

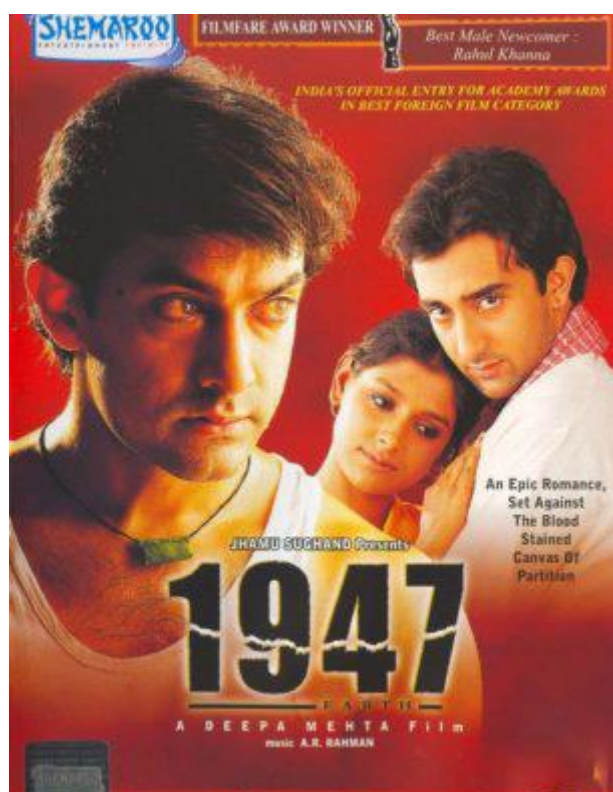
## *Earth (1947): A Testimony of Communal Violence and Fanaticism*

**Mahmud Al Hasan, M.A.**

Lecturer, Department of English, Sheikh Hasina University, Netrokona–2400, Bangladesh  
Address: South City, Rowshan Ara Tower, Bodorer Mor, Mymensingh--2200, Bangladesh  
Email Address: [rakibmhasan94@gmail.com](mailto:rakibmhasan94@gmail.com)

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Courtesy: <https://www.bollywoodhungama.com/movie/1947-earth/cast/>

### **Abstract**

The paper attempts to study Bollywood film, *Earth (1947)*, directed by Deepa Mehta based on Bapsi Sidhwa's partition novel, *Ice Candy Man*, as a tale of communal madness and fanaticism as well as to analyze the consequences of partition. The Indian subcontinent became a hub of religious persecution, anger, and hatred in the summer of 1947. The paper intends to explore how women became the symbol of national borders and therefore, the targets of the fanatics for inflicting gendered violence in different forms. It also aims to point out how the people suddenly became indulged in the act of communal violence due to the partition of 1947.

It further looks into account why people turned violent under the influence of false nationalism and bigotry. The study again tries to highlight the collective madness of the people of the Indian subcontinent leading to a menacing atmosphere and anarchy. It is qualitative research where content analysis is used as the selected method and the film is explored through the lens of postcolonialism. The analysis is supported with the data taken from secondary sources.

**Keywords:** Partition, violence, religion, communal madness, fanaticism, *Earth (1947)* movie

## **I. Introduction**

Deepa Mehta's *Earth (1947)* depicts communal violence, forced conversion, diaspora, and fanaticism which ultimately resulted in physical and psychological trauma, mass destruction, refugee crisis, chaos, and confusion during the partition of India and Pakistan. *Earth (1947)*, directed by Deepa Mehta, is the second installment in her thematic trilogy known as the *Elements* trilogy. Mehta's trilogy consists of three films: *Fire* (1996) was released first, followed by *Earth (1947)*, and finally *Water* in 2005. The independence of the Indian Subcontinent from British rule brought a sense of loss—a loss of brotherhood, trust, co-existence, and mutual respect. After the partition of India, some Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs carried out atrocities in the name of safeguarding religion and nationalism. *Earth (1947)* is a testimony of the bloody division of India which not only tore India apart into two pieces but created a rift among friends of different religious backgrounds of the same territory and thus, made them hostile, and destructive towards one another. Mehta shows the evil face of the Indo-Pakistan partition by recollecting the traumatic memories of those moments through the interactions among the different characters in the film.

