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Article

Between Fabric and Myth: Material Archives and Mythic Disruptions of the Female Body in *Rajkahini*

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Abstract: This study explores how the film *Rajkahini* (2015) represents the partitioned female body as both a material archive and an anti-epic symbol through costume, props, and mythic imagery. Sarees, stains, and jewellery serve as living testimonies of violence, survival, and relationship, whereas the film's silence regarding menstruation and sanitation highlights the gendered omissions of partition experiences. At the same time, reference to goddess, rani, and begum archetypes are destabilized, unsettled as the narrative questions nationalist-sacrificial motifs and instead highlights fragmented, resistant female subjectivities. By tracing the intersection of material culture and myth, the paper argues that objects pull women from mythic abstraction into embodied histories. The analysis draws on feminist material culture, repair studies, economic anthropology, and subaltern feminist historiography.

Keywords: partition; archive; mythic; destabilization; archetypes

Introduction

The 1947 Partition of India was not merely a geopolitical division but also a significant human catastrophe, resulting in one of the largest displacements or relocations in contemporary history. Although statistics speak of millions uprooted and killed, Partition cinema has grappled with the challenge of representing trauma that defies straightforward storytelling. Women, specifically, have frequently been portrayed in these narratives as either silent victims of abduction, sexual assault, and relocation, or as sanctified and revered symbols of the nation, enveloped in grand narratives of sacrifice. Such portrayals threaten to simplify women to allegories—Bharat

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Mata, Durga, or anonymous victims—while muffling the actual experiences of gendered survival and embodied pain.

Srijit Mukherji's *Rajkahini* (2015) disrupts this film tradition by positioning women's bodies at the core of history, in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The film takes place in a brothel that crosses the Radcliffe Line, turning the personal space of the household into a disputed borderland. This approach compels a confrontation with the dual challenges faced by women: as symbols of the nation-state and as repositories of violence, endurance and remembrance. The film occupies a distinctive position in Partition cinema by situating women—sex workers confined within a brothel on the newly drawn Radcliffe Line—at the very heart of the narrative. Here, the female body becomes both a literal battleground of violence and a symbolic repository of competing meanings. Unlike earlier films where women are represented primarily as sacrificial "mothers of the nation," *Rajkahini* foregrounds fractured subjectivities that resist easy assimilation into heroic nationalist epics. Unlike earlier cinematic texts, *Rajkahini* does not glorify women's deaths as epic sacrifices to the nation; rather, it exposes the fractures and resistances within their subjectivities, presenting them as figures who both embody and resist mythic abstraction. This paper argues that *Rajkahini* stages the 'partitioned' female body along two intersecting registers – as a material archive and as an anti-epic symbol. Costumes and props—sarees with their frayed textures, blood-stains, and tears; jewellery circulated as debt, dignity, or kinship token; and the absent yet haunting traces of menstruation and sanitation—operate as embodied testimonies of survival, violence, and care. These everyday objects serve as what feminist material culture theorists' term "living archives," preserving what official histories erase. Simultaneously, the film invokes mythic archetypes of goddess, rani, and begum that have long been used to sanctify women as nationalist icons. Yet rather than affirming these motifs, *Rajkahini* destabilizes them, refusing sacrificial closure and instead presenting resistant, anti-heroic female subjectivities that fracture the epic narrative mode.

By examining this tension between cloth and myth, ornament and allegory, silence and spectacle, the paper demonstrates how the film *Rajkahini* produces a counter-archive of partition. It traces how women's bodies, through their materiality and their refusal of mythic containment, unsettle dominant historiographies and expose the limitations of nationalist memory. The analysis uses feminist material culture studies, and economic anthropology to interpret objects as evidence, while employing myth-criticism and subaltern feminist historiography to explore the disruption of sacrificial themes. Viewed through this lens, the film presents itself not only as a narrative of trauma but as a deep negotiation between survival, memory, and myth, redefining the partitioned female body as a disputed space of history and resistance.

Conversely, the film presents women through recognizable mythic archetypes—the goddess, the Rani, the begum—that have traditionally depicted female bodies as symbols of national pride or sacrifice. Yet Mukherji subverts these tropes – the film's conclusion refuses the neat closure of sacrificial epic narratives, instead leaving us with fractured, resistant female subjectivities that cannot be comfortably assimilated into the

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nationalist imagination. In this refusal lies the film's radical intervention—it dismantles the epic mode of Partition storytelling and foregrounds an anti-epic politics of memory. The paper tries to explore elaborately how the film invokes yet destabilizes mythic archetypes like goddess, rani, and begum, rejecting nationalist sacrificial epics in favour of fractured, subaltern female subjectivities.

