rivers of Punjab are Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum. Only Sutlej, Ravi and Beas rivers flow in Indian Punjab. The other two rivers are now in the state of Punjab that is situated in Pakistan. The Punjab State in India is divided into three regions: Majha, Doaba and Malwa.

The oldest recorded name of this region is Sapta-Sindhu. The seven rivers mentioned in the Rig-Veda are Indus, Vitasta (Vehit/Jhelum), Asikni (Chenab), Purusni/Eravati (Ravi) Vipasha (Beas), Sutudri (Sutlej) and Saraswati (which has substantially dried up, and is now locally called Ghaghar). The word Punjab refers to all these except Indus and Saraswati. The Greek name for the region was Pentopotamia, which corresponds to the name Punjab. The Persian name Punjab is the equivalent of the Sanskrit name Panchaap, which also means five rivers.

During the period when the epic Mahabharata was written around 800–400 BCE, Punjab was known as Trigarta (meaning Three Valleys) and ruled by Katoch kings. Earlier, the Indus Valley Civilization spanned across much of the Punjab region with

cities such as Harrapa (modern-day Punjab, Pakistan) and Rakhigarhi (modern-day Haryana, India). The Vedic Civilization was spread along the length of the Saraswati River to cover most of Northern India including Punjab. This civilization shaped subsequent cultures in the Indian subcontinent.

The first known documentation of the word ‘Punjab’ is in the writings of Ibn Batuta, who visited the region in the fourteenth century. The term came into wider use in the second half of the sixteenth century, and was used in the book *Tarikh-e-Sher Shah Suri* (1580), which describes the construction of a fort by ‘Sher Khan of Punjab’. Reference of Punjab can also be found in volume one of “*Ain-e-Akbari*”, written by Abul Fazal, where ‘Punjab’ describes the territory that can be divided into provinces of Lahore and Multan. The Mughal King Jahangir also mentions the word Panjab in ‘*Tuzk-i-Jahangeeri*’, introduced by the Turkic invaders of India, literally meaning “five” (panj) “waters” (ab), i.e., the Land of Five Rivers, referring to the five rivers which go through it.

In fact, the first mention of the Sanskrit equivalent of ‘Punjab’ occurs in the great epic, the Mahabharata, where it is described as Pancha-nada, which means ‘country of five rivers’. Similarly, in the second volume of *Ain-e-Akbari*, the title of a chapter includes the word ‘Panjnad’, which is formed by combining the words Panj (five) and Nadi (river). As of today, the name Panjnad refers to the five rivers of Punjab which, after merging with each other, flow into the Sindhu (Indus) River. It was because of the presence of these rivers that Punjab was made the granary of British India.

Punjab’s cultural diversity and uniqueness is evident in the Punjabi poetry, philosophy, spirituality, education, artistry, music, cuisine, science, technology, military warfare, architecture, traditions, values and history. The compassion and high spiritedness exhibited in the lifestyle of people of Punjab (Punjabis) is hard to miss. While Punjabis are known for their strong determination, their culture presents a multi-hued heritage of ancient civilizations.

Punjabis celebrate numerous religious and seasonal festivals, such as Dussehra, Diwali, Baisakhi, and many more. There are numerous anniversary celebrations as well in honour of the Gurus (the 10 religious leaders of Sikhism) and various saints. Expressing happiness and gaiety through dance is a typical feature of such festivities, with bhangra, jhumar, and sammi being among the most popular genres. Punjab’s economy has

predominantly been agrarian in nature, historically evidenced in the remains of granaries and other artifacts of the Indus Valley Civilization, and many festivals are centred around the seasons and the corresponding crop cycles.

In discussing globalisation and its effects on the politics of identity, Brar (2007: 6) explains that “Identities based on race, religion and caste are more primordial, those based on class are more instrumental, while cultural and linguistic identities are much more ‘constructed’”. It would appear then that the Punjabi identity is a constructed territorial identity in nature, rather than an essential or primordial one. Its primary elements are the territory of Punjab along with the culture and language(s) of Punjab. Although the primordial identities of religion and race are not constitutive of the Punjabi identity, they are relevant in the way that Punjab is regarded as the homeland of the Sikhs and, to some extent, of the Jats.

Elucidating substate territorial attachment through the framework of ‘Regionalism’, Knight (1982: 518) states that such an identity means “the awareness of togetherness among a people of a relatively large area”. Besides being a cultural world, “ours is also a political world, with political “interference” having caused the earth to be partitioned in ways that often make no sense from a cultural perspective” (Ibid: 514). He emphasizes the importance of territoriality for the regionalism perspective. The Punjabi identity can be considered as a substate territorial identity from this perspective of regionalism.

Territoriality refers to the attachment of a people with the land that they inhabit. It encompasses the sacred nature of the territory’s geography along with the cultural history that is embedded in it. Pohl (2001) describes regional identity as a spatial identity consisting of belonging to or feeling-at-home in an area at the meso-scale, a scale which lies somewhere between local identity and national identity.

Describing as problematic the multitude of debates on identity and globalization in India, Josh (2007) suggests that identities are not timeless or immutable and goes on to explicate how communal identities in colonial Punjab were constructed and reconstructed. He explains that the making of pan-Indian monolithic identities of Hindu-Muslim and their respective narratives was primarily an urban phenomenon in Punjab, while the rural spaces still retained the idea of a shared cultural commonness.

He adds that not only were identities not homogenous during colonial times, but that their mutual boundaries were also fuzzy.

Punjabi identity is usually considered as a linguistic identity and is sometimes interchanged with the religious identity of the Sikhs. Language and religion thus appear to be important features of Punjabi (Punjabiness). However, on closer examination, we observe that language and religion are rather fluid concepts in defining Punjab, and that this identity has got more to do with the territory (geography) and the culture (civilisation) of Punjab. As noted by Gosal (2004: 19), the “geography of Punjab can be understood meaningfully only with the help of Punjab’s history [and culture]” and vice-versa, because “[t]he physical earth and the men living on it in their full, multi-dimensional relationships constitute the reality of the earth”. Thus, it is these four elements that shall be explained in this chapter, i.e. geography, culture, language, and religion of Punjab.

GEOGRAPHY

In order to understand Punjab, it is first necessary to understand India. India as a nation was not born on August 15, 1947, rather it is an ancient civilization with a millenia-long continuity. According to Surya (2020), the core philosophical thought of India is all inclusive, all accepting, and most importantly, it has never negated the existence of different philosophical, spiritual or religious thoughts. However, when the philosophies of this land came in contact with Semitic religions or traditions, which are inherently exclusivist, conflicting, and proselytising, there needed to be made a response by the non-exclusive, inclusive faith based on the Hindu spiritual traditions to respond to the aggression and proselytising attempts made by such foreign traditions which came to Indian soil. This is evident in Grierson’s “bifurcation of India into an Aryan-Hindu India and a Semitic Islamic intrusion” (Majeed 2019: 6) in the Linguistic Survey of India of 1898.

This response has been often termed as Hindutva or Hindu Nationalism. If Hinduism is the potential inclusivity of the common wealth of indigenous thought, then Hindutva is primarily the defence of Hindu philosophy and culture against the foreign, Semitic advances. Hindutva is an intellectual, political, and social response of the Hindus/Indians to defend themselves against aggression (Surya 2020). It represents the

“anxieties about the pollution of a pure culture and civilisation called India” (Ghosh 1991, Hansen 1999, Jaffrelot 1991; as cited in Brar 2007: 7).

For India, Punjab has historically served as a border or frontier region. It is in Punjab that many important battles and wars have been fought. It was for the purpose of defending Punjab that Prithviraj Chauhan fought and lost in the second battle of Tarain to Mohammad Ghori in 1192. For Punjab, the Sulaiman and Kirthar ranges between the Makran coast and the Pamir knot form the western frontier. Towards the East and South, Punjab merges into the Haryana-Delhi-Braj region and Rajasthan. The downstream region of the Sindhu River system is called Sindh and is part of present-day Pakistan. The areas between the five rivers of Punjab are called *Doab*, and they have varying dialects and cultures among them.

At the time of partition, Punjab was made up of the British province of Punjab as well as the princely states (called Native States) of Punjab, as depicted in Map 3.1, published by the Imperial Gazetteer of India. This configuration was a result of the conquest of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s ‘Lahore Kingdom’ by the British forces in the mid nineteenth century after two Anglo-Sikh wars. At the time, the rivers Indus and Yamuna served as the western and eastern frontiers of the region. In 1901, the western part of Punjab was separated and constituted as the North-West Frontier Province.

While talking about Punjabi literature, Mir (2010: 134) claims that apart from caste/kinship and gender, the third major theme found in it is that of territoriality, a particular “spatial imagination” by which she means the “habit of understanding social relationships as inherently connected to geographic spaces”. She observes that such an imagination of a ‘region’ is pivotal to narratives like Heer-Ranjha. This theme of territoriality “emphasizes the affective attachments [that] people [establish] with the local, and particularly their natal places” (ibid: 123). This reflects the importance of the Motherland in Punjab.

Oberoi (1987) explains that there are different Punjabs (Guru Nanak’s, Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s, and British) and the idea of Punjab as a territory is in fact a very vague one. Thus, it is essential that these features of Punjab as a region are taken into account. The configuration of Punjab’s geography and politics went through changes in each of the aforementioned stages. What the British acquired after the second Anglo-Sikh war was

a diminished Punjab, especially as Kashmir was made a separate political entity by the Treaty of Amritsar (1846).

The territoriality of Punjab after its division has been succinctly captured in a song by Gurdas Mann, ‘Ki Banu Duniya Da?’ (Coke Studio, 2015), which translates to, “What will become of this world?”. It has the singer imagining the rivers of the Punjab speaking among themselves about the partition:

“Saanu sauda ni pugda; Raavi toh Chenab puchda, ki haal ae Sutluj da? Painde dur Peshawaran de oye. O wagah de border te, raah puchdi Lahore’an de haye” (Our partition cost us dearly; River Chenab often asks her sister River Ravi, how is my dear brother River Satluj? The road to Peshawar is far and distant and hard to reach. At the Wagah border, I look for those paths that once existed to Lahore, but sadly don’t exist anymore.)

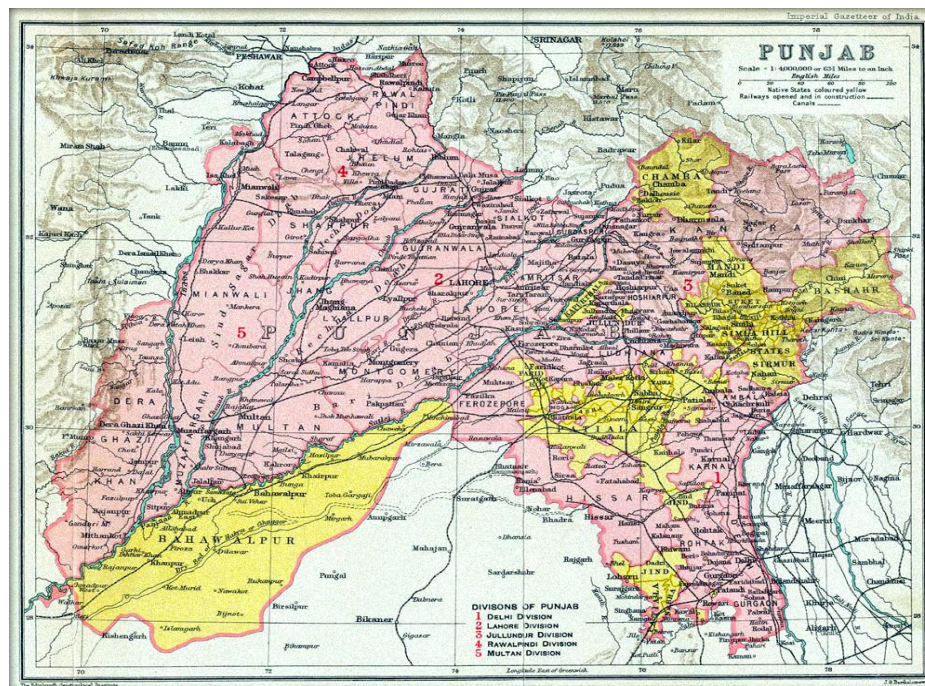
This conversation among the rivers represents the hardships that the partition caused, not only to humans and their society, but to the whole ecology of Punjab. It refers to the landscape of Punjab imagined through its rivers divided by the border. The rivers of Punjab naturally form the defining element of Punjab’s geography, and especially its ‘sacred geography’.

