



Analyzing the Theme of Forced Migration in Amit Majmudar's Partitions through the Lens of Everett Lee's Pull-Push Theory

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ABSTRACT

Partitions, the novel written by Amit Majmudar, provides a vivid insight into the complex forces behind forced migration that are based on Everett Lee's Pull-Push Theory. The novel revolves around two main characters – Keshav and Shankar whose lives are destroyed due to India's partition in 1947. Our qualitative case study investigates numerous "pull" and "push" factors in order to understand what triggers this process of migration. The current study aims to explore by employing textual analysis and utilizing theoretical frameworks to dissect how socio-political, economic, and cultural forces define decisions made by the characters we meet throughout the story. The results illustrate the complexity of migration stories and emphasize the importance of placing individual biographies within a larger context. This effort helps in understanding deeper levels of forced migration studies and how they can influence historical perspectives and contemporary global issues, as described in this research.



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INTRODUCTION

The bloodiest upheavals of Partition, one of the most important event in recent history of the subcontinent, erupted with the dissolution of British rule in the subcontinent giving birth to twin nations at the cost of two million lives and massive cross-border migration of about ten million people (Butalia, 3; Menon and Bhasin 35). While counting on the horrors of the event Mosley

(1971) estimates that 100, 000 young girls are kidnapped on both sides, forcibly converted or sold on auction block. The event, due to the mega devastation it caused, due to ever-lasting consequences on the direct participants' and upcoming generations' lives, and because of the immense significance it holds in the subcontinent's history, motivated many eminent Hindu, Bengali, Punjabi, Sikh and Muslim writers to record its causes, consequences and horrors in Partition Literature which is presumed as one of the important genre of South Asian Literature. This fiction can be categorized into works of early Partition writers which include mostly male scriptwriters who jot down the event from its political and religious perspectives. However, the second group subsumes both male and female novelists and short story writers who create a counter-voice to the former male-centric dominant political history by discussing the event from females' perspectives and by highlighting the hidden tales of this tragic historical episode. For instance, Jyotirmoyee Devi's *The River Churning: A Partition novel*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Saadat Hasan Manto's *Bitter Fruit* and *Pinjar* by Amrita Pritam are notable works of Partition Literature recorded at different time spans. The immensity and severity of its effects can be noticed in the fact that even those writers who escape its brutality could not resist writing about it and Amit Majmudar is one such example. An Indian-American novelist and a poet born in 1979 writes his emotional outpourings on the India-Pakistan partition project based on what he read in the books about the event in the novel titled *Partitions* 2011. This short yet touching displacement tale of four partition-stricken characters who have distinct religious affiliations are told from dead narrator's perspective. Ibrahim Masud, a dislocated Muslim pediatrician is bound to leave his Indian abode to a refugee camp near Pakistani border only to be returned back to Atari, Amritsar's. Simran Kaur, sixteen years old Sikh girl, becomes a refugee in her struggle to save her life first from her father and then from Muslim abductors Ayub, Qasim and Saif. Keshav and Shankar, Brahmin twins of Roshan Jaitley and Sonia, migrate from Lahore to Amritsar, fruitlessly search for their lost mother.

The reviewed literature analyze only the character of Simran Kaur in terms of the engendered violence she is subjected to by her own father, the trauma she suffers from by being raped and abducted, and the defense mechanism she develops to cope with her mental and physical wounds. The dearth of literature on Keshav and Shankar characters, on their forced migration, on the risks the journey holds for them and on their ending up at an intervening place rather than at a destination encourage the researcher to explore their forced migration in detail and better understand it by viewing it through Everett Lee's Pull Push Model.

Statement of the Problem

Ending up of Keshav and Shankar in Amritsar refugee camp, an intervening opportunity between the place of the origin and the destination, their choice of staying at it rather than moving towards Delhi questions their personal and pull factors of the destination, further complicating the relationship of selective migration and personal factors.

Research Questions

- 1) How does Everett Lee's Pull Push Theory illuminate the experiences of forced migration as depicted in Amit Majmudar's *Partitions*, through the lens of Keshav and Shankar?
- 2) What are the primary factors driving the migration of Keshav and Shankar in *Partitions*?

- 3) How does the narrative structure of *Partitions* by Amit Majmudar reflect the dynamics of forced migration as understood through Everett Lee's theory?