The study is conducted to show the heartbreaking consequences of partition on the lives and psyches of people based on religion and cultural diversity. Besides, it attempts to evaluate postcolonial issues such as the victimization of women, and communal madness and how they affected the whole Indian subcontinent. This article is divided into two sections. In the first section, I have tried to explain why the British divided India based on communal grounds, the causes of partition resulting in the total destruction of harmony and friendship among the Indians, and the ramifications of it by analyzing Mehta's *Earth (1947)*. In brief, it offers a concise overview of the partition of India. It further includes the theoretical scheme of the study. The final section is about the thematic analysis as well as my interpretation of the

stylistic features of the film. In this section, an attempt has been made to disclose how women became the worst victims of gender-based communal violence, and traumatic experiences, and how they affected their psychology.

## **II. Objectives of the Study**

The paper deals with three basic objectives, and they are as follows—

1. To identify the consequences of partition violence and communalism.
2. To evaluate how women became the symbol of national honor and religious pride and therefore, the targets of the fanatics for inflicting violence and exhibiting their disdain towards the other community.
3. To address the collective madness leading to a menacing atmosphere in the Indian Subcontinent and the traumatic experiences of people.

## **III. Literature Review**

The partition of the Indian subcontinent is widely viewed as a great diabolical event in the history of the 20th century. It is virtually impossible to trace an event of such magnitude as the partition of 1947 that had mammoth repercussions. The British Empire started to collapse in the late 1940s as a result of mass consciousness and the demonstration of independence. Due to the partition, British India was divided into India and Pakistan which obviously had sinister implications on the lives of people. The British colonizers ruled the Indian subcontinent for almost 190 years. They came to India for commercial purposes. Dr. Manjunatha Sakalesh writes that the main intention of the British was to transfer wealth from the subcontinent to Britain and create a huge market for British products (504). However, over time, they gained control of the subcontinent after the fall of the Moghul Empire in 1757. In the name of civilization and Christianity, they looted the wealth of India for their economic benefits and personal interests. They divided the Indians based on their castes, tribes, and religions to rule them successfully for a longer period of time. They used brute force and propaganda to carry out violence to create a sense of fear in their minds and keep them under control and servitude. As a result, the Indians were marginalized and cornered due to their lack of agency and voice. The British Colonizers fundamentally “aimed at turning them into docile mimics of their own way of life and thus the Indians became the outsiders in their own country” (Mehmood 5). They used the tactic of divide and rule to govern the Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims of India (Sandhu 62) and manipulate their valuable resources.

During the 1940s, the political conditions of India went through a significant upheaval. Gandhi launched the “Quit India Movement” in 1942 which was backed up by masses who had shown their eagerness to employ non-violence and truth against the British colonial regime. Besides, there were movements like the Non-Cooperation Movement, Satyagraha, Dandi Salt March, and also violent armed resistance for freedom. In the 1940s, acts of violence bestowed a feeling of empowerment upon the Indian population living under colonial rule and contributed significantly to India’s eventual liberation from British dominance. According to Natarajan and Muniyaraj, “The Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 is one of the greatest tragedies, the magnitude, ambit, and savagery of which compels one to search for the larger meaning of events and to come to terms with the lethal energies that set off such conflagrations” (18). Communal riots caused due to the partition shows the contemporary society inhabited by the people of different communities, rotten to the core. Regarding the gruesomeness of partition Ian Talbot in *Freedom's Cry* states that “In order to understand the Partition experience in its totality, we must set alongside the brutality and sense of up-rootedness, the enthusiasm, which many shared for Pakistan, and the sense of purpose and direction given by the hope of a Muslim homeland” (13). The Hindus and the Sikhs killed the Muslims and raped their wives, children, and usurped their lands; and vice versa. Women were abducted, molested, gang-raped, and killed mercilessly. So, the year 1947 should not be remembered as the year when India and Pakistan got independence, but for the genocide that took place in the name of religious beliefs and nationalism. Muhammad Qasim describes *Earth* as a “painful tale of Indian partition of 1947” (91). Regarding Deepa Mehta’s film, Surendra Bhatt asserts that “1947 *Earth* is a kind of plea for the conscience against the violence of Partition” (66). Mehta shows the real picture of female exploitation and gendered violence very vividly.