By interrogating this tension between cloth and myth, ornament and allegory, silence and spectacle, the study also seeks to demonstrate how *Rajkahini* produces a counter-archive of Partition. It asks how women's bodies—through the materiality of objects and the destabilization of myth—emerge as contested terrains where history, memory, and survival intersect. To be more precise, the study explores the tension between material culture and mythic representation in *Rajkahini*, showing how everyday objects and mythic imaginations of the female body create a counter-archive resisting erasure and nationalist appropriation. Drawing on myth-criticism and subaltern feminist historiography to read against epic-nationalist tropes, the paper situates *Rajkahini* as both a cinematic archive and a critique of dominant historiographies.

Objects against Epics: Material Testimonies as Counter-Archives to Mythic Nationalism

Rajkahini (2015) figures women's bodies as living archives of partition by foregrounding material culture—textiles, jewellery, stains—and by staging strategic silences around menstruation and sanitation. The film's brothel setting intensifies how fabric and ornament index ownership, labour, and vulnerability, while stains (blood, soot, paan, kohl) become semiotic sediments of violence and care. What cannot be spoken—especially the cyclical, intimate economies of menstruation and hygiene—structures the mise-en-scene as a "negative archive," where absence and residue testify to trauma as forcefully as words (Kristeva 3; Ghosh 144) Through these material registers, *Rajkahini* re-orients Partition memory away from grand narratives to embodied survival.

Throughout the film, it composes an archive not out of documents but out of 'bodies', 'textiles', and 'rooms'. The brothel that is shown in the film, can be seen both a home and a file cabinet – its fabrics and ornaments store what the state refuses to keep. When the government declare that "Mr. Radcliffe's border will pass through it" (*Rajkahini*, 00:14:50), the house itself becomes a contested record, resisting bureaucratic erasure. Drawing on Appadurai's "social life of things," the clothing and jewellery circulate as goods, commodities, ritual objects, and safeguarding charms, gaining layered significances as they transit between clients, madams and the women involved (Appadurai 6)

Kristeva's notion of "abjection" illuminates how menstrual blood and bodily waste though culturally unrepresentable, persists through silence as structuring absences. The film's refusal to stage menstruation scenes directly, is not a narrative omission but a formal testimony – silence functions as index (Kristeva 4; Chattopadhyay) This resonates with Begum Jaan's own critique that "whether it is

British who rule or Indians, it is always men", highlighting how women's embodied archives persist outside the masculine nation's textual record (Chattopadhyay).

The use of textiles in *Rajkahini* are never merely decorative. The mise-en-scene extends this politics; sarees can be seen hanging as makeshift curtains or borders which visually echo the Radcliffe line, each tear or seam mapping forced reterritorialization (Bhattacharya 210). They delineate thresholds between private grief and public performance. A rent sari is also not just poverty's sign; it can also be seen as a border artifact, a map of forced reterritorialization. The daily labour of washing, drying, folding, and re-draping reasserts bodily sovereignty in the face of state dispossession. Each act of laundering becomes reparative care—of the self, of the room, of the community. Care here is work, repetitive and gendered, yet also political: it keeps the archive legible. Also, the veils and dupattas mark both consent and refusal. The lowered veils manage the gaze; on the other hand, the lifted veils signify transactions. The camera angles can often be seen to respect these fabric thresholds, cutting away or framing through cloth. This indirectness is an ethics of looking that counters partition's spectacularized violence with a juxtapositioning of modesty and control.

Jewellery sits at the nexus of capital, ritual, and embodiment. Throughout the film, the Anklets (ghungroo) signify labour; the bangles and the nose rings signals status, marriageability, and community belonging; whereas the chains at the neck double as adornment and also as a sense of constraint. Throughout the film, the ornaments function as savings—converted into cash for flight, bribes, food, or medicine. The pawned bangles and melted coins materialize the conversion of memory and lineage into bare survival. When jewellery is stripped in moments of coercion, the scene records both economic dispossession and symbolic unmooring (*Rajkahini*, 00:47:20) The elements like sindoor, mangal sutras, and protective amulets—whether worn defiantly by sex workers or cynically by patrons—complicate the sacred/profane divide. Ornament could never be fully recuperated by patriarchy; it can ward off harm, signal solidarity, or mock respectability politics from within.