This spatial imagination is further elaborated in the network of pilgrimage sites and routes that straddle the region. Punjab is home to the Katas Raj, Takshila, Amb and Kafir Kot temples and the remains of the Salt Range hills, among others, which date back to different periods of ancient Indian history including the 7th century Hindu Shahi kings of Kabul, Gandhara, and western Punjab as well as the Kushan period. They have been neglected by the mainstream of architectural scholarship since the partition of India, but for a few works such as ‘Temples of the Indus’ by Michael W. Meister (1996). Hiuen Tsang also wrote of a stupa built by Ashoka at Katas Raj. Till 1947, Katas Raj was seen as the second most important Hindu religious site in Punjab after the Jwalamukhi temple near Kangra. It has even been suggested by Rajesh Kochhar in his book, ‘The Vedic People- Their History and Geography’ (2000), that the Helmand (Harahvaiti) and Hari rivers of Afghanistan are the real Saraswati and Sarayu rivers as mentioned in the Ramayana and Rig Veda. This highlights the historical importance and sacred nature of the geography of this region and beyond.

Further, the Sikh pilgrimage sites which mark the length and breadth of Punjab only add tremendously to the sacredness of the region, as described by Khalid (2016) in the book titled ‘Walking with Nanak’, in which he traces the journeys of Guru Nanak Ji and describes the state of the Gurudwaras in West Punjab. He also narrates how several of these Gurudwaras have been converted into mosques by the Pakistan government in the guise of renovation.

This shows that while the borders of Punjab had varied over the years, the region derived its identity from the sacred nature of its geography and rivers, after which it has been named, and also from its importance from the perspective of India’s security as being the western frontier of India.

Map 3.1 – Punjab before partition (1909)



CULTURE

The excavations of Harappa and Mohenjodaro in the 1920s showed the extensive history of India’s and Punjab’s civilisation. Punjab is also supposed to be the region where the Vedas were composed or ‘revealed’. Given the location of this region on India’s frontier, it has served as the meeting place of different cultures and streams of thought, although it has often also been the major gateway to India for invaders such as

Alexander, Mahmud Ghazni, Muhammad Ghori, Mughals, Ahmed Shah Abdali, Nadir Shah, et cetera.

Culturally, Das (2006: 468) explains Punjabi identity in the following way:

‘Punjabiyaat’ refers to a commonly held, all-encompassing view of Punjabi culture, society and being Punjabi as an individual. The term thus refers both to larger structures of social or community organization (such as kinship networks, caste identities, religious beliefs and practices, understandings of gender roles, etc.), as well as to individual Punjabi values (such as bravery, resilience, honour and heartiness).

Most importantly, Punjab is the birthplace of the Sikh sect which emerged in the 16th century to protect Indian religion in the face of Muslim invasions. Guru Nanak Dev, the first Sikh Guru, walked across the length and breadth of India, especially the Punjab and Sindh regions, to advocate his teachings of religious tolerance. The Sikh history is replete with examples of the Sikh Gurus, and later the Sikh Misls (confederacy) in the eighteenth century, taking on foreign invaders and committing immense sacrifices to confront the authoritarian and intolerant Mughal rulers. This cultural history is highly important for understanding the Punjabi values of bravery and resilience, which are sometimes misunderstood even to this day.

For instance, the encounter of Guru Nanak Dev with the Turkic invader Babur is recalled as such: ‘Bless me, O man of God, so that I succeed in my endeavour of conquering India’, Babur is believed to have asked Guru Nanak Ji. ‘You have come to conquer my land and you have the audacity to ask for my blessings?’, Nanak is believed to have replied (Khalid 2016: 96). This demonstrates the centrality of territoriality to the founding father of Sikhism. Sikhism was, as a matter of fact, devised to defend North India militarily at a time when several temples had been destroyed and Indian religion was being reduced to the margins.

About Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, Babu Rajab Ali has written in his *Dashmesh-mehma* (Hamrahi n.d., as cited in Josh 2007: 49): “Sach te arran vale, paap se laran wale, jang te charan vale, hind rakhi es Gur”, the poem paraphrased by the author as saying, “Having given to his Sikhs a distinct appearance, identity and sense of pride, [fighting for truth and against evil], he (Guru Gobind) has proved to be a true

saviour of the Hind”. This demonstrates the last Guru’s commitment to the territory of ‘Hind’ which led him to constitute Sikhs as a militaristic community.

Historically, Punjab’s cultural influence extended to Central and West Asia as well. As Jain (2003: 108) expounds, for Punjab “[t]here was no attempt at political expansion in the west, but the assimilation of all the foreigners who came to the Punjab- the Greeks, the Parthians, the Sakas, the Kushans, and the Huns- in the socio-religious structure of India was a triumph of the Indian culture, especially of Kashmiri and Punjabi cultures.” The inclusivity of the Punjabi culture is evident throughout its history and the resultant syncretism of the region. Even during the colonial period, the regional variations in population growth of Punjab were primarily a function of migration (Krishan 2004: 80), a process that has shaped Punjab historically.

The bravery and resilience of Punjabi people is also illustrated in the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-49. Punjab was one of the last regions of India to fall under the British yoke, as Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s army fought valiantly for India just like the people of Punjab did against the Mughals and previous invaders. These features are also highlighted by the fact that “During the World War I, nearly two-thirds of the British Indian army hailed from Punjab and at no time this share fell below three-fifths” (Talbot 1988: 45; as cited in Krishan 2004: 81).

These values of bravery, resilience, and community organisation formed an integral part of Punjab’s identity as well as the people’s imagination. Given the uncertainty that persisted here, historically, due to various factors, the resilience of Punjab may be regarded as a defining characteristic of the region. It refers to the capacity of Punjabi people to recover quickly from difficulties, and it is visible in the dynamism of the region, which is however grounded in the core value of defending the way of life of India.

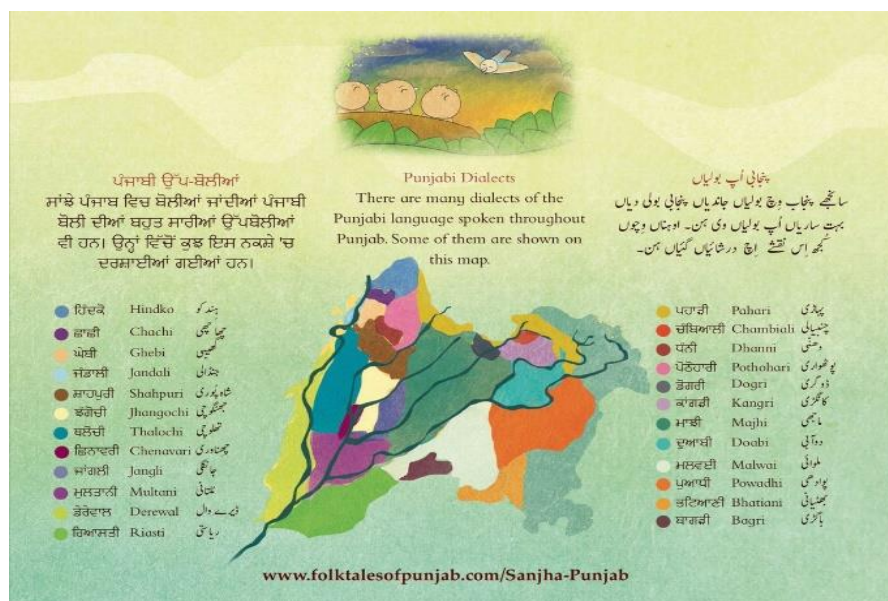
LANGUAGE

The Punjabi language, like Hindi, is a descendent of the Shauraseni Prakrit, a language of medieval northern India that was used primarily in drama and plays during the 3rd to 10th centuries. It is believed that Punjabi developed as an evolution from the Shauraseni-Prakrit-Apabhramsha languages around the 11th century. It is spoken by

around 100 million people globally, which includes both Punjabs as well as the diaspora.

It is said that the language or dialect changes every fifty kilometres in India. As a result, dialects on the opposite sides of such a language continuum may not be mutually intelligible, yet it is difficult to locate precise boundaries among them. The Punjab region has a variety of dialects that include Doabi, Majhi, Malwai, Saraiki, Pahari-Pothwari, etc. which merge with Haryanvi/Braj Bhasha or Hindi to the east, Pashto/Pakhto to the West and Sindhi to the south, as shown in the following map:

Map 3.2: Dialects of Punjab



The dialects of western Punjab are collectively known as Lahnda/Lahndi. These are related to Punjabi and Sindhi both. While Saraiki and Hindko are standardised languages, the others like Pahari, Shahpuri and Pashto are dialect continuums. Lahnda script refers to the writing systems that evolved from the Sharada script (itself derived from the Brahmi script). It was widely used in the northern and north-western part of India in the area comprising Punjab, Sindh, Kashmir and parts of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was used to write Punjabi, Hindi, Sindhi, Saraiki, Balochi, Kashmiri, Pashto, and various Punjabi dialects.

The Gurmukhi as a script was devised in the mid-16th century by Guru Angad Dev Ji (1539-1552), the second Sikh Guru, in order to correct inadequacies in the Lahnda script so that the sacred literature (Guru Granth Sahib) might be accurately recorded. The Gurmukhi alphabet is derived from the Lahnda alphabet that has roots in the

Brahmi alphabet. Guru Angad Dev enhanced the Gurmukhi alphabet to its current state for the express purpose of writing the holy book, giving rise to the slogan "Guru's mouth" or Gurmukhi. Beside Punjabi, the Guru Granth Sahib has several other languages interspersed, including Persian, Sanskrit, Brajbhasha and Khariboli, all written using the Gurmukhi alphabet (Anand 2013).

Punjabi Muslims had been using the Shahmukhi alphabet from the times of the Muslim and later Mughal Empires in the region and thus the term "from King's mouth." Shahmukhi is a modification of the Persian-Nasta'liq (Urdu) alphabet – meaning, the direction of writing is from right to left, while that for Gurmukhi is left to right. Majhi dialect of Punjabi is common to both Pakistan and India and it is the basis for the bulk of spoken and written language since the 10th century (ibid). At the same time, in regions which comprise the provinces of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, Hindi was and has been the language used by the people, although the dialects vary from one place to another. It is evident that the ‘difference’ between Punjabi and Hindi is more nominal than real, given that both of them are made up of multiple dialects and are derived from the same Indo-Aryan Sanskritic roots. What gives Punjabi a distinct identity is the preservation of the Lahnda script in the form of Gurmukhi.

RELIGION

The relations of the Sikhs with the [Muslim] Sufis were that profound, that strong and that fundamental. How such strong bonds were broken because of which the Sikhs fought a do-or-die war with the Mughals and the sparks of which finally led to the partition of the country in 1947 and claimed the lives of millions? (Singh 2012: 105)

In terms of religion, Punjab is generally imagined as the home of the Sikh people. It must be acknowledged here that the “Sikh panth [sect] emerged as a protector of the Hindu dharma” (Puri 1984: 1126). This fact reminds us that not only is territoriality the main constituent of Punjabi identity, but also religion. It highlights the security imperative of religion in terms of how religion has served the purposes of both spirituality and defence in Punjab. “The two most pronounced forms of sub-national identities in India are religion and region, which are the most important pulls on the Sikh mind also” (Ibid) and this had been the case with Punjab before partition as well.

Punjab is often regarded as a symbol of syncretic culture which many believe is an important feature of Indian society. Its history is replete with instances of cultural contacts and religious effervescence. It was here that several prominent streams of spirituality emerged and magically transformed the society in multiple ways. They include Sufism, Sikhism, Bhakti tradition, et cetera.

