

Abstract

Bheed: An Exploration of Social Fragmentation and Historical Echoes

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Register No: AB23ENG033

2023 - 2026

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This project analyses Anubhav Sinha's *Bheed* (2023) through the framework of Memory Studies, examining how the COVID-19 lockdown is represented as a site of collective memory rather than a temporary public health crisis. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, the study explores how individual suffering is transformed into shared remembrance through cinematic space, narrative structure, and visual aesthetics. Focusing on borders, roads, checkpoints, and migrant bodies as memory sites, the project highlights how caste, class, and institutional power shape social fragmentation. By evoking historical echoes of Partition and state control, *Bheed* is read as a cinematic archive that preserves marginalised experiences often erased from official narratives. The study demonstrates how Indian cinema can resist selective forgetting and foreground collective memory as a political and ethical force during moments of crisis.

**BHEED: AN EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION
AND HISTORICAL ECHOES**



Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and Literature

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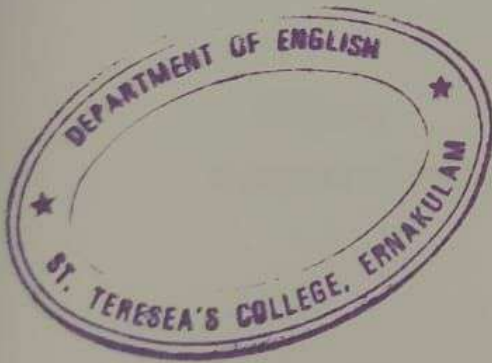
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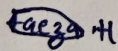


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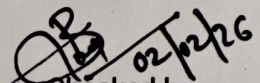
Author Name	Faeza Hameed K
Course of Study	BA English Language & Literature
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Department	English & Centre for Research
Acceptable Maximum Limit	20
Submitted By	library@teresas.ac.in
Paper Title	Bheed: An Exploration of Social Fragmentation and Historical Echoes
Similarity	1% AI - 19%
Paper ID	5211208
Total Pages	23
Submission Date	2026-02-02 17:18:28

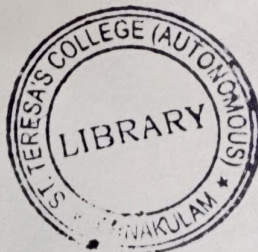


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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this project, entitled “*Bheed*: An Exploration of Social Fragmentation and Historical Echoes”, is a record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr Jisha John, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project, entitled “*Bheed: An Exploration of Social Fragmentation and Historical Echoes*” by Faeza Hameed.K, is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I take this opportunity to thank God Almighty for showering me with his abundant blessings and grace throughout my project.

I want to place on record my sincere gratitude to Rev. Sr. Nilima (CSST), Manager and Provincial Superior, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam, and to Dr Anu Joseph, Principal, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam, for their continued support throughout my studies at this institution.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Jisha John, for guiding my thoughts in the right direction and helping me express them in the best possible way.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Head of the Department, Dr Tania Mary Vivera, and to all the other teachers in the department, without whose guidance this project could never have been completed.

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Introduction

Memory Studies is an interdisciplinary academic field that examines how individuals, groups, and societies construct, preserve, and recall memories of the past. This project explores how both personal and collective memories are reshaped by political, social, and cultural forces through the lens of collective memory. This lens is applied to the 2023 film *Bheed* to understand how it brings to the surface painful memories where others wish to keep them hidden. Through this critical analysis of the film using this connective theory, it does not only aim to reveal the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 lockdown; it turns an eye to understand how the crisis-shaped identities, relationships, and power structures within Indian society. Another thing to be noted about the film is that it was directed by Sinha, who is known for dealing with such sensitive issues like the one in his film *Article 15*.

So, in the film *Bheed*, it stars Rajkummar Rao, Pankaj Kapur, Ashutosh Rana, Aditya Srivastava, and Dia Mirza. The narrative of the film is placed during the March 2020 nationwide lockdown, where migrant workers were unable to cross interstate borders and were exposed to inequalities due to caste, class, and institutional authority. The film draws images from the real situation, like the deserted roads, streams of people walking home, and closed borders; these images are applied to tell a fictional story that reveals the narcissistic state power structure that looks at these migrant workers as a logistical problem that needs to be solved using paperwork, force, and regulation. The film turns the gaze for the viewers to understand the migrants' hunger, abandonment, and humiliation they have to face due to the corrupted power authority.