The Stains are the film's most insistent material sign as because they resisted any easy erasure. The stains archived events that the script repress: attack, miscarriage, miscarriage of justice. The stain of blood on cloth—whether from violence or childbirth—refuses a clear narration. Here, its ambiguity matters – is this sacrificial, sexual, menstrual, maternal? The undecidability of the scene does the archival work by preserving multiple possible histories on the same surface. Conversely, the imageries of the paan stains on walls, soot on ceilings, mascara smudges on pillows defies erasure – "the patina of inhabitation" that disrupts bureaucratic order (Daiya 88). These "low" traces refuse the clean, bureaucratic order of Partition paperwork. They announce that the brothel is not a fungible space but a sedimented memory site.

In other scenes, the bed linens become palimpsests: they carry bodily imprints that outlast clients and officials. Where the state recognizes stamped papers, the scenes of *Rajkahini* offers the stained textile as counter-credential, validating women's testimony against erasure. Explicit menstrual or sanitation scenes can rarely be observed in mainstream Indian cinema; movies like *Rajkahini* leverages this cultural

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reticence. The absence functions as a structural principle. The accessories like buckets, basins, and ewers appear as background props; their persistence points to unspoken routines– the washing of blood, cleaning of sheets and disinfecting rooms. These objects are the punctuation of care work the plot does not "deem" narratable. The menstrual cycles index a non-linear temporality that defies the nation's linear "midnight hour" of independence. Against the punctuality of Partition dates, the women's bodies keep cyclical time—an alternative chronotope the film hints at through repetition of chores and the return of stains. In the film, the brothel's women do not neatly occupy "victim" or "agent" positions; they practice tactical care under necropolitical threat. The notion of 'care' appears as mending tears, dressing wounds, sharing ointments and cloth pads, pooling coins to buy soap or analgesics. These small acts are ethical choices that refuse the state's indifference. The fabrics are shown as shields—wrapping a trembling body after assault, creating an impromptu screen around a bather, or bundling a newborn. The ornament circulates within the group, for instance, a bangle was sold to cover another's medical fee. Thus, care shown is redistributive. Refusing evacuation or the terms of displacement—however tragic—can be a mode of caring for place, memory, and each other. The brothel as a defended home troubles respectability and redefines kinship. The dense fabric textures dominate frames—patterned sarees, mosquito nets, curtains—so that the image itself "feels" woven. In addition to jewellery and draping aesthetics, the tactile aesthetic engages the viewer's senses, making the experience of looking nearly haptic. The film often drops into dampened ambience—cloth rustle, anklet jingle, basin clink. Such acoustic minimalism trains attention on the labour of care rather than on speechifying history. Silence is not lack; it is testimony under duress. The warm tone, dust-red and sepia-leaning interiors rhyme with blood, rust, and earth—chromatic cousins of stain. The palette historicizes without nostalgia, inscribing wear, grime, and use as truth values.

By framing textiles, jewellery, stains, and sanitation silences as its primary sign system, *Rajkahini* reframes Partition memory through the ethics and labour of care. Women's bodies do not merely "symbolize" the nation's wound; they store history—absorb it, circulate it, and sometimes wash it out only to confront its return. The film thus builds a "counter-archive" of partition, one sustained by women's labour of survival rather than the state documents (Ghosh 147) stating that the very materials deemed too intimate or too impure for official record, insisting that any accountable history of Partition must read for fabric, ornament, residue, and the quiet, cyclical labours that kept life going when the world was being redrawn.