*Earth* (1947) is widely acclaimed for its bold storytelling, powerful performances, rich cinematic language, musical compositions, and creative direction. Madhuri Chatterjee writes that “The film raises questions regarding boundaries imposed on female bodies which acquire significance in the larger social discourse” (80). According to the opinion of Abhinanda Das and Chandrima Sen, “Mehta through this film has primarily reflected women’s role and their struggle in the traumatic history of the nation” (398). The film is an exquisite representation of contemporary realities in the Indian subcontinent. Rape became a tool of communal violence and ethnic cleansing in 1947. “The violence against women in this film ranges from physical,

sexual to psychological and symbolic” (Madhuri 71). Therefore, women were raped during partition violence due to the sadistic pleasure of men as well as to break the spirits of their opponents. Sewa Singh Bajwa addresses that Mehta’s movie, *Earth (1947)* “is based on the pangs of the partition of India” (153). The British colonizers devised the choice to divide India along religious lines as a strategy to undermine the unity of diverse communities that had courageously resisted British rule, striving for their own rights and freedom. The British had the last laugh by turning the Indians of all communities against one another during the partition in 1947 when they divided India in the disguise of transferring power to the local Indians. Although many research works have already been done on Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel, *Ice Candy Man*, only a few research works have been conducted before so extensively on *Earth (1947)*. Therefore, through this study of the film, an effort is made to shed light on the terrible outcomes of partition and the nasty picture of communal atrocities and violence inflicted upon women.

#### **IV. Theoretical Framework**

*Earth (1947)* is explored critically in this study by using the theory of postcolonialism to get the desired objectives. Postcolonialism is the criticism of colonialism and is associated with the inheritance of colonialism, colonial agenda, and thought process. Pramod K. Nayar defines the term “post-colonialism” as “the theoretical wing of postcoloniality. It refers to the mode of reading, political analysis, and cultural resistance/intervention that deals with the history of colonialism” (17). It serves as a means to contest colonial governance and structures, aiming to restore the agency of individuals who endured oppression and hardship during different manifestations of European colonialism and imperialism—an extension of colonialism itself. Aime Cesaire points out the devilish outlook of European colonialism that results in racism, class system, slavery, and discrimination in *Discourse on Colonialism*. Frantz Fanon talks about the effect of colonial racism on the colonized in *Blacks Skin, White Masks* that causes an inferiority complex in their minds. Homi K. Bhabha discusses hybridity and mimicry in his works. The colonized develop a hybrid identity by imitating the colonizers and their language, culture, and appearance after denouncing their own identity and language. As a result, they experience a lot of physical and psychological problems.

Colonialism is exploitative in nature which results in an identity crisis, mimicry, cultural hybridity, ambivalence, and inferiority complex in the minds of the colonized. Decolonization is the transfer of power to the local authority. Ideal decolonization is a complete

break up from the colonial aspects in terms of colonial legacy or inheritance. The ideas of decolonization are not realistic as they are completely illusive in nature. There was bloodshed, racism, inflation, political assassinations, communal riots, and violence toward one another which were the legacies of colonialism. If there was no colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, there would never be such things.

## V. Methodology

The current research is qualitative in nature where the content analysis method is used to interpret the themes, symbols, dialogues, and the contents of *Earth* (1947). It utilizes the theory of postcolonialism as its theoretical framework to achieve the desired objectives of the study. The primary source of the study is *Earth* (1947). It is well-structured and the analysis is backed up with the data taken from reliable secondary sources.