In the centre of the story is the character of a lower-caste police officer who is in dilemma due to his sense of duty towards humans as well as his role as an officer who enforces the law that requires him to implement the lockdown by restricting the movement of these migrant workers back home. Shot largely in black and white, it blends past and present, fusing the trauma of Partition and at the same time suggesting that it is a similar drama that can be seen during the COVID lockdown; this also shows how new crises reopen the past unhealed wounds. By using *Bheed* as a film that shows how institutional power and social fragmentation are repeated over time and by focusing on borders checkpoints and crowds, the study highlights how memory is never individual it is always shaped by institutions groups and historical movements.

This is the point that Maurice Halbwachs' theory puts forward it is always the power structure that determines what is acknowledged what is remembered, and whose stories are silenced. The images of locations like barricades highways and endless walking not only become spaces of human existence but also instruments of control that contain collective memory. Individual experiences may differ yet the crowd shares suffering, and the group is united by the collective experience produced by a single system that affects all of them. The film moves beyond documenting events it gives the audience a first-hand experience of the migrant condition. Such experiences are amplified using sound which heightens emotion and through silence and pointed dialogue. The study uses Memory Studies and Halbwachs' notion of collective memory to analyse the text qualitatively unpacking the settings narrative structure characters and images to map how social fragmentation is represented and remembered.

The film should never be treated just as a pandemic film it demarcates a historical phase and preserves it for the future to understand personal pain and how it transforms into memory.

Chapter 1

Theorising Memory Studies

Memory studies is an exciting interdisciplinary field in the humanities and social sciences. It dives into how societies remember forget and tell stories about their past. Instead of seeing memory just as something personal or psychological this approach views it as something we create together shaped by culture and politics. Our memories take shape stick around and get passed on through shared moments institutions stories and images. In this way memory turns into a key space where we wrestle with identity power trauma and what it means to belong. Cinema that powerful visual and storytelling medium, plays a huge role in building collective memory. It turns our real-life experiences into cultural touchstones we all share. This project employs Memory Studies as a theoretical framework to analyse Anubhav Sinha's *Bheed* (2023) a film that revisits the COVID-19 lockdown in India and foregrounds the mass migration of workers during that period.

The lockdown while officially framed as a public health emergency revealed deep-rooted social inequalities related to caste class labour and access to dignity. *Bheed* does not merely document this crisis it remembers it. Through its narrative structure visual style, and character trajectories the film transforms individual suffering into a collective experience thereby contributing to the formation of social memory. Memory Studies enables an understanding of how such cinematic representations preserve challenge and reframe what a society chooses to remember. A foundational theorist in Memory Studies is Maurice Halbwachs a French sociologist who introduced the concept of collective

memory. Halbwachs argues that memory is never formed in isolation individuals remember within social frameworks such as family, class, religion, nation and institutions.

According to him even personal memories are shaped by the social groups to which individuals belong. Collective memory therefore is not a static archive of the past but a dynamic process that is continuously reshaped by present concerns. It determines which events are remembered how they are interpreted and whose experiences are granted legitimacy. Halbwachs distinguishes collective memory from history. While history aims to record events objectively and chronologically collective memory is lived selective and emotionally charged. It is rooted in everyday experiences and sustained through repetition narration and symbolic spaces. Importantly collective memory is influenced by power. Dominant social groups often control official narratives while the memories of marginalised communities' risk being silenced or erased.

This insight is particularly relevant to *Bheed* which centres the experiences of migrant workers whose suffering was largely absent from institutional accounts of the pandemic. In *Bheed* the COVID-19 lockdown doesn't appear as a sudden break but as one chapter in a deeper story of exclusion and displacement. The film keeps spotlighting borders state lines, police checkpoints, barricades and roads that act as spatial anchors for memory. Halbwachs argued that memory is tied to places, and *Bheed* brings this alive visually turning everyday spots into haunting sites of remembrance. Highways stand for exhaustion and abandonment checkpoints recall control and humiliation while borders stir echoes of past mass displacements especially India's Partition. These spaces hold layered memories, weaving old injustices into today's pain.