From Sacrifice to Refusal: Fracturing Sacrificial Motherhood and the Logic of Nationalist Epics

Cinematic representations of partition often incorporate familiar narrative patterns that draw on epic structures of sacrifice, nationhood, and martyrdom. In such narratives, women frequently appear as mythic archetypes especially as the goddess embodying purity, the Rani as a warrior-queen defending national pride, or the begum as the custodial figure of community honour. As Ranjana Khanna observes, these archetypes have been historically mobilized to embody the "sacrificial subject of

nationalism" (Khanna 2005). The film's women do not resolve into heroic martyrs or allegorical vessels of national trauma; instead, they fragment the epic structure and resist easy assimilation into nationalist memory. This paper explores how Mukherji invokes yet destabilizes mythic archetypes to foreground fractured, subaltern female subjectivities, and in doing so, crafts an anti-epic politics of memory. The mythic archetypes of the goddess, the Rani, and the Begum have long structured nationalist discourse around women. Partha Chatterjee's influential work notes that during the nationalist struggle, women were located in the "inner domain" of spirituality and tradition, symbolized by images of goddesses and queens (Chatterjee 1993). This framing served to cast women as symbolic custodians of cultural purity and honour. In majority of the concerned works, the Goddess is generally represented through figures such as Durga, women representing purity, sacrifice, and safeguarding of dharma. The image of Rani represents figures such as Rani of Jhansi, a fierce protector of her motherland, merging women's bodies with the battlefield. The Begum represents a Muslim female archetype, often tied to the rhetoric of community honour, as in the tragic trope of women's abduction during Partition (Butalia 1998). These archetypes coalesced into what Veena Das calls the "epic mode of Partition narratives," where women are sacrificed as symbols of community redemption (Das 1995).

Mukherji is aware of these resonances and stages his female characters within their shadow. Early sequences draw heavily on goddess imagery: in one crucial scene, a character is dressed in bridal red while background praises hinting at her positioning as a sacrificial goddess. Similarly, another character, when leading a group of displaced women, is framed through the cinematic language of the Rani archetype, her upright posture and martial gaze suggesting militant strength. The begum archetype emerges in a character whose seclusion in the zenana is disrupted by communal violence, evoking the vulnerability of Muslim women during Partition. Yet, these invocations are not stable. Mukherji destabilizes each archetype through fractured dialogues and narrative disjunctions. For instance, the character Begum Jaan's refusal to be positioned as "*ভারতমাতা*" (Mother India)- the dialogue directly rejects the sacrificial script. Similarly, in the movie, the Rani character signifies that men only talk about honour of women when they need their blood. Such situations uncover the brutality of nationalist expectations placed on women.

The partition films often conclude with women's sacrificial deaths—whether through immolation, abduction, or suicide—as a means of preserving communal honour (Menon and Bhasin 1998). Mukherji refuses such closure. The goddess-framed woman does not die to redeem the nation; she survives, scarred and resistant. The Rani figure does not emerge triumphant; instead, she walks away from the battlefield. The ending scene echoes that their deaths leave only fire and ruin, refusing nationalist glory. The begum does not return to her family's honour; she disappears into anonymity, refusing both martyrdom and recovery.

This refusal disrupts the epic mode. As Ananya Jahanara Kabir notes, epic narratives impose a "teleology of closure" that secures meaning for collective trauma (Kabir 2005). By withholding closure, Mukherji enacts what can be called an "anti-epic

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politics of memory." Memory here is not monumentalized through epic sacrifice but fractured through resistant subjectivities. Mukherji highlights fragmented female identities through cinematic disjunctions: abrupt cuts and edits, disrupted conversations, and incomplete storylines. One sequence lingers on the face of the begum character as she hears Azaan against the sound of a distant train whistle. Begum's articulation of dislocation when the Radcliffe Line cuts her house into two nations, resists epic assimilation and insists on displacement as identity. Similarly, the characters' refusal to "fight for honour" emphasizes female agency against the masculine appropriation of martial imagery.

These subjectivities resonate with Gayatri Spivak's call to "hear the subaltern voice not as sacrifice but as resistance" (Spivak 1988). By refusing neat epic scripts, Mukherji insists that women's Partition experiences cannot be contained within the nationalist imagination. Mukherji's anti-epic stance is crucial to rethinking Partition memory. Traditional Partition epics monumentalize women's suffering to secure nationalist redemption. In contrast, Mukherji foregrounds ambiguity, fragmentation, and refusal. As Urvashi Butalia notes, Partition memory is often transmitted through silences and fragments rather than epic narratives (Butalia 1998). Mukherji's film aligns with this fragmentary archive, privileging women's resistant subjectivities over monumental sacrifice. The anti-epic politics also challenges historiography itself. Official histories often privilege heroic closure; Mukherji's refusal destabilizes such historiography, insisting that Partition memory remains unsettled, resistant, and unfinished. Mukherji's film stages women through familiar mythic archetypes but destabilizes them to resist nationalist appropriation. By rejecting sacrificial resolution, emphasizing fragmented identities, and highlighting oppositional conversations, the film deconstructs the grand narrative of Partition storytelling. What arises is an anti-epic political memory—one that recognizes trauma without glorifying sacrifice, prioritizes resistance over martyrdom, and emphasises on the disquieting existence of marginalized female identities in partition recollections.

