



## Historical Negationism and Epistemological Misrepresentation of Jinnah and Muslims in the Film *Viceroy's House*



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**Abstract:** *Viceroy's House* by Gurinder Chadha is a 106 minutes long film released in English and Hindi in 2017. The film is about the last days of the British Raj and the subsequent partition of India in 1947. The film is based on the books "Freedom at Midnight (1975)" and "The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of Partition (2005)". The film documents the period of the last Viceroy of India Lord Mountbatten who was missioned to handover freedom to India but unfortunately ended in the partition of India in his course of responsibilities. The current study discusses the misrepresentation of Jinnah the founder of Pakistan portrayed as an ambitious politician who wanted the division of India in line with imperial designs. This historical negationism and epistemological misrepresentation is in line with Corrigan's (2015) discussion about ideology in films where he discusses how films dominate and sometimes distort ways of seeing the world.

**Key Words:** Viceroy's House, Partition, Pakistan, Jinnah and Cinema

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### Introduction

*Viceroy's House* (2017) by Gurinder Chadha is a film about Lord Mountbatten the last Viceroy of India. Though the film focuses on the arrival and actions of the last viceroy but carries with it the themes of politics, freedom, love story, horrors of partition and much more about India and English ways of

living in the last days of Raj. The film has received positive reviews from the critics as Kenigsberg (2017) a reviewer from *The New York Times* positively hailed the film as interesting and informative for presenting the history in a compact running time without losing the interest of the audience. In the same go, Merry (2017) in the review published in the *Washington Post* described

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the film as educational and melodramatic for accomplishing the difficult task of historical representation of a complicated period of history.

However; Bhutto (2017) criticized the film as a glossy imperial version of India's traumatic partition. In her article published in *The Guardian*, Fatima Bhutto wrote that the film "scandalously misrepresents the historical reality". She constructs her argument that Chadha's film is focused on the benevolence of the Mountbattens and altogether ignores the freedom struggle of India. The film distorts the historical facts and presents the freedom of India as the result of British exhaustion in World War II at the hands of Germans while neglecting the indigenous and monumental struggle for freedom by Indians altogether. The historical negationism in the film is manifested in the negative portrayal of Jinnah and Muslims as villains.

"Communal violence between Hindus and Muslims is spoken of by the Mountbattens and other Raj imperialists as though it were a cyclone, arriving in India from some unknown Provenance, moved by an unknowable science. Divide and rule a staple of British Colonial administration, is given no credence. Three hundred million Hindus and Sikhs want a united India, (Chadha) informs us via Raj interlocutors, it is 100 million Muslims who do not. Mirroring the fractures of modern nationalism wrought by India's partition, Chadha seems to take pleasure in laying the bloodshed and brutality of 1947 at the feet of two particular villains: Muslims and Jinnah" (Bhutto, 2017).

Another reviewer, Jack (2017) in his review in *The Guardian* wrote that the film receives a "damning" response from historians who believe that the film lacks historical research and attempts to present the distorted and fake claims that Pakistan a nation-state was the product of a conspiracy of Winston Churchill an ex-Prime Minister of Britain. However; at the time of partition of

India Churchill was not the Prime Minister rather Britain was being ruled by Labour Government than under the premiership of Clement Attlee.

Thus the film *Viceroy's House* (2017) distorts the historical facts about the partition of India by neglecting the role of Muslims of India in general and Muhammad Ali Jinnah the founder of Pakistan in particular. This phenomenon is known as denialism or historical negationism wherein historical records are falsified or distorted. The term negationism was coined by the French historian Henry Rousso. Russo in his book *The Vichy Syndrome* (1987) attempts to distinguish the concept of historical revisionism and negationism. According to him adding the missing gaps in history with new shreds of evidence is totally different from distorting and faking the available pieces of evidence of history. In short, historical negationism ends in manipulation, mistranslations of the text and deliberate attempts to create distrust in the genuine documents. The same is seen in the case of the film *Viceroy's House* (2017). The film altogether neglects the role of Muslim league and Jinnah and contemptuously presents them as the architects of Partition which resulted in massive displacement and mass murders.

This epistemological misrepresentation of Jinnah is aimed at achieving a deliberate purpose of blaming him as a cheap politician, lacking vision while exonerating the Congress and Hindu leaders from this guilt. Unfortunately, these attempts are made in line with imperial designs to present English masters as benevolent and real benefactors of India.