## VI. Discussion

*Earth* (1947) is not only about the portrayal of partition-related events but also their ominous outcomes on the lives of people from different religious groups and ethnicities. It highlights the jaw-dropping legacies of colonialism such as communal violence, rapes, forced diaspora, and other atrocious activities after the independence of India and Pakistan. The film is set in the colonial period in Lahore, Pakistan. It represents the political events of the Indian subcontinent when it was going through the process of potential division based on religious backgrounds. Losing their sanity, people targeted their friends of different religious sects. The motto of their violent acts was, “An eye for an eye”. They ended up cutting one another's throats without showing any mercy. Millions of people became homeless all at once and were forced to leave their birthplaces. The depiction of the conflicts and their disastrous impacts on the subcontinent during the days of partition in *Earth* (1947) is presented from the perspective of a handicapped girl, Lenny. She views various events around her very minutely and addresses them to the viewers thoroughly. She discovers the absolute truth about human nature as good friends turn into the worst enemies while the city of Lahore is set aflame.

Mehta has proved her creative brilliance in terms of dialogues, storytelling, music, and other cinematic issues while writing the script and directing *Earth* (1947). Following the 1947 partition of India, a surge in nationalism and a sense of supremacy emerged among the people, driven by communal fervor, superstitions, and misguidance from political and religious leaders. Religious and cultural differences became the bone of contention among people. Most of the

male characters in *Earth (1947)* are shown as communal and they foster ill feelings and hatred in their minds. These incidents of communal violence were the direct outcome of British colonialism. Mehta gives detailed descriptions of events occurring just before, and during the early days of the partition. It shows how the relationships among human beings change with the passage of time due to their differing religious beliefs. Lenny interacts with other characters of different religions such as Dil Navaz, Imam Din, Shanta, Hari, Hassan, Totaa Ram, Moti, Sher Singh, Surindar Singh Mikha, her cousin Adi, and her parents Bunty and Rustom Sethi, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Rogers to name a few. Her interactions with them allow her to gather many ideas and experiences about the way of the world regarding how human love and friendship change abruptly because of partition and turn into hatred and suspicious feelings. She learns about the gruesome lessons of religious intolerance leading to mob rule, brutal rapes, betrayal, and murder of friends, and near and dear ones. Regarding the partition of India, Lenny announces that “Two hundred and fifty years of the British Empire ended in 1947, but what's there to show for it, except a country, divided? The massacres, kidnappings, vendettas, and more violence, was it all worth it?” (01:34:59-01:35:28). Lenny belongs to an ethnic minority group living in Lahore and they somehow escape much of the communal violence around them. However, they are the eyewitnesses of those vicious crimes that have profound effects on Lenny's upbringing. Lenny's parents maintain good relations among all classes of people and try to help them when they need it.

Mehta portrays unity, the celebration of different cultures, diversity, and respect for every community in the film before the partition took place. During the marriage ceremony of Papoo, Dil Navaz, Shanta, and others sing and dance to enjoy the occasion and bless the newlyweds. Hassan and Shanta fall in love with each other and decide to get married. Friends provide their opinions regarding partition in the course of their meetings and begin to talk about their superiority over the others on communal ground. When a Muslim friend and Sher Singh debate over religion, Hassan reminds them about communal harmony stating that “The holy Quaran lies in their Golden Temple in Amritsar. In fact, the Sikh faith came into existence for the sake of creating Hindu-Muslim harmony. So, why fight amongst friends?” (39:36-39:50). Hassan calls for unity among different religious groups when they engage in a war of words regarding their own religious identity and supremacy. Colonialism provokes the colonized to be vindictive and bitter towards themselves. Therefore, friends become very communal and attempt to prove their religion over the other.