Bheed black-and-white cinematography cleverly blurs the line between past and present. Its visual style mimics old archival footage giving the film a real sense of history that invites us to see the lockdown not just as a one-off crisis, but as part of a pattern that keeps repeating in society. This approach echoes Halbwachs's idea that collective memory lives on through lasting images and symbols across generations. In the core, the film is a cinematic museum that tries to preserve the raw emotions and social truths that may otherwise get forgotten behind the curtain of time. It can also be noted how class and caste not only divides our external social world but also the internal mindscapes of collective memory. Lockdown increases the class and caste division as most migrant workers are from lower caste and economically weaker sections and they are the one who are affected by it while the elites are unaffected of it.

This difference will also create a difference in the memories that one collects. It reinforces Halbwach's idea that our memories are closely linked with our place in the society. Lockdown will be remembered as a crucial administrative step by the elites while the migrant workers will look down upon it as betrayal and brutality. Institutions influence on our memory is analysed using *Bheed* as the primary text. The control is done using police forces and bureaucratic language. The film exposes the huge gap between the official narrative and people's actual experiences. *Bheed* brings forward the stories that never hits the frontlines i.e. survival and tales of pain. A character to be noted in the film is Surya Kumar Singh who is in dilemma whether you put forward his duty or his concise on the front.

First, he follows official orders but later he gives away to his moral instincts. His human side is revealed through this. The film should never be regarded only as a

pandemic story but it is during a crises that the people who is seen and who is forgotten is revealed. Suffering gets turned into something that we can all understand and sympathise with. Pain may be neglected but can never remain ignored forever. *Bheed* questions social exclusion of the migrant workers by the government and calls upon them to take responsibility. In the beginning Bhaskar acts as an obedient citizen who follows order even to its slightest detail. Driven by the emphasis put forward by the police, control runs over empathy. As things unfold, he confronts the real human cost. The moral conflict that he faces marks the exact moment when dominant collective memory challenges individual conscience.

It introduces the concept of collective memory as developed by Maurice Halbwach's and applies it as a theoretical lens to understand the film *Bheed* (2023). Memory studies is a multi-disciplinary approach to understand how personal and shared memories dig on cultural remembrance. The narrative technique proves itself useful as it is successful in unpacking tensions, identity and trauma. Emerging late in the twentieth century, it gave scholars a chance to revisit the past beyond viewing it as mere historical facts but as a living force. In the core memory is a bridge that ensures passage between the past and the present. Halbwachs pioneered his approach by rejecting memory as purely individual. He introduced memoir collective memory is a social construct. For him we remember within frameworks like family, religion, or class our personal recollections bend and reform through group dynamics.

Bheed vividly portrays this collective suffering and social rifts during the lockdown. The abrupt crisis laid bare deep inequalities especially the marginalization of migrant workers whose stories official narratives often sidelined. The film doesn't frame

the lockdown as a one-off event but as part of a recurring pattern of exclusion, rooted in entrenched social and structural inequalities. *Bheed* brings back tough memories of people forced to leave home suffer and fight to survive. It shows how movies can dig up forgotten stories turning one person's pain into everyone's shared history. These crises aren't old news they still affect us. Movies aren't just fun; they're like memory banks for society. They revisit big events, traumas, and unfairness, helping us learn from the past for today.

Bheed shows workers fleeing in huge numbers, borders blocking them inside their own country, and divides of caste, money, and power. To get why *Bheed* makes these feel like our common past not lone tragedies look at Maurice Halbwachs's idea of "collective memory." He said we remember through groups, not alone. Social setups and power shape what we hold onto, building who we are. In *Bheed*, this turns personal hurt into a big warning about repeating mistakes like splits in society and injustice. The lockdown links to old pains: moves by force, caste hate, government force. Halbwachs explains how groups frame memories, clash with facts, and pick what to keep or drop. *Bheed* is a movie space where old pains mix with new one's displacement and hurt as part of us all.

The film stirs feelings like fear, shame, wrong, and pushback that poor workers and outsiders felt. Caste and class make it worse they suffered more than rich city folks. Their pandemic memories include hunger, beatings, shunning, and long walks. Communities share these as ongoing oppression. *Bheed* fights forgetting by spotlighting them, breaking stories of "all together" to show real breaks. People group by caste, class, power. Workers bond over shared misery endless walks, no food, shelter, checkpoint

insults. Power people see lockdown as smart rules; workers see betrayal. The film shows views from all sides, proving position shapes memory. Roads, stops, buses, and temp camps become key memory spots in *Bheed*. The road in particular symbolises both movement and exclusion. For migrant workers the road is a space of suffering, exhaustion and uncertainty.