However, in the decades leading up to the independence and partition of India, religion became a political tool in the hands of divisive forces. These forces employed the majority-minority axis to carve divisions in the minds of the people, and subsequently on the map of the subcontinent. The following table shows how the Hindu-Sikh combined majority in Punjab was replaced by a Muslim majority between 1881 and 1941.

Table 3.1 : Religious Composition of Population in Punjab, 1881-1941

Census Year	Percentage of				
	Muslims	Hindus	Sikhs	Christians	Others
1881	47.6	43.8	8.2	0.1	0.3
1891	47.8	43.6	8.2	0.2	0.2
1901	49.6	41.3	8.6	0.3	0.2
1911	51.1	35.8	12.1	0.8	0.2
1921	51.1	35.1	12.4	1.3	0.1
1931	52.4	30.2	14.3	1.5	1.6
1941	53.2	29.1	14.9	1.5	1.3

Source: *Census of India, 1931, Punjab, Part I, Report, p. 69* and *Census of India, 1941.*

Apropos, 1881 was the first time that a full-fledged census was carried out by the British in India. The above chart implicates this exercise in the larger process of the cultivation of binary identities which was the primary component of their ‘divide and counterpoise’ strategy. Krishan (2004: 85) explains that the rise in the proportion of the Muslim, Sikh and Christian population was at the cost of the Hindus who suffered depletion of their population base due to conversion, and that this was more typical of the British Punjab than the Punjab states.

As noted earlier, the emergence of the Sikh sect was due to the need of protecting India and Hindu Dharma. The Sikh Gurus are remembered till date for sacrificing their heads but never bowing down before the Mughal tyrants. They were martyred because of their opposition to forced conversions and because they refused to convert to Islam at the point of the sword. Their works which include Babarvani by Guru Nanak Ji and Bachitra Natak by Guru Gobind Singh Ji are testimony to the violence and oppression

that was wreaked upon India by the invaders. Singh (2012: 19) quotes the evidence for the killing of Guru Arjan Dev Ji at the hands of Sheikh Mujaddid Sirhindi, an Islamic army general, as recorded in the latter's own writings, 'Maktubat Amami Rabbani':

During these days the wayward kafir of Goindwal has been killed. This is a good thing and it is a big defeat to the Hindus. Killing him for whatever reason on whatever pretext is a great loss to the Hindus, and is a great victory for the Muslims. Before this I had a dream that the Emperor (Jehangir) had crushed the head of non-believers. There is no doubt that he (Guru Arjan) was the world-leader of the non-believer Hindus and the emperor of the atheists.

It was these memories that played a major role in the modern history of Punjab. Moreover, the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan, which barely even had much support in Punjab, had a severely harmful effect for the harmonious religious atmosphere of the region. Their use of religious identity for the purpose of politics has to be understood as a major bordering process that took place before partition. It highlighted one kind of identity to sow seeds of divisions among a people who had for long seen difference and divisions as an acceptable feature of their reality.

Interestingly, there were also groups that cut across religion, for example, the Jats, Gujjars, and Rajputs who were Muslim in the West, Sikh and Muslim in the middle, and Hindu in the east/southeast (Douie 1916: 104 and Punjab Government n.d.: 1-16; as cited in Krishan 2004: 84) as their Hindu caste (or tribe) affiliations survived despite their conversion to Islam or Sikhism.

In this backdrop, there were efforts to seek and create unity by groups like the Arya Samaj, through ideas like "Arya-Sikh Bhai Bhai" (Arya and Sikh are brothers) in the Punjab (Jones 1976: 135). Such efforts produced the solidarity that was needed at the time as they reinvigorated the core value of Sikhism which was to protect India and Dharma. However, it also led to a polemical bordering process in which the efforts of the Samaj to reform society with its sharp criticisms led to some among the Sikhs to bolster their separate identity. At the turn of the century, there was an effort by Kahn Singh Nabha to establish Sikhism as a distinct identity through his book titled, 'Hum Hindu Nahin' (We are not Hindu) published in 1898. It presented a conversation between a Sikh and a Hindu to highlight their differences on various matters. This shall be explored in depth in the following chapter on the creation of borders.

CONCLUSION

This chapter illustrated the main features and elements of the Punjabi identity as it existed before the partition of India. It drew upon the themes of geography, culture, language, and religion to map the contours of the Punjabi identity and show how the identity and its borders were fluid and indeterminate. The next chapter shall explore the ways in which borders were imagined and enforced with reference to these features in the years leading up to the partition. It shall consider how differences were exaggerated and made to seem irreconcilable, especially through the demand of a separate state of Pakistan.

CHAPTER 4

PUNJABI IDENTITY IN THE POST-PARTITION PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

“All history should be studied geographically, and all geography historically.”

- Herodotus

After the partition of India, “people changed, and not only in their locations” (Butalia 1998: 55). The changes that took place were manifold. As regards Punjab, the region was divided between India and the newly formed state of Pakistan. The border was drawn on the map of the land. The border was fixed in the hearts and minds of the people. The division of Punjab exemplifies what Menon (2013: 49) explains as “nonidentity within dialectical images that contain the incommensurable contradiction of being similar and different simultaneously.” She adds that “Nationalisms are structured around the dialectic of identity within the nation and difference without” (ibid). It is a very simplistic explanation of nationalism, yet highly relevant in the case of India’s partition based on the ‘Two-nation theory’.

‘TWO-NATION THEORY’

As is well known, the demand and creation of Pakistan was based on the so-called Two-nation theory. This theory was premised on the proposition that Muslims and Hindus are essentially different communities and nations. It was forged by the attempt to cast the Muslim and Hindu identities in terms of nationhood, a concept that requires a shared history and culture for a community to be called a nation. A nation has a particular relation with the territory that it resides on, and thus it is a territorial category in principle. However, exceptions like the ‘Roma’ nation cannot be ignored either.

The Two-nation theory was propounded in British-ruled India to enunciate territorial claims of the minority community so as to secure and carve off territories where they could safely be in a majority. According to Panikkar (1953; as cited in Basu 2015: 5), the separate representation provided for the Muslim community in 1909 had sowed the seeds of separatism that eventually led to the lamentable partition of the country. Menon

(2013: 10) suggests that “This particular way of imagining community affirmed certain commonalities through the category of religious identity while underestimating other axes of similitude and association.”

The origin of this pursuit has to be located in the political nature of Islam (sometimes called ‘Political Islam’) and its history of invasions and conquests, particularly in the Indian subcontinent. As mentioned earlier, the primary demands that the ‘nation’ of Pakistan made on its people were loyalty towards the Islamic identity and the Urdu language. In the case of post-partition India, it was federalism and secularism that dominated the narratives of nation-building.

These ideas therefore determined the premise of the Punjabi identity after partition, especially in terms of its geographic dimension, but also in terms of culture, language, and religion. Although based on the mutually antagonistic religious identities of Muslim versus Hindu-Sikh, the border was drawn on the map and subsequently on the territory of Punjab. About this division, Chaturvedi (2005: 130) remarks that “[w]herever and whenever partitions have been *made* to happen, a large-scale destruction of socio-cultural landscapes has invariably followed” (emphasis original).

The massive scale of violence in the form of murder, rape, mutilations, etc. fed into the memory of the subsequent generations an intense hatred for the other and created a “geography of trauma” (Yusin 2009: 459-60). This destruction and transformation of the Punjabi socio-cultural landscape is examined in this chapter with regard to the changes brought about by the partition to the cultural, linguistic, and religious dimensions of the Punjabi identity as Punjab fell prey to the ‘dueling nationalisms’ (Ayres 2006) that led to the partition. These nationalisms were primarily based on religion (Islam) for Pakistan and secularism for India.

Chester (2009: 4) asks a critical question as to “How did the 1947 division of India and Pakistan, which was intended to resolve conflict between religious groups, come to intensify that [very] tension?” An attempt shall be made to answer this question by analytically understanding the bordered Punjabi identity. As Baudrillard (1983, as cited in Ramaswamy 2002: 151) puts it, “The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory”. As the map was divided for Punjab, so were its culture, people, and identity.

WEST PUNJAB - PAKISTAN

“The ‘partition of India’, which is how the division of the subcontinent in 1947 is universally referred to in Indian historiography, is also (for Pakistanis) the ‘independence of Pakistan’” (Pandey 2003: 13). There however existed a basic contradiction in the aforementioned imagination of Pakistan. The main tenets of Islam are focussed on creating an egalitarian and non-differentiating identity based on its fundamental belief of monotheism. This focus tends to denounce and erase all identities barring the universal Islamic one, which include national, ethnic, linguistic, regional identities, etc. . The precariousness of Pakistan’s identity and its borders, both external and internal, has been succinctly described by Walsh in a chapter titled “*Insha’ Allah Nation*”:

But if maps evoked Pakistan’s external insecurities, its most sensitive borders lay inside the country, which was riven by ethnic, tribal and sectarian fault lines, a place of head-spinning contradictions. One day, a street would fill with rioters protesting against an obscure insult to the name of the Prophet Muhammad. The following day, rich folk would gather to party in a mansion along the same street, clinking their glasses in a Gatsby-like bubble. Depending on who you asked, Islam or the army were supposed to be the glue holding the place together. Yet both, in their own way, seemed to be tearing it apart. People stumbled from crisis to crisis, hoping to find answers. But they remained elusive. More concept than country, Pakistan strained under the centrifugal forces of history, identity and faith. (Walsh 2020: 35).

The word Pakistan had been coined only 14 years prior to the partition by Rahmat Ali. He had proposed it as an acronym of Punjab, Afghan (NWFP), Kashmir, Sindh, and Baluchistan. In Sanskrit, the words ‘Pak’ and ‘Sthan’ mean ‘cooked, pure’ and ‘land/place’, respectively. It means the land of the pure in Persian as well. Phonetically, the name sounds similar to Bactria and Pakhtunistan, both of which are seemingly derived from the Sanskrit word Bhakt (meaning ‘devotee’). The oldest mention of the words ‘paktha’ and ‘pactyan’ are to be found in the Rig Veda and Histories of Herodotus, respectively. The Paktia province of present-day Afghanistan too gets its name from these roots. Although the word Bactria may also be related to the Greek mythological figure, Bacchus, also known as Dionysus, who is said to have established

a city in the region between the Kabul and Indus rivers, known as Nysa/Dionysopolis/Nagara.

The subsequent history of the Punjabi identity in Pakistan is illustrative of a skewed federal scheme. On the one hand, the Pakistani Punjab witnessed a revival in the Punjabi identity of the province, which had been suppressed in the process of the creation of a Pakistani identity based on Islam (Ayres, 2008). On the other, there have been attempts to impose the Urdu language on the people along with the religious and cultural homogenisation demanded by the Islamic nature of the republic. The pressure has led to a significant identity crisis among the people as they keep losing touch with their mother tongue and their native culture. For instance, “In a short span of 70 years, Pakistan has flirted with promoting four languages that were not the mother tongue of many people in the country – English, Urdu, Arabic, and now Chinese – ignoring native languages.” (Hussain Haqqani, Pakistan’s former ambassador to the US, 2018)

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. It is a mixture of Persian, Arabic and various local languages. It is similar to Hindi but is written in the Arabic (Nastaliq) script. In 2018, it was reported that Mandarin has been declared an official language in Pakistan beside English and Urdu. This is ironic because Punjabi, the mother tongue of around 44 percent of Pakistan’s total population in 1998, as well as Pashto, Baloch and Sindhi, are not given any such recognition. Even the Punjab assembly does not allow the use of Punjabi in the house, with space only for English and Urdu. Tarek Fatah (2020) has remarked that in Pakistan, “Punjabi is supposed to be used only when you beat your wife, when you are drunk, when you are gambling, or you are doing extra-curricular evil activity”. He adds that “Once you're not comfortable with your identity, you're ashamed of your mother tongue, [which] means you are ashamed of your mother. There is no place on earth for people ashamed of their mothers and mother tongues.”

There have been several protests where one of the slogans used is: “*Punjab di zabaan Punjabi, saadi jind jaan Punjabi*” (Punjabi is the language of Punjab, Punjabi is our life and soul). As part of ‘Punjabi Prachar’, an organisation for the conservation and dissemination of Punjabi language, people are demanding for making Punjabi as the medium of education in schools. Presently, it is not taught in schools at all in Pakistani Punjab.