Mehta exhibits how communal violence and superstitious beliefs create a rift among the people. Due to communal violence, the characters forget their past friendship and respect for one another. Toota Ram suffers from one kind of identity crisis, unhomeliness, and existential threat to his religious identity within his friend zone as their minds become the mecca of violence, the ultimate legacy of colonialism. Decolonization creates a lot of chaos, confusion, and death. After acquiring freedom, a former colony turns into a total wasteland where government officials and politicians of the newly independent country use the same violent measures of the colonizers to dominate their own people. India has to experience the same fate.

Mehta highlights the communal tensions found in different communities through a sense of insecurity, fear, and uneasiness of the Parsee family for their status as a religious minority in Lahore. They take a neutral position to escape violence. Before the partition of India, they were in favor of the British Raj as they talked about how the British helped India by building roads, and railways, introducing the postal system for rapid communication, and most importantly, by giving them their beautiful language, English. They praise the actions of the British and their rule in India. When the country goes through the traumatic phase of partition, they suffer mentally and psychologically, thinking about their future as a minority group. Mr. and Mrs. Sethi are compelled to abide by the rules and customs of those who rule Lahore after the division of India. They feel the fear of being wiped out from Lahore and the fear of being converted at gunpoint. For them, the independence of India is nothing more than the exchange of one set of rulers for another. They develop a hybrid identity for cross-cultural exchange by imitating the fashion, language, and culture of the British to enjoy benefits and maintain a good rapport with them.

Mehta depicts the tensions and mistrust in the movie when friends lock horns over trivial matters and racially profile one another. A Muslim friend pokes fun at the food habits and customs and pictures of the Gurus of the Sikhs and compares the Sikhs to the swords of the Hindus who can use them against the Muslims. They debate whether Lahore should be in Pakistan or in India. The Muslim friends indicate that Lahore will be in Pakistan as most of the people in Lahore are Muslims. On the other hand, Toota Ram opines that Lahore should be in India as most of the businesses in Lahore are run by the Hindus. Sher Singh finds himself in a



dilemma as he is neither Muslim nor Hindu. Dil Navaz states that the Hindus and the Sikhs will be in India and the Muslims will be in Pakistan.

The tensions among the Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, and the British can be seen during the first half of the movie when Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, Mr. and Mrs. Sethi, and Mr. and Mrs. Surinder Singh Mika have their dinner together. In the course of their discussion during the dinner, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Surinder Singh Mika engage in a verbal confrontation about the presence of the British in India. He blames the British for the political turmoil in India. He asserts self-rule and tells the British to quit India. However, Mr. Rogers informs Mr. Singh regarding the potential political calamities after the British leave India. He states taking the side of the British that "If we quit India today, you bloody well, follow each other's throats. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs will jockey for power. Wait and see! What about the Parsees! If you jump into the middle of this bloody mess, you will be mingled into chatni" (06:26-06:38). Mehta vividly exposes how superstitious beliefs and rumors mislead people. There is a comical scene in the movie where Dil Navaz acts like a Sufi who can connect with Allah using the telephone. He does this as the easiest way to earn money by exploiting the opportunities of their blind faith. Although he deceives people for their lack of knowledge in religion, his statement regarding partition riots turned out to be true later. Surindar Singh Mika is forced to leave his ancestral land for a new life in Amritsar. He is very reluctant to go and blames the British for the division of India saying that "They break my country into two pieces and hand it to us and say, 'Happy Independence'" (47:32-47:44). The same thing happens in India where the Muslims become the targets of fanatics. In the film, Kirpa Ram escapes from Lahore to Amritsar leaving his guineas and money behind in an attempt to escape from being butchered by the extremists. He stands for the victims of partition who lose their belongings and become refugees in their own country. Lenny becomes aware of the religious and cultural differences that exist in society and remarks in grief, "One day everybody is themselves-and the next day they are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Lahore is suddenly emptied of yet another hoary dimension: there are no Brahmins, with caste marks or Hindus in dhotis with bodhis. Only hordes of Muslim Refugees" (Sidwa 175). Mehta depicts the traumatic experiences that partition brings upon the lives of the characters in the film. Lenny goes through a lot of psychological traumas. She witnesses the killing of a man near the house of Dil Navaz. This incident has a lasting impact on her life. She tears her doll into pieces in the same fashion. She also witnesses the mutilated body of Hassan lying on the street. Lenny's