Significance of the Study

The paper attempts to fill a gap by holding Everett Lee's Push Pull Theory of migration to comprehend better the forced journey Keshav and Shankar undertake from Lahore to Amritsar. Their linear but disrupted forced displacement from the place of origin to the destination is interfered with hurdles of kidnapping and selling which fit exactly in the category of 'intervening obstacles' Lee identifies in his theory. The twins' personal attributes of high intelligence, enduring power, unwavering resilience and unbroken perseverance till the very end of the novel reveal the selective nature of migration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The article titled "Honor Killing as Engendered Violence against Women in Amit Majmudar's *Partitions*" conducts a detailed study on the brutal socio-cultural attitude of marking females' bodies with men's honor, females' chastity and religious purity by Sikh men amid Partition. Textual analysis helps the researchers in substantiating their argument of proving honor killing as engendered violence and labelling Sikh's attitude as dark side of biopower. Viewing patriarchal attitude of deciding females' fate for them and shaping their psyches in favor of being killed by their own men gracefully and purely as negative side of biopower, a Foucauldian notion of shaping mass behavior through certain methods and perishing others for one's own survival, act as a backing thought for researcher's stance. It delimits itself to planned honorable death of Simran Kaur by her father by poisoning the milk before any Muslim touch her in communal violence in post-partition era. Also, definition of engendered violence propounded by Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin and Butalia help them achieve their objective. The paper fills a research gap by challenging the previously held belief of honor killing as legitimate and a religious duty of females in risky unpredictable times, thereby promoting it as something rewarding and yielding. Moreover, it uncovers the hypocrisy of patriarchy by calling men's attitude political whatever they do it is not purely for females' chastity or honor sake rather they want for themselves a guilt free survival.

The article by Pervez et al describes an overview of what Partition result in for teenage boys and underage girls and how the disturbing event comes as a blessing for untouchables of the partitioned India. Through the qualitative textual analysis of *Partitions* is discussed the separation of Keshav and Shankar from their untouchable mother, Sonia on Lahore's train station, troublesome journey of doubly victimized Simran Kaur, a Sikh teenager girl who escapes from her father's planned honorable death. It rather makes her fall a prey to a physical assault and bodily disgrace by Muslims abductors: Qasim, Saif, and Ayub. The untouchables like Maya Rani is utterly unaffected and completely passive to the division of India-Pakistan project since she believes that the birth of two divided lands fail to change her status from 'untouchable' to 'touchable' and surprisingly enough, unlike many, is benefitted from the desolate land by collecting everyday used articles for her from those.

The paper evaluates Simran's character by conducting psychological study of her by examining how she treats her trauma of rape and abduction. Latency and flashbacks from Trauma Theory by Cathy Caruth and resilience by George A. Bonnano is employed as a theoretical framework for finding out the severity of her trauma and her defense mechanisms against them. The paper

fills a void by psychologically analyzing the distressed individual Simran Kaur and her coping mechanism through resilience, latency and flashbacks.

With the backdrop of the 1947 Partition of India, Amit Majmudar's *Partitions* develops a storyline where forced migration is shown through its characters: Keshav and Shankar. The novel centers on their struggles in trying to find a peaceful life amidst the ever so chaotic political environment and other traumatic events marked by violence between opposing groups or communities. More importantly, the author's portrayal provides ample room for considering Lee's Pull-Push Theory that might bring into focus an interaction between Keshav and Shankar's forces that propel them from their place of origin and towards alien lands that tend to be home-like.

Analysis of stories on forced migration has been seen as vital through the involvement of a more profound socio-political context that articulates the experiences of displacement. Based on research work by Koser and Pinkerton (2018), they bring out the importance of structural violence and discrimination in intensifying forced migration, indicating how these features lead to marginalized communities being displaced. In a similar fashion, Castles (2003) also underscores the crucial role played by historical events and power dynamics in causing mass human movements evidenced in phenomena such as colonialism and imperialism. Furthermore, in scholarly discussions, the impact of forced migration on people's mental and emotional state has become a point of attention. The works of Silove (1999), where he examines what is termed as the "trauma of exile," have contributed to understanding the profound psychological harm caused by displacement on an individual as well as a community level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper uses qualitative research method to analyze the text *Partitions* by Amit Majmudar, and textual analysis for sifting only those instances from the book which support the researcher's claim. As the method involves uninterrupted reading, it helps the researcher in better understanding the choice Keshav and Shankar make to start and continue their migration till Amritsar, India. *Partitions* textbook as a primary source for textual data and articles as secondary source for finding a gap through reviewing are considered for writing this paper.