These spatial memories are not individual but shared forming a collective image of displacement that resonates with earlier historical events such as Partition. They reflect social structure and power relations. The checkpoint in *Bheed* becomes a modern boundary that echoes older forms of segregation based on caste and class. Such spatial representations reinforce the idea that collective memory is embedded in the material and social organisation of society. *Bheed* strongly reflects this idea by drawing parallels between the COVID-19 lockdown and earlier moments of mass displacement in Indian history, particularly the partition of 1947. Although the film does not recreate Partition directly, the visual imagery of long lines of people walking, carrying belongings and facing uncertainty evokes collective memories of that traumatic past.

Caste discrimination, labour exploitation and state violence are not new phenomena; they are embedded in India's social memory. *Bheed* activates these memories reminding viewers that the pandemic did not create social inequality but exposed and intensified existing structures. In *Bheed* the state is shown as an institution that controls movement, language and visibility. Official announcements, police orders and bureaucratic procedures create a version of reality that contrasts sharply with the lived experience of migrant workers. The film itself becomes a counter institutional space of memory. By telling stories that are absent from official records *Bheed* contributes to

the preservation of collective memory from below. It challenges viewers to question whose memories are valued and whose are forgotten. *Bheed* functions as a cinematic archive of collective memory.

It does not merely represent the lockdown but interprets it through a social lens. The black and white aesthetic of the film reinforces a sense of historical weight, blurring the boundary between past and present. Caste oppression and state violence converge to reveal the deep structure that govern social life because of Halbwach's memory is never purely individual but is always formed, sustained and recalled within social groups. As Halbwachs argues that collective memory is spatially anchored and in *Bheed* spaces such as borders, roads, bridges, quarantine centres and barricades become memory sites where power, exclusion and control are enacted repeatedly across time transforming ordinary locations into symbolic reminders of how society organizes belonging and exclusion and the border in the film is particularly significant because it is not merely a physical demarcation imposed during the lockdown but a social boundary that recalls colonial era divisions and caste based separations, thus activating a collective memory in which authority defines who may move freely and who must remain confined and through the character of Bhaskar Singh a duty bound police officer who begins by enforcing state orders but gradually confronts the moral weight of his actions.

Chapter 2

Borders, Bodies and Collective Memory in *Bheed*

In *Bheed* borders do not merely function as administrative demarcations; they emerge as living sites where memory, power and exclusion intersect. This chapter examines how the film constructs borders as social and psychological spaces that discipline bodies and reproduce historical hierarchies. The COVID-19 lockdown becomes the immediate context through which these borders are activated but the film reveals that such divisions are deeply rooted in collective memory shaped by caste, class and state authority. Through its portrayal of stranded migrant workers, police enforcement and bureaucratic indifference *Bheed* exposes how crisis transforms ordinary spaces into sites of trauma and remembrance. The state border at Tejpura operates as the central spatial metaphor of the film.

It is neither a battlefield nor a war zone yet it mirrors the violence of historical displacements. The checkpoint is engineered as a space of surveillance and control where movement is regulated and humanity is suspended. Much like institutional spaces that privilege order over cares the border becomes a place where people are reduced to categories migrants, labourers, outsiders rather than recognized as individuals. This transformation of space reveals how authority asserts itself not only through force but through the everyday administration of mobility. In *Bheed* to stop walking is to lose dignity and to be stopped is to be rendered invisible. In *Bheed*, the migrants appear not as isolated individuals but as a unified collective. The crowd endless exhausted bodies

shuffling along roads, railway tracks, and checkpoints could easily become just a faceless spectacle.

Yet the film pushes back against that, highlighting their shared suffering as a powerful collective memory. Hunger, fatigue, and humiliation aren't shown as solitary struggles; they're recurring hardships that tie everyone together. This mass movement stirs echoes of past forced displacements, like India's Partition, when sudden borders turned mobility into a raw fight for survival, not a choice. The road function as a crucial memory space in the film. Traditionally associated with progress and connection it is reconfigured here as a site of abandonment. Long stretches of highway filled with walking migrants recall visual memories deeply embedded in India's historical consciousness. These images do not merely document the present crisis they reactivate unresolved memories of migration, loss and state failure.