innocence and heart-wrenching perspicacity lead the viewers through these momentous events, revealing the irrationality of adult behaviors and manners as the fragile unity of a nation teeters on the cusp of historic change. Lenny states that “And that day, in 1947 when I lost Ayah, I lost a part of myself” (01:35:30-01:35:38). Dil Navaz wants to marry Shanta who loves Hassan. He is consumed with hatred when he becomes aware of the killings of the Muslim men and women in Gurdaspur, Amritsar where his sisters live.

The instance of communal hatred and violence is nicely depicted when a train from Gurdaspur arrives in Lahore carrying the dead bodies of the Muslims. The narrator describes that “A train just arrived from Gurdaspur city filled with dead bodies, all the Muslim men in it butchered, and four sacks filled with women's breasts” (52:50-53:13). Dil Navaz's sisters are among the dead bodies. This event is so horrific that it causes him to lose his conscience. His anger is visible when he says to Shanta and Hassan that “I've thrown grenades at the Hindus, Sikhs, whom I've known all my life. I want to kill someone for each breast they cut off my sisters” (01:13:41-01:13:50). He proposes to Shanta to marry him to keep the beast inside him in control. However, after being rejected by Shanta, he cannot restrain it any longer. Dil Navaz “gives into the forces of bloodthirsty cruelty and brutality inherent in general human nature and brought onto the surface by forces of communalism and religious bigotry or other animal instincts” (Singh 70). The beast symbolizes his suppressed soul. Regarding communal violence and madness in Lahore, he tells Shanta that “It's not about Hindus and Muslims. It's about what's inside us. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, we are all bastards, all animals, like the lion in the zoo that Lenny-baby is so scared of. He just lies there, waiting for the cage to open. And when it does, then God help us all. Shanta, marry me, then the animal that's within me will be controlled” (01:02:03-01:03:03). He also tells her to convert to Islam to save herself from being targeted. However, she respectfully declines his proposal and engages in a romantic relationship with Hassan, who is willing to embrace Hinduism and accompany her to Amritsar, seeking sanctuary and embarking on a fresh chapter in their lives. The instance foils his hatred towards Hassan and Shanta. When the dead body of Hassan is found, it is assumed that Dil Navaz killed him for being rejected by Shanta for Hassan as well as for his conversion to Hinduism.

Mehta displays when a Muslim village is attacked, women, and children are not spared from such violence. In the film, Lenny and her brother, Adi, encounter a little Muslim boy who

witnesses the atrocities of the Sikhs and Hindus. He somehow manages to save his life by hiding under the corpses. But his family members cannot survive the deadly assault of the rioters. He discovers his mother's naked dead body hanging on the ceiling fan of a mosque after two days. He even hesitates to speak with Adi and Lenny before knowing their religious identity.

Mehta associates India's division with the physical abuse and psychological trauma of women. Shanta takes shelter in the house of the Parsee family to save herself. Dil Navaz leads the mob giving various slogans like "Allahu Akbar", "Pakistan Zindabad", "Hindustan Murdabad" etc., while searching for the Hindus hiding in the Parsee house. He tricks Lenny to know about the hiding place of Shanta. He orders to capture Shanta and throws her into the mob. Shanta is a representative of those women who were brutally tortured during the partition of 1947 by fanatics. Her feelings are only expressed through the perspective of Lenny. Her sufferings illustrate untold distress, and silence of the colonized people in different colonies of the world upon being tortured. The communal mob led by Dil Navaz views her as nothing more than an object of sexual appetite. "Shanta represents the condition of a minority Hindu woman in a Muslim majority Lahore and all minority women in the partition affected India in general" (Singh 64). Lenny's plight upon losing Shanta represents the loss of her country, culture, and her own identity.