Film studies in recent years have emerged as the constituent of epistemology where masses are informed, taught and influenced by cinematic representations along with entertainment. Corrigan (2015) writes that films are also tools of ideological expression and propagation. Thus movies and films contain particular ideologies to be

disseminated. In his famous book *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (2015), he postulates six approaches to film criticism to address the theme of ideology in films. Out of these six approaches, two are much more relevant to the current study.

1. "Studies of Hollywood Hegemony (in this case the Bollywood and other cinemas" focus on how classical film formulas dominate and sometimes distort ways of scaring the world.

2. Postcolonial studies examine movies from a global perspective aiming to reveal the repression of or emergence of indigenous perspectives (Corrigan, 2015).

Chadha's film falls under this category of hegemonic cinema where the ways of seeing are deliberately distorted and indigenous perspective is deliberately repressed to create epistemological misrepresentation. Jinnah was not an ordinary politician as presented in the film who was being scolded by the viceroy every time he goes there. Wolpert (1999) describes him as the shrewdest barrister of his time. In his famous book *Jinnah of Pakistan* (1999) Stanley Wolpert introduces Jinnah as:

"Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation-state. Muhammad Ali Jinnah did all three. Hailed as a Great Leader, Quaid-e-Azam, Jinnah virtually conjured Pakistan into statehood by the sheer force of his indomitable will" (Wolpert, 1999, p vii).

For Muslims of India and Jinnah, Pakistan was an ideological nation-state where Muslims could freely exercise their cultural and religious practices independently without being treated as a marginalized minority. Jinnah's vision was a greater and strong Pakistan which may lead Muslim nations all around the world as a model and modern state. Partition had never been the idea of Jinnah. The brutal and unwise partition of Punjab and Bengal was

attempted to please Congress and achieve imperial designs. Putting the locus of responsibility of partition on Jinnah as shown in the film in collaboration with imperial masters is indeed a case of historical negationism and epistemological misrepresentation by Indian academia and producers of cultural products to exonerate their leaders of this heinous guilt and crime against humanity.

The current study aims at exploring the themes of historical negationism and misrepresentation of Jinnah and Muslims in the film *Viceroy's House* (2017) by Gurinder Chadha under Timothy Corrigan's postulates about ideological presentations in the films, where popular cinema often dominates and distorts the ways of seeing the world.

The study attempts to investigate the following research questions through the analysis of the film *Viceroy's House* (2017).

1. How historical negationism is achieved through the film *Viceroy's House* (2017)?

2. Why Jinnah and the Muslims are misrepresented in the film *Viceroy's House*?

## Literature Review

*Viceroy's House* (2017) received a positive critical response from the majority of reviewers. All positive reviews applauded the way Chadha presented the tumultuous last days of Raj in India with clarity and with by creating a microcosm of Indian life in the last days of Raj inside the viceroy's house (Corn Hall, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2017). He adds that the viceroy's house is presented as the centre of Indian politics where the fate of four hundred million Indians is being decided. He terms the film as the soapy mix where politics, religious differences and the love story of inter-faith go hand in hand.

Rosario (2017) dubs the film as an engaging film that defends Mountbatten the last viceroy of India as a benevolent and politically impartial character. He terms the

film as an ambitious project which aims to whitewash the involvement of Mountbatten in the partition of India. The film chronicles the events of the last six months of the viceroy's house, taken as a microcosm of Indian political and social life. Rosario (2017) also doubts the historical accuracy of the film but then declares it as a captivating and entertaining narrative.

Chatterjee (2019) reviews the Hindi version of the film as a wishy-washy desiccated history lesson. The film projects Mountbatten and his wife Edwina as altruistic and noble spirits who love India and were against the partition of India. Chatterjee (2019) claims that Chadha in this film draws the moral line in Indian politics placing Mountbatten and Nehru on one side for a united and free India while Jinnah and Churchill are shown on the other side of the line longing for partition. Interestingly, Churchill is not directly represented in the film but his presence is shown vital through a secret file which ensures the partition and thus results in a crucial plot point. The critic further adds that as a history lesson, the film fails to keep the balance and ends up on the wrong side of historical representation.