Mushtaq Soofi (2015) believes that a large number of Punjabis in Pakistan have been “indoctrinated and brainwashed” and have lost the capacity to pause and ponder. This indoctrination has to be understood further with regard to the history, culture and geography of Punjab. One of the primary tenets of Islam is the negation of cultural or localised identities to highlight the commonality of all humans who have embraced Islam. Thus, while we see the employment of the ‘Kashmiri’ identity by Pakistan to fuel terrorism and separatism in Jammu-Kashmir, the exact opposite has been done across the different provinces of Pakistan, i.e., the negation and erasure of regional and cultural identities.

The standard Pakistani Punjabi is an Urdu influenced Majhi written in the Shahmukhi (Nastaliq) script. While it is true that the so-called Hindi-Urdu divide has been associated with the two-nation theory and its imagination, it is however a rather problematic idea, given the impossibility of delineating language borders in the South Asian landscape. While talking of the roles of vernaculars like Braj in unsettling the binary logic of this divide, Bhatnagar (2010: 71) argues that the “Failure to make distinctions between Hindi and Urdu implied a failure to think through colonial modernity.” She also refers to the fusion of Hindi and Urdu in the name ‘*Khari Boli*’ in Bharatendu Harishchandra’s evidence to the Hunter Commission of 1882.

Despite Punjabi’s importance, it is difficult to find a map of the language on the internet. This is partly due to the fact that Punjabi spans across the India-Pakistan border, and most maps of individual languages are country-based. One can thus find many language maps of India that depict Punjabi, and virtually all language maps of Pakistan do so as well. But on Pakistani language maps, the area covered by Punjabi has been diminishing in recent years (Lewis 2013). Feroze din Sharaf, a non-Sikh and non-Hindu poet had lamented such a denial and neglect of Punjabi in education and administration in the 1930s in his verse about a wailing mother Punjabi (Singh 1997: 8):

To those whom I have been lullabying to sleep, I am now a stranger. Though I am a queen of the land of five rivers, my existence is reduced to a very low position. Utterly neglected, I am sitting in a corner with my fists closed. I am a broken Rebecca cast away by its musician-master. O Sharaf! I am the speech of those, who never cared to give me any regard.

Singh (1997) further explains that the breaking up of a common Punjabi literary culture because of religious nationalism has impeded the cultural and historical perspective. A culture that had served as a bridge for India to connect with the West Asian cultures now stands divided and dismembered by a border.

A decolonised understanding of the Hindi-Urdu divide, thus, takes into consideration the historicity and contingency of language as distinct from its use for political agenda and bordering processes. Urdu was after all the name assigned to the everyday dialect of people, substituting the erstwhile name 'Prakrit', so to say. It inherited much from the invaders and migrants of yore (The word Urdu is derived from the Turkish word Ordu, meaning camp, and is related to the English word 'Horde') and incorporated elements from Persian and Arabic. It was indeed a 'foreign language' transposed onto the geography of the Indian subcontinent. The realisation of this truth is something that awaits the Punjabi people of Pakistan till date, given how Muslims in Pakistan have abandoned Punjabi in favour of Urdu as a communal badge of their ethnic identity, a language they also consider to be the marker of their religious identity (Singh 1997).

As far as culture and religion are concerned, the foundational basis of Pakistan denies and pre-empts the existence of religious diversity and multiculturalism. Religion is often regarded as a domain of emotion, both guided by the latter and regulating it in turn. It has been called a 'Business of the heart', involved in transactions of emotion (Corrigan 2001). Therefore, analysing this phenomenon is a difficult task, particularly so in the context of the Indian subcontinent.

Pakistan is dotted with numerous shrines and mosques, along with the few temples and gurdwaras that remain. At the same time, the Islamic imperative of the Hajj pilgrimage plays a dominant role in the people's imagination of their sacred geography. It is a ritual that must be observed if one is physically and financially capable of it. The scale of this pilgrimage is evident in the fact that the spending of pilgrims for this religious tourism constitutes a significant share of the Gross Domestic Product of Saudi Arabia. This reflects the spatial imagination of the people that has been orientated towards the cities of Mecca and Medina, regardless of the presence of numerous sacred spaces in Pakistan.

According to Malik (2002), there are several concerns about religion and minorities in Pakistan. Not only non-Muslims but even the followers of Islam adhering to different

doctrines are discriminated against in Pakistan. Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadis, Shia Muslims, as well as ethnic identities of the Pashtoon, Baloch, Sindhi, Kalash people have been suppressed. The Urdu-speaking people who had migrated from India at the time of partition, known as Muhajirs (Migrants) have also made attempts to assert their identity and demand for rights, and so have the Hindko speakers of NWFP (Now, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). In the 1980s, Pakistan also witnessed an influx of Afghan refugees, whose children were enrolled in madrasahs and later emerged as the Taliban. Malik (2002: 10) adds that “given the disadvantages and stigmatization, communities do not like to be identified as minorities”. This is in clear contrast to the activism of minorities based on their constitutional rights that is often seen in India. The lack of ability to even identify oneself speaks volumes about the position of religious freedom in Pakistani Punjab.

Malik (2002: 6) contends that “Pakistan’s shift from a Jinnahist to a more Jihadi (Islamic fundamentalist) course has nothing inevitable about it, as most of its people still believe in tolerance and coexistence and would like to revert to the original dream.” The assumption here is that Jinnah’s ideal of Pakistan has been distorted and that is the reason for fundamentalism and obscurantism. Such assumptions completely neglect the root of the problem, which is the exclusionary borders drawn by the Muslim League based on religious identity. Many Pakistani scholars, including Malik, find solace in the fact that the violence of partition was conducted by both sides of the mental border, while they fail to recognise that the creation of such circumstances was caused by the minority-majority axis and the separatist demands. As Prasad (1999: 13) explains, community consciousness signifying the feeling of belonging to a particular community is different from communal consciousness which includes hostility towards other communities, the partition is thus often regarded as a result of communal hostilities between two communities. However, it was in fact the fear of being subdued or overshadowed by a ‘Hindu majority’ that led to Muslim separatism, nationalism and eventually the partition.

Further, “[i]n Pakistan, [partition] was deployed merely as a device to build up the heroic and sacrificial struggles which had accompanied the birth of a nation” (Talbot: 311-12; as cited in Brar 1999). This coincides with the general tendency in Pakistan to make idols of such figures who invaded the Indian subcontinent, such as by naming their missiles after Ghazni, Ghoris, Abdali, Babur, etc. They do this as they vandalise

statues of figures like Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the last prominent ruler of the Punjab region. Ironically, the lesson that the Pakistani state drew from the secession of East Pakistan to form Bangladesh in 1971, which was caused primarily by political and ethnic grievances, was to double-down on its Islamic identity (and to Islamize its laws and its education system), at the expense of territorial, cultural and ethnic loyalties/identities (Afzal 2020).

It is clear that culturally, religiously, and linguistically, west Punjab has undergone a huge transformation. The Punjabi language has been reduced to the margins, the cultural memory and elements of tolerance have nearly disappeared, and a form of religious imperialism has eradicated just about all other kinds of identities. Despite the claim of Punjabi domination in Pakistan, it is the Punjabi identity that has suffered the most.

EAST PUNJAB - INDIA

In 1950, two separate states were created in India: Punjab included the former British-ruled province of Punjab, while the princely states of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kapurthala, Malerkotla, Faridkot and Kalsia were combined into a new state, the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU). Himachal Pradesh was created as a union territory from several princely states and Kangra District. In 1956, PEPSU was merged into Punjab state, and several northern districts of Punjab in the Himalayas were added to Himachal Pradesh. In 1966, after the demand for separate states among the Punjabi speaking people and the Hindi/Haryanvi speaking people, Haryana was made a separate state. Singh (1997) notes the irony of the use of Urdu in Persian script for the battle between Punjabi and Hindi in Indian Punjab, as the vernacular press of Jalandhar, published in Urdu, incited both Hindus and Sikhs to promote Hindi and Punjabi, respectively.

According to Puri (1984), one of the reasons why a composite Punjabi identity could not grow in Indian Punjab was because the Punjabi identity and the Panthic (Sikh) identity were used interchangeably. As a result, the urge for the Punjabi identity was translated into an urge for the Sikh identity. For instance, the Akali Dal which championed the Punjabi identity was an exclusively Sikh party. When the central Congress government dismissed the Akali government in the state in 1980, the former worked on Hindu prejudices and fears against the Akalis to come back to power in the

state (ibid: 1127). The author further contends that the most important cause of Sikh frustration was deprivation from power, and that this deprivation should be studied with sympathy and not dismissed with ridicule.

While the interchangeability of the Punjabi and Sikh identities is understandable, it is not justifiable as the former is a territorial and the latter is a religious identity. The idea that Sikhs represent Punjab has been a dominant one, however it relies on the rigid distinctions of religion based on the polemical bordering that occurred over the last century. Sikhism was intended to not only defend the people of Punjab spiritually, but also defend India militarily. This understanding is necessary to avoid unnecessary mental bordering with regards to Indian Punjab.

Two of the demands made by the Akali Dal in 1984 were compulsory teaching of the Punjabi language in schools of neighbouring states and a special status for Amritsar, the Sikh holy city. While compulsory teaching of Punjabi is a fact today in Indian Punjab, the neighbouring states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and also Delhi have several schools offering Punjabi as a language, with Delhi still hosting a Punjabi-medium school. There are ongoing protests to have Punjabi included in the list of Official Languages in Jammu and Kashmir because it is taught in schools, colleges and universities across the Union Territory.

Second, the demand for the status of holy city is similar to the status held by Kurukshetra city in Haryana, with a ban on liquor, tobacco and meat in the central, walled part of the city. This is only fair given that the centre of Sikhism and the site of the Sikhs' principal place of worship, the Harmandir Sahib or Golden Temple is located here. Amritsar, colloquially known as Ambarsar and historically known as Ramdaspur, is located in the Punjab state of India. It derives its name from Amrit Sarovar which was built by Guru Ram Das in the village of Tung. To highlight the importance of sacred spaces, a special train named Panj Takht Special train for the pilgrimage of five Sikh takhts, was also flagged off on 16 February 2014 under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

Sikhism has seen much contestation and disagreement over the definition of its identity. Before the Moga convention in 1996, only Sikhs were allowed to be members of the Akali Dal. After that, they opened it to all Punjabis. But the Akali Dal also claim to be the face and voice of the Sikhs. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is

the apex institution for the management of Sikh temples in Punjab and its neighbouring states. “The 1959 amendment [in the Sikh Gurdwaras Act] returned the right to vote in SGPC elections to the Sehajdharis, but it also defined the term. The act stated that a Sehajdhari was a Sikh who followed Sikh rites and rituals, believed in the Granth Sahib, but was not patit – meaning that their *kesh* (hair) was trimmed. This definition, which was not consistent with the Mahan Kosh, laid the ground for the SGPC’s attempts to exclude Sehajdharis” (Sandhu 2016: 332). This was another incident of polemical bordering.

In 1999, Sehajdharis defined in the aforementioned way were still allowed to vote in SGPC elections. That same year, the Shiromani Akali Dal's Parkash Singh Badal finally managed to push out Gurcharan Singh Tohra and gained control of SGPC, and with the Bharatiya Janata Party government in power, the SGPC soon made a case for barring Sehajdharis. The voting right of the Sahajdhari Sikhs was restored in 2011 by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, but the decision was reverted again by the Sikh Gurdwaras (Amendment) Act of 2016. “It is bewildering that from the vast ocean of Sikh thought and philosophy, it is the presence or absence of hair that marks the definition of a Sikh” (ibid: 338). This is a vivid example of bordering that has challenged the main principles of the Sikh as well as the Punjabi identity. Sandhu (ibid) argues that by defining who a Sikh is and thereby reducing their number, the SGPC does more harm than good for the Sikh faith.