Theoretical Framework

Everett Spurgeon Lee, a Sociology professor, a proponent of Pull Push Theory in the book *Demography* (1966), illustrates on the voluminous phenomenon of modern-day migration by discussing its four main factors, its patterns by formulating hypotheses on its volume and various reasons affecting it. Lee identifies a specific linear pattern of displacement from origin to destination with intervening hurdles and opportunities. A settler might drive away voluntarily or involuntarily from a starting to a final point. Migration to Lee is "a permanent or a semi-permanent change of residence" and "every act of migration involves an origin, a destination, and an intervening set of obstacles" (p.49). Four causes he identifies motivating one for migration are: push forces, pull force, personal factors and intervening obstacles; the first one among them i.e., the push factors which are exit, unfavorable repelling social, economic, environmental, cultural conditions and forces at the place of origin represented through minuses (-), encourage a migrant to leave a place he inhabits and has authentic and full knowledge of. "Persons living in an area have an immediate and often long-term acquaintance with the area and are usually able to make considered and unhurried judgments regarding them" (p.50). Lee

describes these as: “there are others which tend to repel them” (p.50). The tense social relationships between different communities, unclean filthy polluted environmental conditions, weak governance in providing equal security to its all citizens and less economic opportunities may act in driving one out of place of origin. The second impetus behind leaving one’s place of birth are pull forces and in Lee’s perspectives “in every area there are countless factors which act to hold people within the area or attract people to it” (p.50). These conducive attractive coercions at a destination, shown through (+), make migrants decide irrationally and idealistically about a second home without having deeper knowledge of its ground realities. His statement “there is always an element of ignorance or even mystery about the area of destination” (p.50) which reveals the migrants’ knowledge of a place of origin is deeper, real and authentic than that of destination which might be faulty, unreal, and erroneous. The third significant factor determining the course of migration, evaluating its feasibility, its pace in Lee’s understandings is the in-between landscape from an origin to destination which a displaced subject covers. His migratory journey can be interrupted and slowed down by environmental, political, cultural barriers between the nations he is leaving and shifting to. Altogether these impede his visit, making it challenging and demanding but fails to stop him completely. In his words: “between every two points there stands a set of intervening obstacles which may be slight in some instances and insurmountable in others” (p.51). Negative factors at the origin, positive factors of the destination, and overcoming the intervening obstacles do not decide the possibility of a migration alone; the personal factors play a most crucial role in deciding whether to migrate or not. These are individuals’ perceptions on pull & push factors, his intelligence to weigh pluses and minuses of both places before leaving for destination. There are many personal factors which affect individual thresholds and facilitate or retard migration” (P.51).

Moreover, while demonstrating the characteristics of migrants and tracing the nature of migration if it is selective or random, Lee asserts that “migrants are not a random sample of the population at origin” (p.56), thereby reveals its selective nature. It chooses its sample through migrants personal factors who perceive differently positive and negative factors of origin and destination. Also, their differing capacities to the intervening obstacles make the process selective. “Factors at origin operate most stringently against persons who in some way have failed economically or socially” (p.56). Individuals are positively selected who are primarily driven by pull factors of the destination and others who are primarily driven out of the place of origin by the push forces are negatively selected.

Data Analysis

Personal factors, the most important seed of migration as Lee identifies in his theory, play the most crucial role in determining Keshav and Shankar course of migration, in making up their minds to tolerate all the hardships that come their way from physical injuries to kidnapping to selling while going from Lahore to Delhi for finding their mother, Sonia. Their personal attributes i.e., intelligence, perseverance, and toleration despite their young age enable them to weigh accurately push factors of Lahore, pull factors of Delhi, and intervening obstacles and let them go on towards their final point of travelling without giving up the hope. The strength of both brothers to tolerate the troublesome journey in less facilitative trains is brought to the forth through the emphatic dialogues of Dr. Roshan Jaitley on the physical injuries Keshav and Shankar receive on jumping out of the train because Sonia fails to board the train as Ghulam Sikri “grabs her braid and pulls. Her head jerks back, and her body lifts” (p.12). “Shankar’s three broken ribs and the cut on Keshav’s head” (p.13) undoubtedly make their displacement exacting,

and demanding but fail to stop it completely. Shankar's toleration is best evidenced in enduring the hurt caused by the sharp edges of his broken ribs while he breathes and the worst agony he endures in spite of the weak health he is in due to his inborn infected heart muscles. "Shankar stabbed by every breath" (p.14). His unwavering courage to achieve his objective of reaching Delhi to meet Sonia at a cost of his life even is witnessed by readers when he could no longer endure the burden of the cumbersome journey and bad health.