Schwartz (2019) praises the presentation and subject matter of the film. But again casts doubts on the historical objectivity of the film. He discusses that Mountbatten was caught between the demands of Hindus and Muslims. His biggest dilemma was to see and check the emerging violence with 14 million people being displaced. He had to decide whether to support Gandhi and Nehru to set up a pluralistic but Hindu-majority nation or to consider the plea of Jinnah and Muslims of India for a separate Muslim-majority state named Pakistan.

The critics, in their reviews, praise the performance of the actors who have done justice to their characters. Hugh Bonneville performs beautifully as Lord Louis Mountbatten; Gillian Anderson also acts well as Lady Edwina the wife of Viceroy. Lily

Travers acts as Pamela the daughter of the last viceroy. Other actors include Neeraj Kob (Mahatma Gandhi), Tanveer Ghani (Jawahar Lal Nehru) and Danzil Smith (Muhammad Ali Jinnah).

Means (2017) states that Chadha uses a conspiracy theory of involving Jinnah and Winston Churchill in the nefarious design of partition to achieve their vested interests. For Chadha, this turn in the film helps her to exonerate the Hindu leaders from their failure to win united India.

Bhutto (2017) severely criticizes the film as it distorts the historical realities and serves as pleasing the imperial designs. She wrote that the film altogether neglects the indigenous struggle for freedom and presents the colonial masters as saviours and real benefactors.

Ain (2021) examines the film from the perspective of cinematic representation of the violence related to the partition of India. Ain (2021) in his analysis focuses on the violence related to the partition while ignoring the misrepresentation of history in the film. However, he adds that Chadha's film is a commercial endeavour which focuses to exonerate the viceroy while ignoring his political motives by focusing more on his personal life and charisma.

Kumar (2013) explores the theme of the negative portrayal of Muslims in Indian Cinema as the part of rising Hindutva (Hindu Nationalism) in India. In his research article, he digs out the ways in which popular Indian Cinema presents the Muslim Other in a pejorative manner within the Hindu majoritarian settings. Though Kumar in his study explores the films produced by Bollywood from 1990 to his time of publication, Chadha's *Viceroy's House* also fall within Bollywood Cinema's recurrent politics of nationalism manipulated by the right-wing new fundamentalism of Hindutva moment in India.

Mamta (2017) in her article studying the

portrayal of women in partition cinema quotes Ian Talbot that in secular India the Muslim actors always remained apprehensive of the acceptance from the audience, thereafter, they preferred to be known by their Hindu names. Dilip Kumar a veteran actor is an example of this non-secular attitude of Hindus towards Muslims. Jinnah as a far-sighted leader of Muslims was fully aware of this danger of identity and insecurity; that's why he had vouchsafed the creation of Pakistan to Indian Muslims. But this intent of Jinnah is negated and distorted in the film of Chadha.

The creation of Pakistan was not the result of whimsical demand by Jinnah, rather it was a long and monumental movement under his leadership. Jinnah had foreseen the future of Muslims during the Congress rule of India. Thus, he wanted that Muslims must be given their due freedom and respect; once India wins freedom from British rule. Pakistan was demanded in 1940 and the word Pakistan was coined in the 1930s. The historical pieces of evidence support that partition was not a plan of Jinnah (partition of Punjab and Bengal) but it was Nehru who had written to Wavell that the division of Bengal and Punjab was inevitable. Thus Congress was getting ready to accept Pakistan in March 1947 to which Jinnah had triumphantly added that from a laughed-at concept of a separate homeland now Pakistan seems a reality and "Insha Allah, we shall have Pakistan" (Wolpert, 1909, 312).

Historical negationism is also known as Denialism. Historical negationism is a term used for the distortion of historical records. It must not be confused with historical revisionism. The difference between these two terms is very clear. Revisionism refers to the exploration of new pieces of evidence or newer interpretations of historical pieces of evidence. Historical negationism on the other hand either falsifies the existing pieces of evidence by distortion or brings in new, unverified or unauthentic resources as shreds

of evidence. It also refers to the deliberate mistranslating or misrepresentation or misinterpretation of the text.

The current study explores how this misrepresentation and distortion of history known as historical negationism is achieved in the film *Viceroy's House* (2017).