Defining something inevitably leads to limiting that thing. Sikhism may be seen as a derivative of the Vedanta philosophy (belief in One Ominipotent God), sans the post-vedic rituals and the term “Sikh” means shishya, or student. The name of the religion itself is open and inclusive to everyone who wishes to learn. The Guru Granth Sahib does not define the Sehajdhari, Keshdhari or Amritdhari Sikh. The scope here is not to go into the meaning and philosophies of Sikhism, but only to understand the contextual relevance of the movement’s original purpose. It was meant to unite the people of Punjab and northern India to fight oppressors and invaders and stand up for the oppressed. Over the centuries, Sikhism has developed various sub-movements or factions with their separate claims to identity, such as Singh Sabha Movement, Namdhari Sikhs, Sahajdhari Sikhs, Nirankari Sikhs, Gur-Sikh, Nirmala, Udasi, Sanatan Sikh, Tat Khalsa, Patit, etc. The mental borders that such definitions imply tend to undermine the main tenets of Sikhism.

The partition is lamented in Indian Punjab, especially for the reason that it was vehemently opposed by Sikh leaders. While it is true that after the demand for Pakistan was conceded, some Sikhs too made a similar demand, it is also true that they opposed Pakistan's creation for the loss of culture and heritage that it entailed for them. About this, Singh (1964; as cited in Gill and Khosla 2017: 15) wrote that “ [Mr. Jinnah] knew in his heart of hearts that Sikh opposition to Pakistan was one real obstacle in his way ... [and he] held out all kinds of allurements, including the formation of an autonomous Sikh area within Pakistan. Some British officers also conveyed similar offers”. The mental borders of Pakistan thus envisaged mental borders among the Sikhs too, and this has been a very difficult legacy of the partition for Indian Punjab.

The secessionist movement in the 1980s was, seen from this perspective, a related consequence of the partition. The Government of India's white paper on the Punjab agitation mentioned four factors responsible for it (Kaur et al 2004: 197-205), which included sponsorship by the Shiromani Akali Dal, open advocacy of violence, anti-national activities, and involvement of criminals and Naxalites. The movement was based on the Anandpur Sahib resolution of 1973, a document that sought to protect Sikh interests and the Punjabi language speaking areas of other states. The report explains that the grant of 'holy city' status was not in consonance with the secular nature of our constitution, but also mentions the efforts made to stop the sale of liquor, tobacco and meat around the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) and Durgiana Temple. The report also adds that “In the course of time, communal separatism became an integral part of a movement which was started in the name of grievance of all Punjabis” (205). Elucidating the position of the Punjabi Hindus, Puri (1984: 1127) argues that “Punjabi Hindus, on the other hand, [had] acted more as an extension of the central authority or the so-called national mainstream in opposing the Sikh aspirations instead of asserting a sub-regional identity”. It is clear that the basic objectives of the Sikh community are preservation of the Punjabi identity and the Sikh identity and rigid boundaries of religion have only impeded this objective in the long run.

Singh (1997) suggests that the negotiations of economic, linguistic, and political issues of Punjab have been given a religious shape by the successive Congress governments at the centre since Independence. This tendency to draw and emphasise religious boundaries for the purpose of politics appears to be a legacy of the partition that must be abandoned at all levels in India.

Another important and problematic cultural aspect of Punjab has been the ‘Sardarji joke cycle’ (Handoo 1999) concerning the ethnic jokes made about Sikhs. Humour has been long regarded as an important part of human sociality, yet it also often contains elements of offence and bordering. Ethnic jokes have been studied with regard to the politics that they entail (Kessel and Merziger (eds.) 2012). In India, there has been a common trope of depicting Sikhs in comic roles in Bollywood movies as well as the prevalence of jokes about ‘Sardarji’ depicted as a not-so-intelligent person. Such narratives have been responsible for drawing social boundaries and also disrespecting one of the bravest communities of India.

Ethnic jokes are made to make a ‘cowardly’ community seem ‘stupid’ and a ‘militaristic’ community seem ‘crafty’ (Davies 1982). The ‘militaristic’ tendency of the Sikhs has been a matter of jokes in India which have been responsible for drawing social boundaries. Ethnic jokes are meant to police the geographic, social, and moral boundaries of groups; for example, there are many jokes about ‘gypsies’ in European countries that are aimed at excluding the said group of people from the dominant groups. While the Supreme Court of India has stepped in and banned such jokes about Sikhs, more needs to be done to trace the origins of such tropes and understand their implications for bordering, “For a proud community like the Sikhs needs not so much sympathy, compassion and pity as empathy, understanding and respect. It is as important to pacify their excessive anger as it is to give an outlet to their legitimate anger” (Puri 1984: 1128).

Almost all of these issues are related to the bordering principle in some way or the other. The demand for Chandigarh to be included in Punjab, for instance, is in contrast with the way that Chandigarh serves as a border metaphor. The city is a Union Territory and is the shared capital of Punjab and Haryana. It depicts a place where people of two states interact and coexist in an organic fashion. The fact that the Chief Ministers of these states are in fact neighbours is an antidote to the possible stress that might exist over boundary or water-sharing issues.

What is evident from the above discussion is that the federal and secular nature of India’s constitution, despite being associated with some issues, have however enabled the Punjabi identity to prosper and build on its strength. Although the geographic conception of Punjab has undergone change, the fluidity and penetrability of inter-state

boundaries does not create water-tight compartments and therefore allows for the preservation of the Punjabi culture. The remarkable growth of the Punjabi entertainment industry as well as the Punjabi literary tradition is testimony to this fact. Further, there is adequate protection of religious and sacred places including through institutions and policy. Given that Sikhs are regarded as a minority community in India as per the National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992, the constitution makes available to them the rights to propagate their religion and also conserve their language, script, and culture. The Punjabi language and script have been well safeguarded and also promoted not only in India but also abroad.

In other areas too, Indian Punjab has fared much better. Agriculturally, Punjab has historically been a land of extensive cultivation. In view of this fact, east Punjab has 84 percent of its land sown and 95 percent of the total cropped area is irrigated compared to 41 percent of west Punjab, and has a clear edge over west Punjab where much development needs to be done (Gosal 2004: 24). Indian Punjab also has much higher productivity while west Punjab's literacy rate is a pitiable 37.9 percent compared to east Punjab's 76.7 percent (Tiwana et al 2017). There are sharp contrasts in the development of the two Punjab since partition and this fact highlights the role of the border in enabling a better standard of education and living in Indian Punjab.

CONCLUSION

While an extensive analysis of the divided Punjabi identity is a herculean task, this chapter has presented the main changes that took place after the partition and how they correspond with the resilience (or the lack of it) of the Punjabi identity. West Punjab has witnessed a considerable and consistent deterioration of the Punjabi identity and culture, while east Punjab has managed to stand by its culture and preserved its identity. Despite Ali's (1933) contention that Pakistan would serve as a buffer state for India's security, this has not been the case and Pakistan has time and again created problems for India in the border regions of Punjab and Kashmir. Pakistan is also associated with secessionist groups like Sikhs for Justice and is known to have sponsored militancy and separatism in Punjab, something that can be traced to their own separatist and bordering principles that led to the partition.

Despite the rhetoric of a shared history and culture of India and Pakistan, a comparison of the two Punjabs illustrates not only the differences that have emerged after the partition, but also the inherent differences that led to the partition in the first place. Still, there have been many attempts from both sides to reconcile the differences and explore avenues of cooperation. As a Twitter user posted, “Waheguru willing, the land of our Gurus, West Punjab shall also one day come back to India, with no restrictions and all shall have unfettered access to every corner of it” (Singh 2020), the border is often crossed by the people of Punjab if not physically, at least in their imaginations. Known as border poetics, such acts include seeing and imagining the border, remembering the partition and imagining the other side. The border poetics across the Punjab border shall be enumerated and analysed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER – 5

BORDER AND THE LIMINAL PUNJABI IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

“Not only could they not live in one country any longer, they could not even part peacefully.” -Josh (2008)

The partition of India was a long-drawn process, although it appeared to have been done overnight. The year 1947 marked the culmination of the Indian independence movement and also witnessed one of the bloodiest events of Indian history, the partition. The celebrations of 15th August seemed to overshadow the events of the partition, which has also been referred to as the ‘dark side of independence’ (Butalia 1998: 272). The announcement in 2021 by the Government of India to mark 14th August as the ‘Partition Horrors Remembrance Day’ has thus brought about a much-needed recalibration in how the Independence Day is remembered and celebrated in India.

This chapter elucidates the events and processes that went into the partitioning of India, with a focus on the role played by identities in the creation and erection of borders. It then looks at how the border is understood and the ‘other’ is imagined in Indian Punjab.

As noted in Chapter 2, the Indian subcontinent had not known fixed borders for most part of its history. The mountain ranges and water bodies had served as India’s frontiers throughout history. However, with the rule of the British and the technologies they introduced, the mapping of the subcontinent became possible with high precision, finally culminating in the partition. The first part of this chapter examines the history of the Punjab region as a frontier of India. The second part elucidates the processes that enabled and facilitated the demarcation of identities and created mental borders among the people. The third part considers the liminality of the border and the border poetics used to navigate this phenomenon. It considers the multiple ways in which the border is crossed both in reality and through imagination and popular culture.

PUNJAB AS FRONTIER

“Most of the available histories of the Partition ... are written by either the apologists of Pakistan or by its bitter opponents” (Bhalla 1994: xii). Therefore, instead of viewing the partition merely from the prism of Pakistan’s creation, it may be more useful to consider the history of the frontier region of Punjab in terms of security and locate the partition in that context.

Punjab is one of the most ancient civilizations in the world with a distinguished culture. Punjabi language has its origins in the Indo-European family of languages which includes Persian and Latin. A land of ethnic and religious diversity, it is the birth place of a number of religious movements. Some of the prominent ones include Sikhism, Buddhism and many Sufi schools of Islam. Punjab has historically been a region of churning and witnessed different forms of violence. It has responded to several invasions and also welcomed migrants and refugees from the North-West. It has held a central position with regard to the defence of India, both territorial and spiritual. As regards the Turkic invasions, Balakrishna (2021: 79) remarks that “[a] chief factor that enabled Mahmud of Ghazni to wreak such extensive havoc across such a vast expanse of India lies in his eventual conquest of (undivided) Punjab, the original region of the sacred Pancha-Nada Kshetra (land of the five rivers), which was the highway to mainland India.” This gives us the cue for the significance of Punjab for the purpose of India’s security.

The Indian state of Punjab was created in 1947, when the partition of India split the former British province of Punjab between India and Pakistan. The mostly Muslim western part of the province became Pakistan’s Punjab Province; the mostly Sikh-Hindu eastern part became India’s Punjab state. The partition saw many people displaced and much intercommunal violence, as many Sikhs and Hindus lived in the west, and many Muslims lived in the east. Several small Punjabi princely states, including Patiala, also became part of Indian Punjab.

The partition of 1947 occurred at two levels. First, the Partition of India, also known as the Partition of British possessions in India. Second, the partitions of Punjab and Bengal regions. This distinction is important because these two levels of partition took place in a chronological order. The chronology of the partition of 1947 shows that the demand of the Muslim League was first conceded by the Mountbatten Plan and the partitions of Punjab and Bengal were then done on the basis of the assembly vote of non-Muslims

of Punjab and Bengal, who voted for partition of their regions so they could avoid being included in Pakistan. This clarification is necessary because these two levels must not be confused. Otherwise, it leads us to the trap of the distorted view that both Hindus and Muslims sought partition. There is an abundance of evidence to show who was responsible for the partition of India. As Chester (2009: 138) explains, before partition “Hindus made up a large majority of India’s population, but the Muslim minority numbered some 90 million, making it the largest single population of Muslims worldwide. Muslim nationalists increasingly argued that Muslim interests were in danger in Hindu-majority India.”

While the composite Punjabi culture had been instrumental in not only assimilating the migrants from Central Asia, it also always stood up against violent invasions, oppression, and injustice. The bordering of the partition was thus harmful for the identity in more ways than one. Amrita Pritam’s following verse from 1948 (as translated by Dutt 2017) from her poem, *A Call to Waris Shah* (*Ajj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu*) presents a soulful lament about the partition:

Waris Shah, I call out to you today to rise from your grave. Rise and open a new page of the immortal book of love. A daughter of Punjab had wept and you wrote many a dirge. A million daughters weep today and look at you for solace. Rise o beloved of the aggrieved, just look at your Punjab. Today corpses haunt the woods, Chenab overflows with blood. Someone has blended poison in the five rivers of Punjab. This water now runs through the verdant fields and glades.