In the movie, Hari converts to Islam from Hinduism and shaves his bodhis. He is circumcised to prove his new identity as a Muslim. He changes his name to Himmat Ali, changes his dress code, and memorizes the kalma. He finds himself in the middle of a great dilemma regarding his colonial and postcolonial identity. Therefore, he is left to suffer psychologically due to his identity crisis and mental trauma. His condition resembles the mental state of the colonized people in different parts of the world. Moti also undergoes a conversion to Christianity and adopts the name David. Postcolonialism results in fear, inferiority complex, servitude, and dependency syndrome in the minds of the colonized. There is hardly any sign of justice and humanity. The colonized remain in a state of uncertainty and danger of being persecuted. Therefore, they attempt to imitate the colonizers by rejecting their roots, values, and desire for the status of the colonizers. Hari and Moti do the exact same thing. When the mob attacks the Parsee house, they especially look for Hari, Shanta, and Moti. Hari is forced to utter kalma to prove his identity as a Muslim. They undress him to check his penis

which is a marker of his identity. The fate of Shanta remains unknown. It is supposed that she might be sold in a brothel, married to Dil Navaz, or sent to Amritsar. The incidents that occurred around Lenny left a scar on her mind and affected her psychologically. In short, Deepa Mehta is very successful in representing partition violence and exploitation of women and children through different characters and events in the movie.

## VII. Major Findings

The film represents a society turned upside down from good to worse due to its barbaric atrocities as a result of communal hatred and anger of one community over the other and all kinds of manifestations to prove their legitimacy and superiority over the others. Upon adopting communal identities, individuals who previously used to coexist peacefully began regarding the 'other' as their adversary. As a result, they suffered physically and mentally. Though the Indian subcontinent got independence from British rule, it came in exchange for a lot of suffering. In the name of independence, the British rulers destroyed the harmony of all communities by sowing the seeds of religious hatred in their minds and ideologies.

Mehta at the beginning of her movie shows harmony and mutual respect before the partition among the different characters of different religious beliefs. They live amicably for years and help one another at the time of their distress and during different functions. There is a sense of Indianness among them. There are many instances of solidarity and mutual co-existence among the different characters in the film. Dil Navaz, Hassan, Shanta, Sher Singh, Totaa Ram, and others used to meet in the maidan to chat on various topics ranging from personal issues to the ongoing political upheaval in India as well as to cut nasty jokes on one another's religious faith. They are even seen taking food at a restaurant together although their tastes, food habits, and religion are different. Shanta takes Lenny with her wherever she goes. Shanta has many admirers like Dil Navaz and Hassan. Both of them love her despite being Muslims. So, there is inter-faith love among the people. Makar Sankranti, the kite flying festival, is observed by all irrespective of their religious identity. Dil Navaz teaches Shanta how to fly a kite. Lenny and Imam Din also enjoy the festival as the sky of Lahore is filled with Kites of various sizes, and colors. The kites indicate the peaceful coexistence of people of different religions in Pakistan.

In her film, Mehta uses some monumental symbols to point out the political riots and religious intolerance that resulted from the partition of India. At the beginning of the movie,

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we can see some beautiful flowers cut from the flower garden. It symbolizes the impending disaster of India. Unbroken India is like that beautiful flower garden that is full of various kinds of flowers. They reflect the non-communal consciousness and fraternity of the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and people of other religious faiths. At the beginning of *Earth* (1947), it is seen that a plate falls to the ground from Lenny's hand and breaks into pieces. It is a significant event hinting at the division of the whole of India, and the rift in Hindu-Muslim unity and relations. In another important scene, Lenny's mother, Mrs. Sethi, is seen sewing clothes with the needle. But the sound of gunfire disrupts her work and her fingers become bloody from the blow of the needle. The incident symbolizes the impending bloody India having religious and political tensions arising from the tragedy of partition.