## Theoretical Framework

The current study is qualitative in nature. It explores historical negationism a concept coined by French historian Henry Russo in 1987 and epistemological misrepresentation of Jinnah the founder of Pakistan in Gurinder Chadha's film *Viceroy's House*. The study is based on Timothy Corrigan's book *A Short Guide to Writing about Films* (2015). The dialogues and the contents of the film are critically examined to trace historical negationism in the films within the framework of ideology as postulated by Corrigan. According to Corrigan (2015), films portray ideologies to present their own distorted way of seeing the world. The postcolonial study of the films reveals the repression (in the case of this film) or the emergence of indigenous perspectives within the colonized cultures. India was a colony of Britain and Chadha instead of telling the story of the indigenous struggle for freedom in India, favourably presents the last viceroy Mountbatten as a kind, sympathetic and benevolent character. In this pursuit to please the colonial master, she biasedly misrepresents Jinnah the founder of Pakistan as a weak character who struggles for the independence of his nation in collaboration rather under the influence of ex-British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who never appears in the film. But his alleged document which lacks any historical evidence decides the fate of millions of people in India who suffered the pangs of partition.

## Analysis and Discussion

Corrigan (2015) describing the significance of

movies and films in our daily life states that films have become part of our cultural life. We all like, identify and value certain movies to the extent that they become part of our everyday affairs and conversations. Corrigan's claim can be consolidated with the remarks of Erwin Panofsky who stated that:

"If all the serious lyrical poets, composers, painters and sculptors were forced by law to stop their activities, a very smaller fraction of the society would seriously regret it. But if the same thing happens with the movies, its social consequences will be catastrophic" (Panofsky, 1992, p 234).

Thus, films permeate our public and private lives and we often take them seriously along with entertainment and pleasure. Films often discuss and portray the ideals and beliefs of our lives and contribute to our vision of the world. Movies often directly or indirectly discuss ideologies; thus they contribute to our ideological experiences as well.

In this context, Corrigan (2015) postulates six principal ideological schools of film criticism. Our current study is based on two of these principles where films dominate and sometimes distort our ways of seeing the world and reveal the repression of or emergence of indigenous perspectives within the formerly colonized cultures.

Moreover; Ain (2021) argues that cinema and works of literature reflect the psyche of any nation in their own ways. Films based on historical events differ from history in the sense that films involve emotional investment in the events of history. The films related to the partition of India in 1947 are often focused on the violence incurred as the result of the gory partition of the subcontinent.

But as a result of this partition, two independent nation states Pakistan and India emerged on the map of the world.

*Viceroy's House* (2017) is a unique film

based on partition in the sense that instead of focusing on the violence as the result of partition and focusing on the indigenous struggle for freedom speaks in favour of the last viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten. In this imperial favouritism, the film underplays and undervalues the role of Muhammad Ali Jinnah the founder of Pakistan. Beyond this, the film misrepresents Jinnah as an aide of the British Raj and responsible for the death and displacement of more than a million people.

*Viceroy's House* is a 2017 fictional film based on historical events. The film is directed and co-written by Gurrinder Chadha a British film director with Indian origin. Usually, her films explore the lives of Indians living in England while addressing their social and emotional issues. She usually makes film adaptations from the books but then adds her own flair and version to these adaptations.

*Viceroy's House* stars Hugh Bonnerille, Gillian Anderson, Neeraj Kabi, Tanveer Ghani, Danzil Smith, Om Puri, Manish Dayal, Huma Qureshi and Michael Gambon. This starry lead cast resulted in the commercial success of the film with usual positive critical reviewers except for some critics and reviewers discussing the historical objectivity in the film. The film was originally released in English in the UK on March 03, 2017, and its Hindi version was released on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2017 on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence of India and Pakistan.

The film focuses on the arrival of Lord Dickie Mountbatten as the last Viceroy of India in 1947 in the Viceroy's House in New Delhi along with his family. He was commissioned to oversee the dissolution of the British Raj in India and hand over power to the Indian people. However, India then was politically divided between Muslims and Hindus, where Muslims wanted their separate homeland Pakistan under the leadership of Jinnah. Mountbatten is shown as a sympathetic viceroy who attempts to

keep united India along with Jawahar Lal Nehru, the leader of the Congress. The plot on its sidelines, depicts the love story of Jeel Kumar a Hindu and Aliya a Muslim girl, both working in the viceroy's house. With the worsening condition of mistrust and rise in communal riots between Muslims and Hindus, Mountbatten was directed by the Labour Government in England to divide the subcontinent and hand over Muslim-majority provinces to Pakistan. The scheme resulted in the partition of Punjab and Bengal which was commissioned to an inexperienced English lawyer, Cyril Radcliffe. The story moves on to depict the love story of Jeet Kumar and Alia, who are planning to marry despite their communal differences, but then the partition thwarted their efforts, as Alia and her family decided to move to Pakistan. Unfortunately, the train Alia was boarded to reach Lahore is attacked and burnt. But Alia miraculously escaped to reach New Delhi, where she met Jeet Kumar again amid grief, loss and pain.