When Shankar collapses. He drops face first, leaving empty the curve of Keshav's arm. When Keshav turns him onto his back, the first thing he sees is his brother's bleeding nose, and he uses his sleeve to dab at it. Shankar doesn't respond to his name. He doesn't respond to a shake of his arm, a hand on his cheek (p.136)

Likewise, perseverance and intelligence of Keshav and Shankar and their kidnapping and selling go side by side in the novel to reinforce the idea that their personal factors play immense role in heading them towards their final point. Although the hurdles that lie in between the place of origin and destination slow down the pace of their journey but they fail to cut it through and through since the two surmount these up to a greater extent through their personal efficiencies. The second visible intervening barrier they face while covering the distance between the two landscapes is their kidnapping by Saif Nasir and selling them to Shanaaz Bibi. On seeing them as fair skinned Brahmin youths alone without any guardian at Lahore train station at night and watching them wandering in search of Sonia, Saif Nasir, a Muslim abductor and a human trafficker, kidnaps them by making them into a belief that Sonia has taken a temporary stay in his house and is waiting for them. "There you are," he says. "Do you know your mother has been looking for you? Good thing she sent me out; she was worried you had left the station." (p.59). After taking them out of the train station, he sells them to Shanaaz Bibi "See what I brought, Saif says" (p.60) and presents them as a commodity who will solve all her financial problems by hooks or crooks. "Shanaaz bibi, they are Hindu boys, clever Hindu boys. In two years, they will manage your money for you. You know how they are—wherever they go, the house fills up with gold. In ten years, I will come visit you in a new haveli, and then we'll talk" (p.61).

Their cleverness is even acknowledged by Saif who meets them only once. Both Keshav and Shankar immediately sense the danger of the trapping they are in from Saif receiving money from Shanaaz Bibi, from the locked doors, and from her false hopes about Sonia's return. On finding an opportune moment after staying awhile with her, they devise a plan of escaping to resume their search for their lost mother. "Shankar looks at Keshav and makes a quick gesture and mouths, Bhaag. Run" (p.72) "As soon as she is through the door, Shankar slips outside, pulls the door shut and slides the latch, grinding it into its hole in the wall" (p.73)

With the body scratches and wounds they get, they are acquainted with loneliness, fear, insecurity and hopelessness on their way but they face it with valour and courage, making them selected migrants and their process of migration not completely random. They are scared among the river of unfamiliar people hastily boarding the trains bound to India from Lahore train station but they are dauntless as Shanaaz Bibi acknowledges: "And look how brave you are, not a tear" (p.61).

Keshav and Shankar desire to find out their lost mother who they parted with in the mayhem of migration of Hindus from Lahore to Delhi after their boarding the train, and their urge to be among their own Hindu community, in my opinion, and Sonia's presence act as social pull forces of the destination for them to keep considering the dislocation all the way from the initial point

of journey to the final despite its risks, dangers and threats. Ghulam Sikri, a secret lover of Sonia presumes the two a barrier for his smooth relationship with her, grabs her from her braids when she is about to step in to the train, thereby separating her from her twins. "They would be separated from their mother only four compartments over" (p. 22). On seeing Sonia fails to get into the train, they manage dismounting it after much struggle and start looking for her on the platform. Shankar on lifting Keshav to his shoulder questions him. "Do you see her?" "I'm looking, bhaiyya." "Go higher, so she can see you" (p. 28). It is this pull which turns the two into agile and sharp children to free themselves from the locked rooms of Shanaaz Bibi, make them question her boldly about when their mother is coming back or if she is returning to them at all. Shankar's wish to search for her mother during his short stay with Shanaaz who treat them with affection and kindness is indicative of the strong forces of the destination, making them overlook good opportunities such as her. "He wants to get back to the train tracks. He wants to keep looking for his mother, who, he suspects, isn't coming here at all, but his legs are locked under him" (p.66). Simultaneously Keshav is equally pulled and encouraged by the same force to ask from Bibi "Where is our mother?" (p.60). This sudden unexpected dis-association with Sonia, her saying of going to Delhi guide the two's route throughout by igniting their competences and making them forget momentarily about their hardships and malaises. "Shankar is excited enough by his idea that he forgets, for a while, about his chest" (p.37) He starts accompanying Keshav in calling his Ma as loudly as he can so that he is overheard and sets Keshav apart for increasing probability of either seeing her or being seen.