Mehta highlights the issue of forced child marriage against the will of the girls in the movie. There is a scene of the marriage ceremony of Moti's daughter, Papoo, with an older Christian. It also suggests that at the age when the girls are supposed to play with puppets, they become puppets in the hands of others. Moreover, it points out the deplorable status, and passivity of women who have to conform to the code of conduct and activities imposed upon them by patriarchal society and religion.

The character of Hassan is a replica of Mahatma Gandhi to some extent who preaches the messages of unity of all Indians irrespective of their caste and creed. He is eager to convert to Hinduism to marry Shanta and shifts to Amritsar. It shows that his love for her is more important than his religious identity. He is portrayed as a secular individual who does not hesitate to take the risk of his own life for the safety of his friend, Sher Singh, and his family amidst the communal riots.

Mehta shows the gradual metamorphosis of Dil Navaz in the film. He is shown as a friendly figure and a gifted poet who loves Shanta at the beginning of the film. However, due to the partition, he changes to a great extent and becomes indulged in communal violence and atrocities. Dil Navaz represents those people who in the name of religious honor engaged in communal violence and madness. He uses the same violent tactics of the colonizers to create frenzy and hatred.

Mehta portrays how people's clothing and circumcised penis became the symbols of their religious identity in 1947. Many non-Muslims like Hari and Moti, living in Muslim-

dominated areas go through the process of circumcision and conversion to save their lives from the attack of the extremists. They change their dress code and appearance to look like the Muslims. They also memorize the Kalma and some important verses from the Holy Qur'an to prove their new identity.

In *Earth* (1947), women go through a plethora of psychological and physical trauma. Many of them committed suicide not only to protect their honor but also the chastity of their community. Brass writes that “Women are boundary markers” (94). Violence against women was used as a hallmark for men to regain their masculinity. Women are also subjected to brutal exploitation by their own community. Bigots engage in acts of rape and disfigurement against female bodies to shame their male counterparts. At times, women become the victims of honor killings. By inflicting torture upon women, men try to prove their authority over them and their firm possession over their bodies. Communal violence, often incited by extremists, disproportionately impacts women. During the 1947 violence, women endured horrific atrocities—breast mutilation, vaginal burning, and the tearing apart of wombs, leading to agonizing deaths. Many were coerced into prostitution or compelled to marry their abductors. In the film, Shanta symbolizes the traumatized women who underwent psychological trauma and distress due to their harrowing experiences in 1947, representing an allegory for India torn apart by British colonization. Mehta sheds light on the psychological and physical trauma of gender-specific violence upon women and their defenseless state in *Earth* (1947).

### **VIII. Conclusion**

Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1947) delineates a harrowing narrative of communal violence, religious intolerance, and victimization of women. The violence spans across communal lines, involving conflicts and various forms of aggression. The partition of 1947 exposes religious mindedness and superstitious beliefs within the diverse population of the Indian subcontinent. Innocent women, exemplified by Shanta, became targets of extremists, with their bodies symbolizing national borders and religious pride, used to assert dominance and masculine aggression. Even children like Lenny suffered psychological consequences from the partition. Extremists not only engaged in radical practices but also compromised their own religion by inflicting torture upon women for their own interests. Postcolonial conditions in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh still grapple with issues such as hunger, extreme poverty, famine, gendered violence, price hikes, forced conversion, madness, and religious riots. The enduring

impact of colonialism persists across different sectors and societal structures. Just as the British colonizers are responsible for partitioning the whole Indian subcontinent apart, so are the religious sentiments and sectarianism of all communities. In essence, the partition serves as a parting blow from the British, shattering the harmony among Indians by manipulating them into conflict under the facade of religion. Deepa Mehta's film *Earth (1947)* demonstrates her expertise as a filmmaker in respect of addressing very complicated and sensitive subjects like communal madness, cultural tensions, gendered violence, and bigotry during the partition of 1947 with profound depth, compassion, artistic vision, detailed storytelling technique, accurate depiction of the events, and their physical and emotional impacts on the characters.

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