On the other hand, Cyril Radcliffe is introduced with a mysterious file, where the line of division was already marked. The file allegedly referred to Sir Winston Churchill, who had planned this partition two years back to check the advancement of the Soviet Union towards its access to warm waters through Karachi port. This historical negationism created through this film results in the misrepresentation of Jinnah who is shown as acting according to the wishes and plans of imperial Britain. In this entire scenario, the long and indomitable struggle of Jinnah as a Muslim leader and father of a new nation is brutally ignored and undervalued.

Chadha's film is centred on the theme of political negotiations taking place in the house of the viceroy in New Delhi which ultimately ended in the partition of India. Chadha herself admitted that for political narration, she has heavily relied on a book *The Shadows of the Great Game* by Narendra

Singh Sarila. Sarila (2005) in the book terms the creation of Pakistan as a part of the Great Game. Great Game refers to Great Britain's desire to create a buffer state in the region that would help them easily secure access to Afghanistan, Central and South Asia for their oil trade and check the access of the Soviet Union towards warm waters. According to this theory, Great Britain believed that the Congress had a socialist leaning and united India would join the Soviet Block.

While supporting the colonial discourse, the film presents Indians as servile servants engaged in cleaning and dusting the viceroy's house to welcome a new master. Mountbatten as a last Viceroy of India is portrayed as a sympathetic character who is critical of Churchill's policies but holds great reverence for Nehru and Gandhi. He likes Gandhi for his power of challenging the British Empire. Bhutto (2017) criticizes this benevolence of Mountbatten and exposes that throughout the film story, the empire and its descendants are favoured and internally supported.

The film progresses with Mountbatten realizing the enormity of his task. The task was not easier. The British were quitting India after a rigorous rule of two hundred years over India.

Mountbatten is presented with a personal inclination towards the Congress and Nehru. He is in awe of Gandhi. Meanwhile; he seems disinterested towards the Muslim cause. He even seemed little interested in seeing Jinnah whom according to Wolpert (1999) he believed to be a psychopath. The film presents Muslims as quarrelsome and irrational dispute-mongers. In both cases of personal brawls, set in Viceroy's house and in a marriage ceremony, Muslims are shown as the initiators. They are dubbed as impatient, intolerant and unsympathetic.

While describing his responsibility as an Operation Madhouse, Mountbatten and his

friends comment:

"Thirty million Hindus and Sikhs want a united India, but many of the 100 million Muslims do not. The Muslim minority don't want to be part of India.

They want their own country Pakistan. There is such rancour between the leaders now, it is nigh on impossible to get them in the same room".

And immediately in this scene, Mountbatten meets Nehru. Nehru was invited to the viceroy's house by the viceroy himself. Jinnah seemed no priority of Mountbatten.

In another scene, when Lady Mountbatten expresses her desire to meet Indian women, she prioritized Sarojini, Naidu, the sister of Pandit Nehru while ignoring Fatima Jinnah or other leading Muslim women politicians. The Muslims are presented as quarrelsome ignorants who could initiate civil war if they are denied Pakistan. Now-here in the film a single statement is presented as the reasoning for a separate homeland for Pakistan. In one instance, when Asif talks about Pakistan, he validates it with a weaker argument that only Jinnah foresight it. To counter, Jinnah's growing popularity among Muslims, Chadha incorporates a derogatory remark against Jinnah uttered by a Muslim freedom fighter when he declared Jinnah a "troublemaker".

Finally, when Mountbatten leans to see Jinnah only on the instance of his personal secretary Pug, Lady Mountbatten wanted him to side with Nehru, instead of Jinnah. While discussing with Nehru, about the Muslim plan for Pakistan, Nehru argues simply that the Congress won't like the idea and Gandhi would be heartbroken with this plan. Seemingly, for Nehru the demand of Muslims for a separate homeland was a less serious issue than his politics and liking of Gandhi. He had no clear ideology or plans for United India or Chadha and indeliberately ignored this important aspect. This is again

tantamount to historical negationism.