The effects of the partition can be summed up in the fact that the exemplary literary tradition that Punjab possessed was made use of to describe and narrate that very destruction which destroyed it. The poems, songs, and stories that Punjab’s folk culture is famous for have now become a site of remembering the partition and also challenging the bordering processes that accompanied it. This shall be explored further later in the chapter. The following section looks at the identity politics that was employed to bring about the partition and break the syncretic and historical cultural traditions of undivided Punjab.

MAPPING IDENTITIES

In the decades leading to partition, increasing tension between Hindus and Muslims in British India led to disagreements over what independent South Asia should look like.

“Hindus made up a large majority of India’s population, but the Muslim minority numbered some 90 million, making it the largest single population of Muslims worldwide. Muslim nationalists increasingly argued that Muslim interests were in danger in Hindu-majority India” (Chester 2009: 138).

The demand for Pakistan was made with the argument that the Muslim minority would not have adequate safeguards in an independent India. This conclusion was drawn after several attempts by the Muslim League to include provisions for Muslim representation in the anticipated constitution of India, often seeking a disproportionate quota in the government branches. Simultaneously, the demand for Pakistan was accompanied by a promise for the protection of minorities in the proposed Islamic state, a responsibility that Pakistan has faltered on ever since its creation. At worst, this may be regarded as deceit in the name of Islam, and at best it may be seen as cognitive dissonance of the Pakistani state.

The process of mapping identities has been succinctly described as a terminological swindle by Goel (1983: 87) in his book titled ‘Muslim Separatism’:

Hindu society had been reduced from the status of a nation to that of a religious community in the counting of heads which the British rulers described as their census operation. Nationalism was now increasingly being labelled as Hindu Communalism. A revaluation of the national resurgence could not lag far behind. It was soon stigmatised as Hindu Revivalism... On the other hand, Islam was getting raised from the status of an imperialist ideology to that of a religion. The residues of Islamic imperialism were now being rehabilitated as the representatives of a religious community which was in a minority and which was trying to save itself from the domination of a majority. The frantic efforts of a foreign fraternity to retain its unequal rights and privileges ... This terminological swindle ... was brought about by the combined efforts of the British imperialists and the residues of Islamic imperialism. They shared a problem in common. The problem was the rising tide of National Resurgence in the indigenous Hindu society... the use of a new terminology had far-reaching ideological consequences

The importance of language is emphasised in this argument in how the native culture and languages were sought to be suppressed in favour of Urdu and how phrases and

their meanings were manipulated to demean the national culture of India. Goel (ibid: 90) adds that what is needed is the use of an exact language which “will substitute Nationalism for Hindu Communalism, National Resurgence for Hindu Revivalism, Islamic Atavism for Muslim Revivalism, and Islamic Imperialism for Muslim Communalism.” This terminological swindle explains why Mohammad Iqbal was able to compose the song ‘*Saare Jahaan se Achcha Hindustan Hamara*’ in which he says ‘*Hindi hain hum*’ (We are Hindi) and yet later was able to denounce the Hindu community and pit Muslims against them. While ‘Hindi’ was portrayed as a territorial and cultural conception, ‘Hindu’ came to describe the religion of the people, despite both words having the same etymological root.

“If you want to understand Punjab, be ready to count its corpses” (Sandhu 2016: i). In order to understand Punjab, we must understand the partition, and in order to do that, we must be clear and unambiguous in our language. The story of partition is a story of horrors, a story of the despicable consequences of the ideology of a community that aspired imperialism in the name of protection of religious rights. The evidence is plentiful for how the state of Pakistan has effaced and erased the native culture and way of life in west Punjab. It was in fact, an earlier example of the ‘*Raliv, Tsaliv, Galiv*’ strategy that led to the mass murder and forced migration of Kashmiri Pandits before and during the 1990s.

Pandey (2003: 16) contends that “Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus were all redefined by the process of Partition: as butchers, or as devious others; as untrustworthy and anti-national; but perhaps most fundamentally, as Sikhs and Muslims and Hindus alone.” Sina (2009: viii) aims “to unmask Islam and show that it is an imperialistic ideology akin to Nazism, but disguised as religion, and to help Muslims leave it, end this culture of hate caused by their “us” vs. “them” ethos and embrace the human race in amity.” The ethos of designating an “us” vs. “them” is a basic feature of human relationality and identity formation. It runs concomitantly with ordering and bordering processes. However, it becomes problematic when it seeks a multiplicity of distinctions based on the multiple layers of identity.

The moment of partition embedded a religious identity along a territorial mode. In doing so, it replaced the territorial and cultural imagination with a religious one. This was an aberration for two reasons. First, a religion by definition has no territorial basis

or logic. It only concerns itself with what may be regarded as sacred geographies. Such geographies often overlap and are sometimes contested, for example, the city of Jerusalem. Second, the Indian subcontinent has been a territorially orientated and conceptualised place. From the imagination of the Bharat Mata to the diversity and unity of shrines, sacred spaces, and the mytho-historical stories and epics associated with these places, India has been a united territory culturally and spiritually for centuries.

Psychogeography is described by Guy Debord as the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals. The border may be described as a geographical barrier, one that may be the result of certain geographical features, or one that is inscribed in and through geography. It entails that we examine the linkages between psychology and geography. Both these domains are concerned with borders and bordering processes. Borders of the mind shape borders on the land and vice versa. In the case of Punjab, a region located on the frontier of India, geographical borders have played a predominant role in people's imagination and spatial socialisation, although the discrete border is a relatively new reality for them. The mental border, however, is a relatively later experience for a culture that always sought to synthesise and approve of varying ways of life. It has created a seemingly permanent schism that no calls to a historically shared culture can possibly resolve.

There are two important insights that psychogeography provides about the partition. First, it highlights the psychological bordering processes that led to the partition of India and the erection of a geographic border in the first place, of how a mental border was realised through a geographical border. Second, it illustrates the effects of the geographic border for the subsequent psychology of the region.

In this regard, the legacy of the partition is seen not merely in terms of the trauma that it caused in the moment of the partition, but also the ways in which bordering was embedded in the psychology of the subsequent generations. There are two ways in which the border has affected the psychology of the people of the region. The polemical bordering, as mentioned earlier, of identifying and mapping communities is related to the problems of separatism and terrorism in India in the 1980s. Similarly, the distinctions of North and South India, Mainland and North-Eastern India, etc. too are a

product of this psychogeographic legacy. Second, the border creates a yearning to be crossed. “Psychogeography is the fact that you have an opinion about a space the moment you step into it” (Hou Je Bek n.d.; as cited in O’Rourke 2021) and the presence of an impenetrable border in the vicinity of one’s hometown has significant implications for that person’s socialisation. Added to this is the nostalgia conveyed through stories told by the elder generations, stories of an undivided, unbordered time.

While the cause of separatism has often been sought in the federating principles of India, the root issue is the border metaphor. Therefore, it is necessary that we examine the vestiges of this metaphor and how they have been dealt with and navigated over the years. As Chatterji (1999; as cited in Chester 2009: 6) informs us, “the creation of the boundary was not a contained process, but a long-term political process, one which continues to this day”, bordering as a psychogeographic process is still ongoing.

BORDER POETICS: CROSSING THE BORDER

Border poetics is essentially a psychogeographic tool of seeing, understanding, and navigating the border. It can include the act of physically crossing the border or merely visiting the border and imagining the other. It can also refer to the emotions that are generated by the presence of the border.

Over the last few decades, there have been various initiatives by civil society, NGOs, and the government to allow and encourage people-to-people ties between India and Pakistan. A good number of these have been focused on Punjab. They recognize the common identity of *Punjabiya* (Punjabiness) that has lived through all these decades. Ayres (2006) has presented the idea of peace through cultural diplomacy comprehensively in her article. First, she points out the historically located features of the Punjabi culture, such as the inclusive Sufi tradition and the syncretic Sikh religion, the Punjabi literature that binds the Punjabi people (She cites the example of a freedom fighter, Udham Singh. During a witness interrogation, “Udham Singh refused to give his real name. Instead, he insisted on calling himself “Ram Mohammad Singh”, by this means summoning the three religions of undivided Punjab” (ibid: 66)).

Then she goes on to list the different realms and the kinds of initiatives that have been taken up by intellectuals and activists, and also the Punjabi diaspora recently. She

mentions cooperation over agriculture and development research by organisations like the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development at Chandigarh, India, linguistic exchange and cooperation through development of software that translate scripts (“The Punjabi written in Pakistan uses an Arabic script, while the Punjabi in India uses a script derived from Sanskrit; the two scripts are not mutually intelligible, although the spoken language is the same.” (Ayres 2006: 66)), performing artists such as Ajoka theatre group, Daler Mehndi, and Rabbi Shergill, who are renowned across the border, movies like *Veer Zaara* and *Khamosh Paani*, cooperation in sports through the organization of Punjab Games, cross-border bus services, World Punjabi Conference, etc. Mukherjee noted in 2009 that “the volume of trade as well as the frequency of cultural exchanges and people-to-people contact has never been so high.”

There have also been relatively successful campaigns such as *Aman Ki Asha*, *Aaghaaz-e-Dosti*, etc. that aim to bring people closer. The popularity that TV channels like *Zindagi* and *Colors* receive in the two countries for broadcasting the other country’s TV soaps must also be noted. Maini (2007: 69-82) adds to this list initiatives like the Amritsar-Lahore *Dosti* (Friendship) bus service, the Punj-Aab bus service between Amritsar and Nankana Sahib, the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, the permission to Sikh Jathas (religious groups) to visit Pakistan and the promise of protection of Sikh shrines in west Punjab, the use of Wagah Border for trade, the formation of non-governmental Punjab-Punjab consultative committees like South Asian Free Media Association which proposed building a ‘peace park’ at Wagah. However, almost all of these initiatives have faltered over time and not met with much success.

India and Pakistan have signed a Protocol for Religious Tourism in 1974 under which pilgrims from each side are able to visit religious sites on the other side of the border. An extension of this practice is illustrated by the opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor in Punjab which allows Sikhs and Hindus to visit the Gurdwara that happens to be located in Pakistan. Further, there have also been student exchanges such as between Bishop Cotton School, Shimla and Aitchison College, Lahore whereby students from either side of the border would get to interact with each other and Indian students would also get a chance to visit sacred places like the Nankana Sahib Gurudwara near Lahore. However, all these processes are impeded by the Pakistan sponsored terrorism in India.

Ayres (2006) feels that we ought to consider the disproportionate influence that the two Punjabs have in their respective countries along with the large and culturally active Punjabi diaspora to gauge the potential that the Punjabi identity may have to forge peace between India and Pakistan. Ayres (2008: 919) clarifies that though this identity may look like a case of classical nationalist formation, “the structural features of this process differ markedly from those we have come to understand as classical nationalisms.” The proposal of integrating Punjab has been referred to by Mehta (2005) as a process of ‘simultaneous dialectic’ of greater regional integration and sub-regional power. This also resonates with Ayres’ (2006) claim that the Punjab linkage could have a demonstration effect on other sub-regions of South Asia. For instance, the Punjabi identity across the border could also set a precedent for reconciling Bengali, Sindhi identities, etc. across the borders.

However, this argument fails to consider the rigidity and impenetrability of the border, and more so of the mental border. The mental border that constitutes the nationalist formation of Pakistan persists as rigidly today as it did in the past and this prevents any possibility of the integration of Punjab based on shared history and culture. Yet, it is common in the Indian Punjab to imagine and interact with the other side of the border through music and movies.