The road becomes a living archive storing layer of historical trauma that resurface whenever the promise of the nation collapses. In this sense *Bheed* situates the lockdown within a continuum of remembered suffering rather than treating it as an exceptional moment. Institutional authority in *Bheed* is most visibly embodied by the police and administrative machinery. Orders are enforced mechanically often without ethical reflection. Language becomes a tool of power terms like “rules,” “protocol,” and “orders” are repeatedly invoked to justify inaction. This bureaucratic language stands in sharp contrast to the lived reality of the migrants whose needs are immediate and bodily. The film reveals how institutions rely on inherited memories of discipline and control many of which stem from colonial governance structures.

These memories shape present behaviour allowing cruelty to be normalized under the guise of law. Surya Kumar Singh's character becomes the emotional and ethical core through which this conflict unfolds. As a lower-caste police officer Surya occupies a liminal position within the system. He is tasked with enforcing state authority yet his own social identity places him closer to those he is instructed to control. This tension reflects Halbwach idea that memory operates through social roles. Surya initial obedience is shaped by institutional memory one that prioritizes order over empathy. However as the film progresses his exposure to migrant suffering disrupts this remembered framework. His moral conflict signals a rupture within collective memory where inherited norms are challenged by lived experience.

Caste works silently but powerfully all through *Bheed*. It does not always get named outright yet it shapes interactions, decisions and access to resources. We see how easily certain bodies get restricted or dismissed revealing the deep "caste memory" that still guides social behaviour. Migrant workers face instinctive mistreatment as disposable their suffering viewed as inevitable, not unjust. This normalization stems from a collective memory that has long devalued certain lives. The lockdown doesn't create this hierarchy; it simply exposes it. By highlighting these patterns *Bheed* pushes viewers to face the historical continuity of caste-based exclusion. The character of Balram Trivedi adds even more complexity to this landscape of memory and power. As an upper-caste man made vulnerable by circumstance, Balram's desperation shows how privilege shifts in moments of crisis.

Away from familiar structures of authority his caste identity becomes a tool he attempts to wield in order to regain control. His hostility toward other mirrors the anxiety

of losing inherited dominance. Through Balram the film illustrates how collective memory of superiority resurfaces when social order is threatened reinforcing divisions rather than dissolving them. Media representation in *Bheed* also play a crucial role in shaping collective memory. The presence of journalist highlights the tension between lived suffering and its public narration. While ground realities unfold in silence and exhaustion media discourse often seeks spectacle or simplified narratives. The film critiques this tendency by emphasizing what remains unseen and unheard. In doing so it positions itself as a counter-archive one that preserves memories excluded from official records.

Bheed insists that remembrance must emerge from empathy rather than visibility alone. The film's black-and-white cinematography deepens this archival quality. By stripping away colour *Bheed* collapses temporal boundaries between past and present. The visual resemble historical photograph and documentary footage reinforcing the idea that the event depicted belong to a larger history of displacement. This aesthetic choice invites viewer to see the lockdown not as a fleeting episode but as part of a recurring social pattern. Memory isn't sweet old stories. It's sharp and pushes back hard. The movie feels heavy and grim, but little kindnesses pop up. Sharing a bite of food, sneaking around rules, or letting someone rest they break the wall of meanness for a second. This proves group memories can change if people choose right. Surya's last choice, even if tiny, carves out a new kind of memory.

One about duty, not blind yes-sir. It doesn't smash the system, but it shows the cracks. *Bheed* says society breaks because of bad memories and bad rules. Lockdown borders came and went, but they locked in splits that never leave. By situating personal

suffering within a broader historical framework, the film transforms individual pain into collective remembrance. It demands that viewers recognize the lockdown not only as a health crisis but as a mirror reflecting unresolved social trauma. In this way *Bheed* functions as a cinematic site of memory that refuses closure. It does not offer resolution or redemption instead it leaves audiences with an ethical burden. The film asks whether society will remember this moment as another episode of necessary suffering or as a moral failure that demands accountability.

Through its critical engagement with borders, bodies and authority *Bheed* asserts that remembering is itself apolitical act one that determines whether history will be repeated or reimaged. The chapter analyse *Bheed* through the lens of collective memory to examine how social fragmentation is represented during the COVID-19 lockdown. The film portrays migrant workers not merely as individuals but as a collective body experiencing shared trauma, exclusion and neglect. Their repeated encounters with state authority, caste-based discrimination and physical borders reflect how social divisions become deeply embedded in collective memory. *Bheed* shows that the lockdown was not just a health crisis but also a social rupture that exposed longstanding inequalities. The film does not merely portray an immediate crisis but evokes deeper historical echoes of division, exclusion and systemic neglect.