Mountbatten met Jinnah only when Pandit Nehru suggested him do. Nehru was all praise for Mountbatten and wanted him to persuade Jinnah for withdrawal of his demand for Pakistan. Again, Jinnah has been misrepresented here as if Pakistan was the brainchild of Jinnah alone which had nothing to do with Muslims of India.

When Jinnah met Mountbatten in his Viceroy House, Mountbatten was still all praise for Nehru. Jinnah cleared him that the word Pakistan was coined in 1933 by a group of Cambridge students. Jinnah made it clear to the Viceroy that.

"Muslims do not want to be reduced to the unequal position of negroes in America". Mountbatten replied:

"I assure you Muslims would never be treated as second-class citizens and could you really see India cut in half"?

Jinnah replied:

"In united India we could be a minority of one to four. How could you guarantee that? And for division sometimes surgery could save the patient".

In this setting, Jinnah presented the case of Pakistan with clarity. When Mountbatten insisted upon him to stand united for peace, Jinnah quoted the examples of the division of Ireland for maintaining peace. This short conversation is what Chadha presents as the case of Muslims in Pakistan.

However; Danziel Smith who performs the role of Jinnah, like the real Jinnah with his eloquence wins an argument against the viceroy; who then started giving little weightage to Muslim thought as well. But, it was not only Jinnah but the growing communal riots that forced Viceroy to fly to London to seek approval for the partition. This hasty decision of leaving India and creating two nations is what Churchill described as a shameful flight (Wolpert [2006](#)).



As the storyline progresses, Gandhi comes up with the idea of accepting the leadership of the Muslim League, again intrinsically mocking Jinnah and his vision of Pakistan as a tool of power-seeking.

Gandhi wanted united India with his purity of heart and for that, he could give the Muslim league a chance to rule first but in the next meeting with Indian leaders without Jinnah; this proposal was denied by Nehru. Nehru disagreed with this plan by consolidating the fears of Jinnah in which within democracy, one hundred million Muslims would never be able to rule over three hundred million Hindus. With his obstinacy, Nehru declared:

"We will have our independence, let Jinnah have his Pakistan. In five years' time, he'll be knocking at our doors and begging to be part of India again. We can concede the provinces with a clear Muslim majority, but Jinnah cannot have Punjab and Bengal. They have large Hindu and Sikh populations".

Gandhi disagreed with this plan but Mountbatten moved further as he got the nod from Nehru. With these dialogues from the film, it can be constructed that Nehru had agreed to the idea of Pakistan but without Bengal and Punjab. This idea of the partitioning of these two provinces came as a Mountbatten plan. In the movie, it is shown that Churchill had agreed the plan. But historical documents deny this. Churchill had opposed the premature, hurried scuttle and shameful flight from India in such a haphazard manner but his opposition to the plan was lost to 337 to 185 majority votes by Atlee's Government (Wolpert, 2006).

After seeking approval for partition from London, Mountbatten convened a meeting of Indian leaders which was not attended by Gandhi for obvious reasons of not liking the Mountbatten or the partition plan.

Jinnah is portrayed as protesting against the partition of Punjab and Bengal.

"I want all of the Punjab and Bengal. Do

you expect me to accept a moth-eaten Pakistan". In this very meeting, the attitude of the Viceroy toward Jinnah is insulting and threatening.

"You have got your Pakistan which at one time no one in the world thought you would get it. If I don't have your agreement, this plan will collapse, and the country that you have conjured out of this thin air will collapse".

The storyline then progresses along while depicting the love story of Jeel Kumar and Aila, where again Aila a Muslim girl is portrayed as indecisive and caught in between love and responsibility for the family. The film also presents the downstairs affairs of the Viceroy's House, where staff members are shown divided on the creation of Pakistan. Muslims hail this as a realization of their beautiful dream. Others take it as the cutting of a living body into two halves. Then the film presents the clumsy seen of division of assets between Pakistan and India with a ratio of 20 and 80.