BORDER POETICS: IMAGINING THE OTHER

Using an ‘anti-geopolitical eye’ (Toal, 2010), the following section analyses four Indian Punjabi songs and two posters of (Indian) Punjabi movies to explore the imagination that lies beneath their creation, an imagination that intends to reach out across the border and imagine a Punjab that does not exist anymore. ‘Kya Dilli, Kya Lahore’ is a saying that roughly translates to mean that Delhi and Lahore are more or less the same, and it aptly reflects the emotion in the songs. Gulzar (n.d.) recited the following lines for the trailer of a movie by the same name (Kya Dilli, Kya Lahore): “Lakeerein hain, to rehne do... Kisi ne rooth kar gusse mein shaayad khainch di thi.” (Now that lines are there, let them be there... Someone must have drawn them in the heat of the moment).

A few Punjabi pop songs recently have tried to subvert the idea of these lines and traversed across the border through their lyrics. These songs are of recent production, and have mentions of cities and places which are now divided between India and

Pakistan, and between the two Punjabs. First, the Punjabi artist Guru Randhawa's song, 'Lahore', released in December, 2017, is a song about a man trying to impress a woman by telling her:

“O lagdi Lahore di aa, jis hisaab naa' hansdi aa

O lagdi Punjab di aa, jis hisaab naa' takdi aa”

(The way you laugh, you look like you're from Lahore,

The way you look at me, you look like you're from Punjab)

He further goes on to tell her that her tantrums are from Delhi, and her style is from Bombay. The juxtaposition of all these places in a single piece of musical prose, is unique in that it is almost impossible today to find the mention of Lahore, Punjab, and Delhi anywhere else as if they belong to the same 'habitus', the same space or the same constellation of imagination.

The second example is a song by the same name, 'Lahore', by another Punjabi artist, Gippy Grewal, which also came out in 2017. In a similar setup as the previous example, here, the man goes:

“Ho nakhra ae Lahore da, main aashiq teri tor da

Chandigarh vich charcha ae, Billo teri tor da”

(Your tantrums are from Lahore, I love the way you walk,

Your gracefulness is famous as far as Chandigarh)

He then adds that 'Sector-34' (Chandigarh) has become a favorite spot for him to drive around, so that he could see her. This implies that the woman he is talking about actually lives in Chandigarh, the capital of Indian Punjab. Just like the previous song, this one too merely alludes to Lahore as a place where the woman might have acquired a certain quality from (Tantrum, Laughter). Ergo, the mention of Lahore along with Indian cities is borne out of an imagination, and is yet grounded in reality.

The third song, by Jordan Sandhu, is from the perspective of a woman from Lahore, who has fallen for a man from Amritsar, by the virtue of the fact that he has a farmland close to the border, a common feature for people living near the border in Punjab. In this song titled 'Ambersar Waala' (The man from Amritsar), she says,

“Mundeya Ambersar waleya, Tu lutt li Lahore di rakaan ve

Bordar ton urran tera khet sadde val ve

Chauthi ‘k si waar tainu vekheya main kal ve’

(Hey, man from Amritsar,

You’ve made this girl from Lahore fall for you,

Your farm is on my side of the border,

I guess I saw you just for the fourth time yesterday)

In this song, what is portrayed is an unreal, yet real possibility, that of a girl falling in trans-border love, but in a typical rustic manner. It is a proof of the strong cultural familiarity that people have with each other across the border in the Punjab region.

The fourth song, called ‘Janjhan’ (Wedding procession) by Gurpreet Maan, is from a movie called ‘Lahoriye’. It makes very plain and clear propositions about the partition:

“Ho je na hundi 47 vich leek manzur, Nuhn bebe di le auni si Lahore ton zarur...

Ho janjhan jandiyan Je hundiyan Lahore nu

Aa ke Chandigarh gediyan kyo marde”

(Had the partition not happened in ’47,

My mother’s daughter-in-law would have been a girl from Lahore

Were it possible to take wedding processions to Lahore,

We wouldn’t need to go to Chandigarh to find love)

This song refers to Lahore and along with it, the undivided Punjab, in a seemingly romantic fashion. It alludes to a possibility that cannot be, and is yet wished for. It calls to the fore the Punjabi identity and its territorial core.

What is perhaps most interesting to note here is that these songs have a strong following in Pakistani Punjab too, as is evident in the comments section of their YouTube videos. They are interesting for the fact that people were sending each other greetings across the border in the backdrop of the tension between the governments of India and Pakistan after the terrorist attacks sponsored by the latter in India. These comments, just like the

songs, demonstrate the aforementioned “awareness of togetherness among a people of a relatively large size” that makes up the Punjabi identity.

Until a decade or so ago, it used to be quite common to watch a Bollywood Hindi language film and see its name written in the three languages of English, Hindi (Devanagari script), and Urdu (Nasta’liq script) in the film credit. While Bollywood has changed tact and now only displays the film names in English and Hindi, Punjab appears to have picked up on this act of inclusivity, or resistance, as it may be

“The Punjabi written in Pakistan uses an Arabic script [i.e. Shahmukhi], while the Punjabi in India uses a script derived from Sanskrit [i.e. Gurumukhi]; the two scripts are not mutually intelligible, although the spoken language is the same”, opines Ayres (2006: 66). While travelling in or through Punjab, the disregard for the Hindi language and its script becomes quite evident. Barely any hoardings or banners outside shops or adjacent to fly-overs are in Hindi, and the number of English advertisements or banners is next only to the Punjabi (Gurumukhi) ones.

If one is a Punjabi speaking person, she/he would be more often than not treated with more respect than a Hindi-speaking person. The same bias, or preference, is visible in the film posters too. Most of them have the name written boldly in either Punjabi (Gurumukhi) or English, with a translation in the other language written alongside in a much smaller font. However, a few films have come out recently with posters (perhaps because the themes of the movies were such that they were expected to allure the Pakistani audience too) that have the names written in the Nasta’liq (Shahmukhi) or the Urdu script, alongside the English and Punjabi (Gurumukhi) scripts.

This despite the fact that in India, the Urdu script has been at the receiving end of the Hindi-Urdu controversy, which King (1994) talks about at length in his book, ‘One Language, Two Scripts’, while it is the official script in Pakistan. Just as King’s analysis regards Hindi and Urdu to be one and the same language having two different scripts, it can also refer to the scenario of how one language, Punjabi, has come to acquire two mutually unintelligible scripts.

The posters are as follows:



(Credit: Nadhoo Khan Official Facebook page; Sardar Mohammad IMDB page [Web])

The first poster, of the film ‘Nadhoo Khan’, has the film name written boldly in English juxtaposed with the name in Urdu (Shahmukhi) on the left and Punjabi (Gurmukhi) on the right. The second poster, of the film ‘Sardar Mohamad’, has the full name written in English in the centre, with the word ‘Sardar’ written on top in Punjabi, and ‘Mohammad’ written below it in Urdu. While the absence of the Hindi script is not quite marked on Punjabi film posters, given the wide reach that Punjabi and English names would give the movies, the addition of the Urdu script is very remarkable, particularly as the act of writing the name in the Urdu script comes with the cognizance of the fact that the Punjabi language today is written using two scripts. It may be regarded as an acknowledgement of the Punjabi identity that spans across the border.

Not only is the border a site for performance of sovereignty (Leake and Haines 2017: 964), performance of nationalism and mimetic modes of thinking (Menon 2013), but also a psychogeographic reality that provides a frame for everyday life. The inherent contradiction of the border as a metaphor is that while it symbolises the haunting memory of the violence of the partition, it also serves as a literary device that romanticises the ‘other’ and highlights the yearning to transgress.

CONCLUSION

Kolossov (2005: 612) argues that “economic globalisation and unification of cultures are awakening regional consciousness, which often contributes to the development of separatist or irredentist movements disputing the existing system of political boundaries.” The sub-national regional identities of South Asia seemingly have the

potential of disputing the nearly-settled national boundaries. However, if seen from a cultural and historical perspective, these identities function as territorial identities at the meso-scale between the local and the national identities. By spanning across borders, they serve as sub-regional identities of the South Asian region and highlight the cultural unity of the Indian subcontinent. The Punjabi identity especially draws attention to the importance of territorial and cultural identities in contrast of the religious identities on the basis of which partition took place.

As Newman and Paasi (1998:190) claim, “Borderlands and political frontiers have largely been studied within the context of conflict, separation, partition and barriers as contrasted with peace, contact, unification and bridges”, the need is really to view borders as contradictory liminal spaces that are marked by both conflict and peace, both restriction and transgression, both ‘us’ and ‘them’. Borderlands act as contact zones where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other (Pratt 1991).

In this context, the pertinent question that can be asked is, “What measures - constitutional, institutional or conventional - can be devised to give territorial and non-territorial communities a sense of recognition and participation” (Puri 1984: 1129). Related to this are questions of belonging and ownership. Could territorial identities can be overlooked and non-territorial identities be allowed to determine the answers to these questions? If that were to happen, then the numerous forms of identity would create an array of divisions and borders. Further, if political organisation were to be determined by non-territorial identities as was done for the partition, there would arise a constant state of flux in the Indian subcontinent, given the huge diversity that prevails here. Thus, territorial identities must be reckoned as the basic feature around which principles of federation and consociation may be evolved.

Menon (2013: 17) argues that “[m]imetic relationality offers productive political possibilities for imagining cross-border affiliations.” It is a kind of relationality that takes into consideration ‘similitude’ and yet prevents its usurpation by ‘sameness’. The latter generates identity and consequently, identity politics. Whereas similitude recognises the features that individuals and groups share with each other without necessarily being the exact/identical/same copies of each other. Most importantly, mimesis allows space for incommensurable difference that is inherent in incompatible nationalities or religions. The border ritual at Wagah-Attari is able to “inscribe, sustain,

and perpetuate a narrative of antagonistic hostility between the two nations” (Ibid: 46), as it plays out in a mimetic manner whereby both sides’ performances mirror each other.

Given how geopolitics and political geography are largely determined by the ‘topography of the mind’, Stein (2009) advocates that to understand international conflict, one must better come to understand humans through a psychogeography of intergroup relations or a metapsychology of culture. For this purpose, the myth/history and myth/memory boundaries need to be removed so that myth-memory-history can serve as an analytical tool for understanding psychogeographic processes. The border metaphor is one such concept that enables us to move beyond disciplinary, territorial, and mental borders to discern the complexity and uncertainty of liminal spaces.

Both the lived experiences and the cognitive experiences of Punjab are ridden with liminality. It entails contrasts, binaries, and contradictions. It becomes a difficult space to capture and navigate. The idea of the border explains and shapes this frontier region of India and is therefore an essential element of the identity and cognition of the people who live here.

CHAPTER-6

CONCLUSION – W(H)ITHER BORDER?

“That knowledge is called sattvic (righteous) by which one sees all beings situated in one inexhaustible being and undivided among the divided. Know that knowledge as rajasic (self-centred) by which one sees multiple existences as different entities due to divisions.” -Bhagwad Geeta (18: 20-21)

A border is much more than just a border. It represents history, geography, culture, religion, language, society, and so much more. It differentiates people, but also reminds them of their commonalities. It is a place, a process, a concept, a tool, a perspective, and a paradigm in itself. The borders we choose to create and the borders we choose to see define us as nations and communities. This chapter summarises the findings of the study and answers two important questions: Whither border? (i.e. what is the future of the border in the South Asian context) and Wither border? (i.e. whether borders have become redundant in the globalised era).

Borders are ubiquitous. Binaries and distinctions such as left-right, good-evil, us-them are embedded in our cognitive and moral sensitivities. A border is what divides these binaries and at the same time serves as the meeting place of these binaries. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of borders and their purpose in a world that was until recently witnessing seemingly uncontrollable trends of border crossings and globalisation. It has also brought into limelight the significance of technology in border management and border security. Despite the kerfuffle over globalisation’s diluting effects on national borders, borders are here to stay. And given the important functions that they perform, secure borders are very important for human and national security.

In order for cooperation or integration to take place, it is necessary that the causes and forces of disintegration are first discerned. The partition of 1947 is often regarded as the last such incident that divided India and its sub-regions. If considered on a larger scale, there is evidence of disintegration of the subcontinent over the past many centuries. The British colonial era, despite its introduction of railway and communication lines, was also largely responsible for the recognition and fixation of

social and territorial divides and boundaries. This had been preceded by multiple invasions of India. Golwalkar's (1939: 13) 'war of centuries' perspective enables us to examine the forces of disintegration historically. Further, as Balakrishna (2021) notes, "The conquest of India was the conquest of culture by those who lacked it". The defence of India, thus, is the defence of culture.

