

Re-membering Migration(s): The Culture and Politics of Memoirs and Archives

What does a project like the 1947 partition archive or the Citizen's archive of India (through the Generation 1947 project), or the Citizen's Archive of Pakistan, in their effort to document the memories and lives of those who lived through the partition of British India, seek to achieve? While their stated claims range from seeking to archive the experiences of people who were alive during partition and have lived through the formative years of the Indian nation state, to preserving this chapter of 'our collective history', to find a glimpse of how lives were lived during, before and after partition—such collective collection of memories and making them available for (most) people have been given a new life by the nation-wide commemoration of 70 years of partition. At home in West Bengal, there has been a plethora of migration memoirs—both from 1947 and 1971 respectively, locating different aspects of the violence inherent in such large scale forced migration: structural, caste, communal and gendered. But what do memoirs do? In their (re)creation of memories and through the active verb of remembering, from Latin *memor* (mindful) and Late Latin *rememmorari* (to remember again)—the act of remembrance itself signifies a travel through time—we remember that which we are no longer a part of. In his provocative recent essay "We are all Migrants in the 21st Century" Mohsin Hamid argues that just as we are all migrants through space, so are we through time. Migration memoirs tie both these migrations together, remembering through time a place as well as a journey that no longer is.

Through selected readings of archival projects and memoirs, this paper seeks to investigate the culture that enables memories and the practice of memorializing.