They show themselves. Shankar's idea is to set his brother and himself apart, make them visible, give their mother the best chance of finding them. Or if she asks around whether anyone had seen two boys, this old, wearing this, there is a good chance someone will nod and point to the tracks" (p.37).

Similarly the short stay of the twins with a good companion, Maya Rani amid their journey, who help them out in their pursuit by taking them safely to railway tracks back which they lose sense of after running for their lives from Shanaaz's home seem emblematic of the same pull favorable condition of the end point of their journey. "We have to find our mother. We have to get to the railroad tracks" (p.99).

Their desire to be among their own community members for security of their lives, for political and religious freedom is yet another unavoidable plus of the destination keeping them on a track. Being Brahmin and minorities, they are vulnerable to Muslim atrocities and have less freedom to practice Hinduism the way they can on a Hindu land. Keshav's excitement on crossing the border, to be among his own community and countrymen is apparent in the dialogue: "Those are our people, Shankar!" Keshav whispers excitedly. "Those are Hindus! Did you hear? Those are Hindus" (p.136). Hence, he uses this as a medicine to wake up unconscious Shankar.

Strained social relationship of Muslims and Hindus communities, the later's vulnerabilities to large scale killings in Muslim majority area in the havoc produced by the Partition altogether become push factors for driving Keshav and Shankar out of pure land (p.8). Muslims' vengeance on Hindus is highlighted in the onset of the novel in Hindus' eagerness to board the train as quickly as they can since they fear that "the Mussulmaans are going to find us and hack us apart.....You know what they did in Rawalpindi. It's going to happen here" (p.11). Due to least protection to their lives among Muslims, all of them prefer going to a land where they are in majority and are relatively less vulnerable to such atrocities. An alike instance of trainful of dead

bodies at Amritsar with ghost like appearance terrifies everyone on the platform, thus clear minds of Keshav and Shankar from losing heart.

It will be midnight by the time the train makes it into the station, every compartment closed and locked, door and window. At Amritsar, the platform will sense something wrong about the train well before it stops. People will start pressing back from the tracks while the train is still a dot of light no bigger than a star. The platform will stay quiet as the train inches into place. The absence of anyone on the roof, maybe, or the emptiness of the windows. The stationmaster will part the crowd and throw wide a compartment door. The first gush will reach his feet. He will skip back, and leave his sandals in place, soaked, the bottom step still dripping (p.34). Keshav and Shankar “The decision to migrate, therefore, is never completely rational” (p.6) and inexact knowledge about destination

CONCLUSION

The analysis drawn from Lee’s Pull Push Theory successfully highlights the important causal factors and the route of displacement of migration which displaced people usually take during their voluntary or involuntary migration. It also helps readers in identifying the selective nature of displacement through the personal factors of Keshav and Shankar; they through their resilience, perseverance, and intelligence despite their younger ages overcome the intervening hurdles which come their way in order to get to Delhi where their mother should be as per her say before parting with them. The irrational, unreal and fantastical decision which dislocated people usually make because of their limited and far-from-reality knowledge about a destination is witnessed in the writer’s revelation when he uncovers the place where Sonia has been. Her being in Lahore with Ghulam Sikri, her committing suicide out of the guilt, Keshav and Shankar faulty conception that only Muslims kill Hindus in Pakistan is proven wrong by the writer’s detailing of the atrocities committed against Muslims in Hindus majority areas and through Keshav’s vulnerability to burning by Hindus during the communal violence after he and his brother cross the border to India. Also, the above section of analysis reveals the complex nature of migration suggesting that the migrators do not always end up in the intended or desired place they have in mind as witnessed from Keshav’s and Shankar’s choice of staying at the Atari, Amritsar’s refugee camp rather than moving towards Delhi.

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