Border security in this context becomes a complex matter underpinned by contesting and sometimes contradictory narratives of identity, history, and order. Borders serve an important function of determining and delineating our identities, and this function is based on the memories of history that are transmitted across space and time. History is for most part served by mythology and lecto-orality. The memory of history, in its turn, provides us with the template of order. A border thus acts as a 'contact zone' of two opposing or at the least incompatible identities, histories, or orders.

The intersection of border and identity reflects the significance of territory, as well as of territorial identities. Such an identity is based on a common sacred geography, common or mutually intelligible language(s), kinship, and shared culture. Compared to the Cosmopolitan (de-bordered) perspective on relationality that is entangled in the contradiction between aspired homogenization and actual heterogeneity, the Communitarian perspective does not distinguish between the universal/cosmopolitan 'human' identity and the particular, community identities, rather it regards the cultural identities as terms that already encompass our humanity.

While talking about Security Community as one of the four types of regional security cooperation, Bailes and Cottey (2005: 201) state that "[a]mbitions to build such communities have recently been displayed also in several non-European regions, but the nature and effects of regional integration in the security domain remain poorly understood". A Security Community is defined as a group of states among which there is a "real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way" (Deutsch 1969, as cited in *ibid*: 201). South Asia lacks an effective regional security architecture, and therefore the study of borders is important not only for border management and border security, but also for regional security and cooperation. This study was a step in that direction.

It employed the communitarian perspective to study the Punjabi identity and how it has changed because of the India-Pakistan border. It sought to understand the meaning of

the border in Punjab, its history and its functions. A border is not merely a line on the sand, but it represents a range of emotions, memories, identities, and orders. The border in Punjab was not erected overnight on the 15th of August, 1947. It was rather a culmination of hundreds of years of difference, conflict, and struggle.

Its history lay not only in the politics of the Muslim League in the early 20th century, but also in the numerous invasions that the Punjab region had witnessed in the past. The border serves as a reminder of the Indus River and the Hindu Kush Mountain ranges that have historically been India's frontiers. It is also a reminder of the innumerable battles that have been fought in the region to defend India and India's way of life. It is a history unto itself that makes itself visible in a string of barbed wires and a no man's land.

The most important function of this border is differentiation. It symbolises the difference between India and Pakistan, between tolerance and intolerance, and between moderation and extremism. Difference is a feature of reality that is not necessarily resolvable. A border exemplifies this truth.

The first chapter outlined the objectives of the study and the research questions that it aimed to answer. It also reviewed the prominent literature on borders and identity, as also the border in Punjab. Border Studies is in a nascent stage with regards to South Asia and there is much scope for analytical tools that are relevant to the context and history of the region. While the partition has been studied and narrated from multiple perspectives, the border has not been studied much, especially in terms of the changes that it has caused.

The second chapter examined the link between the two important concepts of the study, i.e. border and identity. It explained the meanings, histories, and functions of borders and the scope of Border Studies. Both the concepts of border and identity are laden with ambiguity and are difficult to be causally linked. They certainly are constitutive of each other in that our identities are defined by the border between 'us' and 'them'. Thus, these concepts are inherently linked with territoriality, sovereignty, nationality, history, and culture. The IBO (Identity-Borders-Orders) perspective reflects the importance of this linkage for securing order in the region. The identities we prioritise in our socialisation lead to the borders that we erect and respect. In this regard, the territorial and cultural identities in South Asia play a predominant role, and have done so

historically. This is evident from the conflicts that happened over the centuries whereby the security and integrity of India or Hindustan was sought to be maintained.

The third chapter examined the main features of the Punjabi identity as it had existed before partition. Punjab was essentially a geographical and territorial category that had a language and culture of its own and was marked by syncretic religious practices. Though being an inherently territorial category, Punjab's boundaries historically were fluid and indeterminate. The Hindu Kush mountains and to some extent the Indus River served as Punjab's frontiers. Its language could be located along the Indo-Aryan continuum of languages and it had been preserved in the Gurmukhi script which was formalised by Guru Angad Dev out of the Lahnda script, which itself is a derivative of the Brahmi script. Punjab also had an extensive literary, cultural, and religious tradition marked by monuments and temples.

The fourth chapter enumerated the differences that now exist between the Pakistani Punjab and the Indian Punjab, as a result of the partition. While Pakistan is sometimes said to be dominated by its Punjab province, in reality the Punjabi identity and culture have taken a backseat due to the Islamisation and Urduisation of the whole of Punjab. There have been several protests demanding the recognition and promotion of the Punjabi language, but they have not succeeded. This has led to a state of identity crisis in Pakistani Punjab. In the Indian Punjab, although federalism and secularism have presented certain challenges, the Punjabi identity and culture have survived and fared much better than the western counterpart. The language, culture, and religious practices of the state have received adequate protection from the state. The 1980s saw an extremist movement which was majorly a result of the legacy and wounds of the 1947 partition and the bordering legacy.

The fifth chapter elucidated the border poetics in terms of how the border has been crossed by people both physically and through other means. It listed the initiatives taken by state and non-state actors to promote cooperation and peace in the region based on the Punjabi identity (Punjabiyyat). But the question then arises is, 'Whose peace?', and most of these initiatives are marred by the difference in perceptions. On the one hand, there is Pakistan that has internalised terrorism as part of its foreign policy, and on the other hand is an India which envisages grand ideals and goals for the region without delineating how to achieve them.

The concluding chapter demonstrates the binary character of the border itself. The border espouses both memories of violence and nostalgia, both love and hate, both fear and desire, etc. It is a contact zone which can enable interaction and trade and at the same time it is a highly securitised and militarised zone that must be firmly secured. The Punjabi identity too carries this binary characteristic, as it creates a yearning to cross the border while also reminding one of the dangers that lay across it.

The first hypothesis of the study was that cultural and territorial identities such as Punjabi are the major factors in politics. It is observed that such identities play a very important role in both domestic and international politics. For South Asia, cross-border cultural and territorial identities influence domestic politics and also bilateral relations. Being Punjabi and Indian defines people as humans. The different scales of such identities coexist and have done so historically. The partition was, from this perspective, an aberration that neglected such identities and made use of religious identities to foment violence, something that its legacy continues to do till date.

The second hypothesis was that a border not only divides but also unites identities. Therefore, we come to see that borders are real and necessary as long as they are territorial borders. Regardless of the increase in trade and interaction, they will continue to exist like they have done in the past, in some form or the other. They may become invisible with the aid of technology, but their functions will remain visible. The border allows us to comprehend that “the dominant rhetoric of India’s “nonviolent” path to independence obscures the magnitude of the violence of the Partition” (Menon 2013: 33), as instead of viewing everything in binary oppositions, we are compelled to realise that not everything is black and white and that there exist grey areas too. A border, therefore, has an ambivalent meaning and function. When it is drawn along geographical frontiers, the divisive function is predominant, whereas when it lies along an artificial ‘line on the sand’, it serves as a site for unification of identities.

The creation of the border has had significant effects for the Punjabi identity. It divided the culture and history of Punjab and had an adverse effect on the Punjabi identity in west Punjab. It engraved not only a ‘geography of trauma’ but also a psyche of trauma on the people of Punjab. Most importantly, it left the Punjabi people with an ambivalence towards their identity as people in the west struggled to preserve it while

those in the east struggled to emphasise it. Overall, the border created an irreconcilable schism that people have tried to overcome in different ways.

The people of Punjab understand the border as a marker of their national identities. They see it as a site of memory and violence, particularly so in the Indian Punjab. Here it represents the cumulative memory of the history of invasions and conflicts that the Punjab region has witnessed over centuries. Simultaneously, the border is understood as a barrier to their collective memory of a shared culture and history. It represents the longing to visit places where one's ancestors were displaced from, and also the sacred places which are embedded in our religious consciousness but are inaccessible physically. While in Pakistan the border symbolises lost territory that could have been included in the Muslim 'homeland', in India it symbolises the defence of our motherland and civilisation. For this reason, the scale of and attendance at the retreat ceremony is much larger on the Indian side of the Wagah-Attari border.

As a site of memory, the border represents the violence that occurred due to the demand of a separate Muslim territory. As a result, in Indian Punjab the memory of the independence is overshadowed by the memory of the partition. The breakdown of the social structure and trust that occurred is etched in the memory of every Punjabi, including those who were displaced and were forced to migrate.

As an analytical category for framing identity, the border serves an important purpose. While the creation of Pakistan and the subsequent persecution of minorities there demonstrates the exclusionary tendency of that state, the inclusive and secular character of the Indian state has not been very conducive to the formation of a national identity. This is so because the vestiges and legacies of partition are still extant in India and have been responsible for social boundaries, particularly in Kashmir and Punjab. These legacies have led to separatist movements in these states which continue to impede the unity and integrity of our nation. There have been efforts to tackle them in recent times, such as the removal of Article 370 and the recognition of 14th of August as the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day.

The Punjabi people have been socialised with the border for multiple generations now and it forms an essential part of their cognition. While they imagine the other side to be similar to themselves, they also understand that the border represents the enemy. It also represents the 'war of centuries' that the Indian subcontinent has been subject to. There

is bitterness with regards to the events of the partition along with the acknowledgement of the similarity of the people on either side.

The partition not only created the geographic border, but it also created a distinction between “who we are” and “where we are from”. Cultural and territorial identities define who we are on the basis of our homeland and where we are from. However, the partition created a border within this identity and sought to define people apart from their territorial identities.

The post-partition identity of Punjab is clearly different from the pre-partition one. The Indian Punjab has ensured that the Punjabi language and culture is given its rightful due through administrative and educational means and also through music and movies of popular culture. They inherit a sense of loss as well as a desire to re-unite west Punjab. On the contrary, the imposition of Urdu and a monolithic identity in west Punjab has prevented the growth of its native culture. They possess a desire to revive their culture and language and make attempts of doing so by seeking interaction and cooperation with the Indian Punjab.

The primary difference, however, remains in the fact that west Punjab seeks from its citizens an absolute loyalty towards the Islamic religion and a sacred duty towards its holy sites of Mecca and Medina whereas the Indian Punjab allows space for territorial identities to coexist with the multiple layers of identities including the national one and also enables freedom of religion. The Indian Punjab also recognises and protects its sacred geography while in the Pakistani Punjab it has been overlooked and neglected. The temples, shrines, Gurudwaras, and remains of ancient civilisations in west Punjab are lacking the kind of protection and conservation that is available to them in the Indian Punjab.

The people make use of many kinds of border poetics to engage with and imagine the other side. Most of these devices overlook the differences and highlight the commonalities. In the form of poems, stories, anecdotes, songs, movies, et cetera, they look back at an undivided past where not only did the geographic border not exist, but also the mental border. Punjab is often imagined and addressed as a unified space in many Indian Punjabi songs.

The legacy of the border is the bordering principle that we have come to accept. While it is easy to draw a line and divide something, it is often difficult to live with the

consequences of such borders. It is important that we recognise the bordering principle as distinct from the event of partition, and avoid its pitfalls. At the same time, we must recognise the importance of the Punjab border for the purpose of India's security. Any crossings must be properly regulated, and the people of Punjab must be made to understand the inherent difference that the border represents and the differences that it has created. While nostalgia is something that we all suffer from every now and then, it cannot be allowed to come in the way of border security. Technology should be used not only for surveillance of the border, but also of how the border and its legacies manifest in places other than the border itself. This includes civil society groups, students, tourists, and such elements within the country that seek to create rigid divisions and boundaries along non-territorial identities.

The future of the Punjab border lays in its strengthening and a possible westward shift so that it may be aligned with the natural frontiers of the Indian subcontinent. For this to happen, the people of both Punjabs must understand the stakes and become able to revive the historical importance of the Punjab frontier for the defence of India. The only cooperation that should be allowed is one that keeps this vision at its core. And only those crossings should be permitted and promoted which recognise the importance of the security and integrity of the culture and territory of the Indian subcontinent.

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