Between Aura and Flesh: The Partitioned Female Body as Site of Myth–Material Collision

Partition cinema has traditionally relied on epic narrative modes where women function as symbols of sacrifice, martyrdom, or nationhood. Srijit Mukherji's *Rajkahini* (2015), however, presents a radical departure. Set in a brothel that straddles the newly drawn Radcliffe Line, the film brings together 11 women who resist displacement when colonial officers order them to vacate their home. Instead of casting them as mere victims or mythic mothers of the nation, Mukherji situates their lives in the material and the mythic: torn sarees, ornaments, bodies, and silences that complicate nationalist memory. This paper examines the way the film *Rajkahini* stages a tension between material culture and mythic representation, using cloth, ornament, and female embodiment to construct a counter-archive of Partition. The paper demonstrates how everyday objects intersect with mythic imaginations of the female body, producing fractured subjectivities that resist erasure and nationalist appropriation.

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'Cloth' in *Rajkahini* is not merely attire but an archive of memory and survival. When the character Begum Jaan defiantly tells the officers, "*আমরা দেহ বিক্রি করি, আত্মা নয়*" ("We sell our bodies, not our souls"), the camera lingers on the folds of her sari (Mukherji, *Rajkahini*). The sari becomes an extension of her defiance, separating body from soul, commerce from dignity. As Tripathy observes, cloth in Partition narratives serves as "a mnemonic surface, carrying histories that official documents suppress" (Tripathy, 92). In a later scene, one of the prostitutes clutches a torn dupatta when threatened by soldiers. The dupatta, fragile yet resolute, embodies the precarious dignity women salvage amid violence. Mukherjee argues that sartorial politics in South Asia inscribe purity, honour, and shame on cloth, making it a battleground of gendered embodiment (178). Mukherji's women reclaim cloth as resistance: instead of markers of shame, their sarees and shawls become armour, both concealing and asserting agency.

The film complicates the 'ornamentalization' of women by transforming jewellery from symbols of beauty into instruments of survival. In one powerful scene, Rubina fastens her anklets before confronting a soldier. The sound of her steps—metal against stone—becomes a rhythm of defiance. Ornaments, typically signifiers of femininity and desirability, here acquire agency, echoing Appadurai's claim that "objects are never inert; they condense and circulate social relations" (34). Ornament also serves as mnemonic carriers. In one sequence, the women exchange bangles among themselves as they prepare for an impending attack. This transfer turns ornament into both inheritance and solidarity, rejecting the nationalist allegory of women as "decorative appendages of the nation" (Kumar 112). Instead, ornaments become signs of resistance, carrying affective histories of survival.

On the other hand, Mukherji deliberately invokes mythic archetypes—goddess, rani, begum—only to destabilize them. The nationalist imagination has historically conscripted women into sacrificial roles: as Bharat Mata, goddess-warriors, or queens embodying the nation's pride (Kumar 56). Yet Begum Jaan undercuts these identifications when she tells her women, "*আমরা কেউ কারও রানী নই, আমরা কেবল বেঁচে থাকার লড়াই করছি*" ("None of us are queens; we are only fighting to survive") (*Rajkahini*). This refusal dismantles the epic mode of Partition narratives, which often culminate in female martyrdom. Instead, Mukherji's characters refuse neat closure. They embody what Spivak calls "fractured subaltern subjectivity," resisting incorporation into nationalist discourse (Spivak 287). In place of the goddess or queen, we encounter women whose survival itself resists mythic transcendence.

The element of 'silence' emerges as a recurring mode of resistance in *Rajkahini*. When the British officer demands that the women evacuate, Begum Jaan responds not with words but with silence, her gaze unwavering. This silence unsettles the colonial and nationalist logic of speech as power, echoing Spivak's question, "Can the subaltern speak?" Here, the refusal to speak becomes counter-speech—an anti-epic gesture that resists assimilation into nationalist mythologies (Spivak 289). Simultaneously, Mukherji refuses to spare the veiwers from spectacle. The climactic assault on the brothel fills the screen with images of burning fabric, fragmented ornaments, and mutilated bodies. Yet

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unlike grand patriotic cinema that aestheticizes martyrdom/ sacrifice, *Rajkahini* withholds closure. The spectacle of destruction becomes a refusal of nationalist catharsis, leaving us with fragments that trouble memory.