The film constructs memory through shared suffering rather than individual narratives. The migrants' experiences echo earlier historical traumas particularly the partition of India where mass movement, state control and social hierarchies determined who could cross borders and who could not. Although *Bheed* is set in a contemporary context its imagery recalls these historical memories suggesting that the past continues to

shape the present. Spatial division plays a crucial role in the film. Checkpoints, barricades, roads and borders become sites of exclusion where collective memory is produced. These spaces mirror older sites of segregation and control embedding present suffering within a longer history of social division. The denial of mobility becomes a curing memory that binds the community together through shared trauma.

Bheed also exposes how official narratives often attempt to erase uncomfortable memories. The state's bureaucratic language contrasts sharply with the lived realities of the migrants highlighting the gap between history of recorded and memory as experienced. Through visual story telling the film resists forgetting by preserving images of suffering that might otherwise be excluded from dominant historical accounts. Social fragmentation in the film is not limited to class divisions but extend to caste, occupation and economics status. These divisions influence whose memories are acknowledged and whose are silenced. Halbwachs theory helps explain how dominant social groups maintain control over collective memory while marginalised groups struggle to assert their experiences.

Bheed demonstrate that collective memory is not merely about remembering the past but about recognising recurring structure of injustice. The film transform individual pain into remembrance exposing historical continuities of exclusion. Through the lens of Maurice Halbwach Memory Studies *Bheed* emerges as a powerful exploration of how social fragmentation is both a present reality and a remembered historical pattern that continues to shape collective identity. Cinema has always functioned as more than entertainment it is a powerful cultural archive that capture the emotional political and social anxieties of its time. In the Indian context film often become sites where

suppressed histories unresolved traumas and collective fears find expression. *Bheed* is one such film that consciously positions itself as a mirror to society reflecting uncomfortable truths about inequality exclusion and the fragility of social unity.

Set against the backdrop of the COVID-19 lockdown in India *Bheed* is not merely a pandemic film it is a deeply political and emotional exploration of how crisis expose existing social fracture rooted in caste, class, religion and historical memory. Though its narrative, character and visual language, *Bheed* reveal how collective memory shape social behavior and how moment of crisis reactivate historical echoes of oppression and division. *Bheed* demonstrate how individual experiences are inseparable from social frameworks of memory. The film humanizes these patterns by focusing on lived experiences emotional conflicts and moral dilemmas thereby transforming abstract social theory into deeply personal narratives. One of the most striking aspects of *Bheed* is its portrayal of crisis as a revelatory force.

The sudden announcement of the lockdown functions as a narrative trigger that exposes the underlying structure of society. While the virus is biologically indiscriminate the social response to it is deeply unequal. The film repeatedly emphasize that the lockdown did not create inequality it merely magnified it. Migrant workers stranded without food, shelter, or transport are shown not as passive victims but as individuals with histories, aspiration and dignity. Their collective suffering evokes memories of earlier historical moments most notably the Partition of India when mass displacement and state indifference defined the lives of millions. Without explicitly recreating Partition *Bheed* draws a parallel between the two moments suggesting that the trauma of displacement is deeply embedded in the nation's collective memory.

Collective memory as a concept refers to the shared pool of memories that a society hold about its past. These memories are not static they are constantly reshaped by present circumstance. In *Bheed* the lockdown becomes a site where historical memories resurface particularly memories of exclusion border-making and state violence. The film's visual motif of barricade, checkpoint and restricted movement strongly recalls earlier moments in Indian history when lines were drawn to separate people whether during colonial rule, Partition, or communal riots. Their petition of these images suggests that society has not fully processed its past traumas. Instead, they lie dormant within collective memory ready to re-emerge during moments of crisis. When migrant workers are stopped at borders between states questioned about their identities and treated as potential threats the audience is reminded of how easily the language of control replaces the language of care.