The glaring example of historical negationism in the film occurs when the reluctant, indecisive and inexperienced Radcliffe is presented with a file containing the map of India by Pug the secretary of Mountbatten. The map is marked with a line of division already drawn for the partition. This map is allegedly linked with Churchill and Chadha tries to misrepresent, distort and fabricate a new version based on Sarila's (2005) great game that the partition of India was decided by Churchill to have access Britain to Central Asia while in parallel checking the access of Soviet Union to the warm waters. This Great Game thesis has been constructed to purge the leaders of the Congress Nehru and save colonial masters including Mountbatten from the guilt of partition and its subsequent violence and horrors. The peaceful transfer of powers, maintenance of law and order and wise division of Punjab and Bengal could have saved the lives of thousands of innocent

people. But this was not done and the film remains silent on this issue. The film puts all the blame for partition and its violence on Jinnah as the viceroy with reference to this controversial film telling his wife.

“This is why Jinnah wouldn't budge. He'd already been promised his Pakistan..... Churchill had his eyes set on Karachi, He won't get it now. Pakistan will be easier to influence than an unruly India with its socialist leanings”.

In the next scene, when Mountbatten visited Karachi to attend the Independence celebration of Pakistan, he told Jinnah:

“It shouldn't be me standing here with you. It would be Churchill. He is the midwife, who delivered you your Pakistan”.

On this occasion, Jinnah is shown waving the letter from President Harry S. Truman of the USA in which he congratulated the people of Pakistan. This small scene is again a historical negationism based on Pakistan's future-leaning towards the USA. Possibly, Chadha might be mocking Jinnah and Pakistan with this portrayal.

On the other hand, Hindu leaders are shown with reverence and agency. The film deliberately ignores the appointment of Mountbatten as the Governor General of India and his failed desire to become the Governor General of Pakistan as well. For this office, Mountbatten allowed millions of people to die helplessly which is a part of history but not our concern in this research.

## **Conclusion**

*Viceroy's House* (2017) a film by Gurinder Chadha focuses on the politics of the subcontinent during the last days of Raj in India. The title manifests that the centre of the presentation is based on activities carried out in the house of Viceroys in New Delhi where Lord Mountbatten arrives as the last viceroy of India. Though the film depicts the crucial period of Indian history and attempts to shed light on the gory incident of partition,

it does so from the imperial point of view. The film presents Mountbatten as a kind, sincere, sympathetic and benevolent character while ignoring the indigenous struggle for freedom on the sidelines (Bhutto, 2017). Interestingly the film relies heavily on the concept of the Great Game proposed in Sarila's (2005) book where the creation of Pakistan is shown as the result of imperial design. This historical negationism and deliberate misrepresentation of Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan consolidate the claims of Corrigan (2015) who proposed that cinema under hegemonic ideology distorts the worldview.

Pakistan as a nation-state was the result of a long struggle for freedom by the Muslims of the subcontinent guided under the visionary leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Wolpert, 1999). Historically and even through the contents of this film, it is established that the partition of Bengal and Punjab along with its subsequent violence was the result of Nehru's obstinacy and failure of the last viceroy who was commissioned to transfer power peacefully to Indian representatives. This administrative and political failure resulted in mass destruction, killings, homelessness and brutal physical and psychological trauma. None can be held responsible for this other than the British government in general and Lord Mountbatten in particular. But the Congress, Hindu media and now this film relocates the onus of this partition on the shoulders of Jinnah and Muslims. To consolidate this negationism, the writers like Sarila and film producers like Chadha, rely on fabricated, distorted, imaginary or falsified pieces of evidence. This is the glaring example of historical negationism as proposed by Henry Rousso in his book *The Vichy Syndrome* (1987). The study judiciously reveals that the film by Chadha misrepresents Jinnah and Muslims throughout the storyline. Jinnah is shown as arrogant and a problem creator who never

reconciles with anyone. Muslims are depicted as short-tempered, quarrelsome and intolerant. The film also distorts the historical realities and seems silent on the Muslim perspective of the struggle for freedom. The film audaciously attempts to protect, advocate and support imperial notions. This is achieved at the cost of Muslim misrepresentation to achieve a particular set of ideologies which holds Jinnah as Muslim responsible for the division of India.

Technically, the film is a commercial venture with positive critical reviews. The setting is beautifully decorated with wonderful acting performances by English and Indian actors. The diegetic and non-diegetic music is composed by A.R Rehman an Oscar-winning musician. The film was also selected for competition at the 67<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival. Against the budgetary cost of 8.5 million dollars, the film has earned 11.8 million dollars at the box office.

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