Taken together, cloth, ornaments, and silences constitute what Kumar calls a "counter-archive of Partition memory" (89). State archives reduce women to statistics or symbols of honour/dishonour, erasing their lived agency. *Rajkahini*, by contrast, foregrounds the everyday objects that bear these histories. The economic anthropology reminds us that objects are repositories of relations (Appadurai 37). In *Rajkahini*, shawls, anklets, and bangles circulate not as mere commodities but as testimonies of survival. The women's collective refusal to abandon the brothel transforms the haveli itself into an archive: walls scarred by violence, rooms filled with objects of daily life, all resisting erasure by Partition's cartographic violence.

Mukherji's refusal of epic closure situates the film within what feminist historiography identifies as an anti-epic politics of memory (Tripathy 94). The women's deaths at the end are not framed as martyrdom for the nation but as fragments that defy absorption into nationalist mythology. Their bodies stay unclaimed, their memory unstitched—an archive of defiance. By foregrounding fractured subjectivities and material objects, *Rajkahini* critiques both colonial and nationalist historiographies. It insists that Partition cannot be narrated solely through maps, treaties, and sacrificial myths, but must be remembered through cloth, ornament, silence, and fragment. The film *Rajkahini* produces a feminist counter-archive of Partition by staging the tension between material culture and mythic representation. 'Cloth' becomes memory and armour; ornaments transform into instruments of agency; mythic archetypes are invoked only to be fractured; silence resists incorporation into epic speech; and spectacle denies nationalist catharsis. By employing these strategies, Mukherji deconstructs the epic-nationalist framework of Partition cinema and highlights subaltern female identities. The film invites us to perceive Partition not only as a narrative of sacrifice or resolution, but as pieces of survival reflected in common daily objects. In doing this, *Rajkahini* provides both a cinematic record and a critique of prevailing narratives, presenting us with fragmented memories that defy erasure and appropriation.

Conclusion

Srijit Mukherji's *Rajkahini* prevents the partitioned female body from being a quiet background to nationalist myth-making. Rather, it positions women—sex workers living in a brothel divided by the Radcliffe Line—at the very core of historical violence, illustrating how their lived experiences, actions, and acts of resistance serve as records of endurance. By foregrounding cloth, ornament, blood, and silence as living testimonies, the film unsettles the dominance of state narratives that often erase women's agency. These objects operate not as aesthetic embellishments but as embodied records of trauma and endurance, what Anjali Tripathy describes as "mnemonic carriers" that preserve erased histories (Tripathy 92). In this way, *Rajkahini* aligns with feminist material culture studies and economic anthropology, reorienting our understanding of Partition history toward the tactile and the ordinary, rather than

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the monumental. Mukherji employs these motifs solely to dismantle them – the characters in *Rajkahini* are neither symbolic mothers of the nation nor the submissive victims. Their final refusal to surrender the brothel to the newly drawn border does not culminate in the redemptive closure of martyrdom but in a defiant embrace of fractured subjectivities that resist assimilation into epic-nationalist memory. As A.M. Kumar notes of Partition art, counter-archives "emerge precisely from the refusal of monumental closure, privileging fragments and fractures as the truest forms of testimony" (Kumar 89). Mukherji's dismantling of the epic narrative mode thus constitutes a radical intervention in Partition cinema, offering what Gayatri Spivak calls an "anti-epic politics of memory" (Spivak 287).

In creating a counter-archive, *Rajkahini* not only critiques the patriarchal frameworks of Partition cinema while also reshaping our remembrance of historical trauma. It demonstrates that history is not solely preserved in state records or monumental narratives but in the fragile textures of cloth, the weight of ornaments, the silence of refusal, and the fractures of subaltern subjectivities. The film's intervention lies precisely here: it resists the epic closure of nationalist sacrifice and insists that the Partitioned female body be read not as allegory but as archive. In doing so, *Rajkahini* reclaims women's histories from erasure, foregrounding them as active agents in the making of memory and in the contestation of history itself.

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