The state represented through bureaucracy and law enforcement, appears more concerned with maintaining order than with addressing human suffering. What makes *Bheed* particularly powerful is its refusal to treat these historical echoes as distant or abstract. The film shows how collective memory operates at the level of everyday behaviour how people justify discrimination, normalize cruelty, and rationalize exclusion by drawing on familiar narratives. These narratives passed down through generations become part of the social fabric influencing how individuals perceive others during times of uncertainty. Social fragmentation in *Bheed* is not limited to class or economic status it also intersects with caste and religion. The film subtly but powerfully suggest that the burden of the lockdown falls disproportionately on those who are already marginalized. Historical patterns of caste-based exclusion find new expressions in the modern context reminding viewers that social hierarchies have adapted rather than disappeared.

The crisis becomes a test of moral values revealing who is considered worthy of empathy and who is deemed expendable. A significant narrative thread in *Bheed* revolves around individuals positioned within systems of authority particularly law enforcement. These characters embody the tension between institutional duty and personal conscience. Through them the film explores how collective memory operates within institutions shaping their response to crisis. Authorities in the film often justify their action by invoking rule, order and procedure. However these justifications are shown to be deeply influenced by historical attitudes toward control and discipline. The legacy of colonial policing with its emphasis on surveillance and force appears to linger in contemporary practice. *Bheed* suggests that institutions like individuals carry memories of their past which influence how they act in the present.

At the same time, the film allows space for ethical resistance. Characters who question orders or express empathy represent the possibility of breaking away from inherited patterns of behaviour. Their internal conflict highlights the human cost of social fragmentation not only for those who suffer exclusion but also for those who enforce it. By foregrounding these moral dilemmas *Bheed* refuses simplistic binaries of good and evil instead presenting a complex portrait of individual struggling within oppressive structure. Beyond its narrative *Bheed* employs visual storytelling to evoke emotional memory. The film's use of black-and-white cinematography serves as more than an aesthetic choice it connects the present to the past blurring temporal boundaries. This visual style evokes archival footage and historical photographs reinforcing the idea that the events depicted are part of a larger historical continuum.

The absence of colour strips scene of distraction, focusing attention on faces, gestures and expressions. Suffering becomes stark and unavoidable. This visual strategy encourages viewers to engage emotionally rather than consume the narrative passively. By invoking the look of historical documentation *Bheed* positions itself as a record of collective experience demanding to be remembered. The use of silence, ambient noise and restrained music amplifies the emotional weight of scenes. Moments of quiet despair punctuated by distant sirens or murmurs of crowds linger in the viewer's mind long after the film end. These sensory elements transform the film into an emotional archive preserving the affective dimension of the lockdown experience. Migration is a central theme in *Bheed* symbolizing both physical movement and social marginalization.

Conclusion

This examination done through the project helped in understanding how cinema functions as a site for collective trauma, fragmentation and historical continuity are remembered and questioned through the lens of memory studies. Rather than the usual treatment of COVID 19 as a crisis, the film reveals the longstanding structures of inequality rooted in caste, class and state power which otherwise may have gone undetected. By exposing the migrant workers' experience *Bheed* transcends personal suffering to the level of shared social memory. This challenges the dominant narrative that seeks to normalise or erase this trauma once it is over. Border, checkpoint, barricade and highways are used as a tool of memory politics in the centre of the film to suspend humanity and regulate mobility.

These spaces are never merely logistical arrangements but memory sites that are powerful which controls who must move, who must wait and who can be abandoned. The lockdown border crisis reminds us of historical moments especially the partition of India that resulted in displacement, fear and uncertainty moulded the country's collective consciousness. *Bheed*, with the help of repetitive images and emotional resonance, points out the fact that memory can never be fully resolved as they remain embedded in social structures, resurfacing at every strike of the crisis. The film's central point of critique is the state role in shaping collective memory. Bureaucratic language, legal order and institutional routine shifts as weapons that are necessary to mask the violence inflicted on marginalised bodies.

The reason why I've chosen the movie *Bheed* is because it shows the real painful issues which migrants go through like being famished totally worn out, and treated poorly. It makes us look at parts of life that most people try to hide or look away from. The movie tells the stories of people who are usually ignored or forgotten by history, which makes us ask who actually gets remembered and who is left out on purpose. Even the police in the film have a hard time, stuck between following orders and doing what they feel is right in their hearts. It shows that what we "remember" as a group can change the moment we start questioning the stories we are told to believe. Really, the movie isn't just about the pandemic; it's about how we choose to remember some problems but ignore others. It warns us that forgetting on purpose is dangerous because it just leads to the same mistakes happening again. With its powerful pictures and quiet moments, *Bheed* tells us that we shouldn't stay isolated from one another.

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